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Independent scout general proficiency requirement (SKU) examination: An autonomy-based assessment for developing students' independence and discipline

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ABSTRACT

Strengthening Character Education in elementary schools still faces operational challenges, as the values of independence and discipline are often taught normatively rather than developed through direct, structured, repeated, and consistently measurable experiences. This study aims to analyze the implementation of the Independent Scout General Proficiency Requirement (SKU) Examination based on limited assistance in fostering independent initiative and habituating disciplined behavior among Cub Scout students in elementary schools. This research employed an intrinsic qualitative case study at SD Hangtuah 11 Surabaya, using purposive sampling, interviews, observation, documentation, thematic analysis, triangulation, member checking, and ethical research procedures. The findings reveal that: 1) the Independent SKU Examination develops students' independence through the initiative to approach the Scout coach, competency demonstrations without direct guidance, and limited assistance that strengthens responsibility, courage, and learning control; and 2) Scout habituation instills discipline through weekly routines, roll calls, uniform-attribute checks, task evaluation, punctuality, and orderliness, enabling students to gradually develop self-control and procedural compliance. This study concludes that the Independent Scout SKU Examination is not merely an assessment instrument, but a pedagogical practice that develops students' independence and disciplined character through autonomy, limited assistance, and routine habituation to counterbalance the culture of instant gratification. The study contributes to Self-Determination Theory by elaborating the concepts of autonomy support, limited assistance, and pedagogical distancing, while also offering a structured character assessment model for the sustainable development of independence and discipline among elementary school students.

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INTRODUCTION

Strengthening Character Education (PPK) is a strategic agenda in modern education systems that aims not only to develop academic excellence but also to foster students' moral integrity and ethical literacy (Sari et al., 2025). At the elementary school level, character formation plays a crucial role because this developmental stage serves as the foundation for long-term behavioral discipline and personal independence (Irwan et al., 2022). Various classical and contemporary conceptual frameworks emphasize that sustainable character cannot be developed solely through rote classroom learning but requires intentional habituation and direct experiential learning (Biesta, 2020; Davidson et al., 2023). Although there is theoretical consensus on the importance of experience-based character education, elementary schools still face challenges in operationalizing structured learning frameworks beyond the formal curriculum. This condition creates a pedagogical gap between character values taught conceptually and the actual behaviors demonstrated by students (Syafiudin & Purwono, 2022).

Numerous studies on character education among elementary school students can be classified into three main streams. First, Scout extracurricular activities have been examined as a space for positive youth development, strengthening self-regulation, social responsibility, and civic character through guided school-based experiences (Larson, 2000; Eccles et al., 2003). Second, Scout education has been positioned as an instrument for improving discipline, developing team-based leadership, and internalizing moral values through practice, role modeling, and educational outdoor activities (Aziz & Ulya, 2022; Haryanto et al., 2024; Arianti et al., 2024; Mawardini et al., 2025). Third, structured extracurricular activities have been studied in relation to the reduction of adult direction and direct involvement (Sánchez-Miguel et al., 2017; Sholawati & Khilmiyah, 2023; Dini et al., 2025). However, previous studies have generally focused on the macro-level impacts of scouting and have not sufficiently examined the mechanism of the Independent SKU Examination. The novelty of this study lies in revealing the simultaneous integration of autonomous assessment, limited assistance, and procedural habituation through concrete ritualized activities.

This study aims to analyze the operationalization of the Independent SKU Examination using a limited assistance method in fostering independent initiative among elementary school students, as well as to explain the continuous habituation process that shapes the internalization of disciplined behavior among Cub Scouts. The research questions focus on two aspects: 1) how Scout coaches organize spaces for autonomy, limited assistance, and competency demonstration in the Independent SKU Examination; and 2) how routines such as roll calls, uniform-attribute checks, task evaluation, punctuality, and orderliness shape students' self-control. Theoretically, this study contributes to expanding character education studies by positioning the Independent SKU Examination as an autonomy-based assessment and disciplinary habituation practice. Practically, this study offers a more systematic, measurable, and applicable Scout coaching model for elementary schools in developing students' independence and discipline.

This study is grounded in the argument that character education in elementary schools faces serious challenges as students become increasingly dependent on adult guidance and are insufficiently trained to manage initiative, responsibility, and self-discipline. However, previous studies on scouting have largely emphasized the general functions of extracurricular activities, character formation, and discipline enhancement, without providing a detailed explanation of the pedagogical mechanisms operating within the Independent SKU Examination. This study argues that independence and discipline are not formed merely through verbal instruction, but through a combination of autonomous assessment, limited assistance, pedagogical distancing, and systematic habituation. The novelty of this study lies in its micro-level explanation of how students take the initiative to approach Scout coaches, demonstrate competencies, receive minimal cues, and engage in routines such as roll calls and

uniform-attribute checks. Its contribution is to offer a concrete, measurable, and applicable operational model for character development among Cub Scouts.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study employed a qualitative approach with an intrinsic single-case study design to examine the implementation of the Independent Scout General Proficiency Requirement (SKU) Examination model. A qualitative case study design was selected because it enables an in-depth, comprehensive, and focused exploration of a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, particularly when the boundaries between the phenomenon under investigation and its context cannot be clearly separated (Hollweck, 2015; Wohlin & Rainer, 2022). The research site was purposively determined at the Scout Unit of SD Hangtuah 11 Surabaya, Indonesia, because the school implements an Independent SKU Examination based on self-paced advancement through a limited assistance protocol. Fieldwork was conducted intensively for six months during the 2025/2026 academic year, covering 24 Scout activity sessions and SKU examination cycles that were systematically and deliberately observed.

Research informants were selected using nonprobability purposive sampling to ensure that all participants had direct experience relevant to the focus of the study (Bhairawa et al., 2022). The participants consisted of three certified external Scout coaches with an average of 7.5 years of coaching experience, three internal assistant teachers who supervised the integration of extracurricular activities with school regulations, and twelve Cub Scout students aged 10–11 years who actively participated in the Independent SKU Examination. To maintain confidentiality and comply with international research ethics standards, all participants' identities were anonymized using alphanumeric codes: EC-01 for External Coach, AT-02 for Assistant Teacher, and CS-01 to CS-12 for Cub Scouts as the main subjects of the field research.

Data was collected through three main techniques to enable source triangulation. First, in-depth semi-structured interviews were conducted individually with external Scout coaches and assistant teachers for 45–60 minutes using a validated interview guide, focusing on pedagogical interventions, behavioral evaluation, and challenges in character internalization. The interviews were recorded with participants' consent and transcribed verbatim. Second, passive participant observation was conducted during weekly Scout activities lasting approximately 90 minutes, including roll calls and the Independent SKU Examination, to document nonverbal behaviors, coach–student interaction patterns, and students' responses to opportunities for independent decision-making. Third, document analysis was carried out on Scout Unit registration books, Training Activity Plans, guidelines for uniforms and attributes, and documents recording students' SKU achievement.

Qualitative data analysis referred to the interactive model of Miles et al. (2014), which includes data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification. Interview, observation, and documentation data were managed using qualitative data analysis software to ensure an orderly analytical process. In the first-cycle coding stage, a combination of In Vivo coding was used to preserve participants' original terms, while descriptive coding was applied to capture the initial meanings of the data. Second-cycle coding was then conducted through axial coding and pattern coding to group initial codes into broader themes. For example, codes such as "approaching the Scout coach without being asked," "reviewing the material after failure," and "learning with peers" were categorized under the theme of Independent Initiative and Self-Regulation. The data were subsequently presented in a cross-source matrix to strengthen transparency, verification, and the study's audit trail.

To ensure the credibility and trustworthiness of the findings, several validation strategies were systematically applied. Inter-coder reliability was established through peer debriefing among members of the research team to minimize individual analytical bias. Member checking was conducted by returning interview transcripts and summaries of the

preliminary findings to the key informants, namely EC-01 and AT-01, to ensure that the researchers' interpretations were consistent with participants' empirical experiences. The researchers also applied reflexivity by acknowledging their position as external researchers and controlling personal assumptions about Scout education so as not to influence the coding process or interpretation of field data. Ethically, the study obtained approval from the institutional ethics committee and official permission from the school. Adult participants signed informed consent forms, while students participated with written parental or guardian consent and their own assent to ensure the protection of participants' rights, safety, and confidentiality.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

Independent SKU examination and limited assistance for independence

The implementation of the SKU Examination in Cub Scout activities was designed not merely as an evaluation of competencies, but as a medium for developing independent character. Through a mechanism in which students independently approached the Scout coach, the coach adopted a passive-observational stance, and assistance was limited to keywords or simple cues, a psychological space was created that encouraged students to rely on their own memory and understanding without direct guidance. This process, which required initiative and self-control, effectively fostered courage, self-confidence, discipline, and personal responsibility.

The mechanism of this examination was explained in detail by an external Scout coach as follows: "When assessing SKU, for example, on the item of being able to mention the pillars of Islam and the pillars of faith, Cub Scouts must initiate the examination process themselves by approaching the Scout coach, or by starting through writing and drawing. If the Cub Scout forgets midway, the coach may only provide one keyword or a simple cue, such as a finger gesture, rather than directly giving the cognitive answer" (Interview, November 14, 2025). Thus, the SKU Examination requires Cub Scouts to initiate the process independently, while the coach provides only minimal cues when they forget. This mechanism is deliberately designed to develop students' independence and learning autonomy.

Figure 1

Independent SKU Examination and Limited Assistance Method for Cub Scouts

Source: Researcher's documentation, 2026.

Figure 1 shows that the arrangement of physical and pedagogical positioning during the examination reflects the intentional application of a deliberate distancing technique. In this process, the Scout coach did not direct students or provide answers directly. Instead, the coach maintained a passive and observational position, thereby creating a psychological space that encouraged students to fully rely on their own cognitive readiness. Students were required to independently approach the Scout coach, state the competency to be assessed according to the

competency standard they intended to fulfill, and demonstrate their knowledge or skills without receiving prompts or cues from others.

Table 1
Independent SKU Examination and Limited Assistance to Foster Students' Independence

No.	Finding	Concise Description	Implication
1	The SKU examination was conducted independently	Students independently approached the scout coach and proposed the competency item to be assessed.	This model fosters courage, personal responsibility, and students' awareness of managing their own learning process.
2	The scout coach adopted a passive-observational position	The scout coach did not provide direct answers but acted as an observer and assessor.	The coach's non-dominant role created space for students to rely on their own cognitive abilities, thereby supporting the development of learning independence.
3	Students demonstrated competencies without direct guidance	Students demonstrated their abilities based on SKU items without direct prompts or answer-based assistance.	This process strengthened students' self-confidence, memory, communication skills, and courage in demonstrating competencies independently.
4	Assistance from the scout coach was limited to keywords or simple cues	The scout coach only provided minimal assistance, such as keywords or simple cues, when students forgot the answer.	Limited assistance functioned as minimal scaffolding that maintained students' autonomy and encouraged them to retrieve answers through their own memory and understanding.
5	A psychological space for independence was established	Pedagogical distancing provided students with space to think and act independently.	This psychological space contributed to the formation of independent, disciplined, confident, and responsible character in the process of completing SKU requirements.
6	The SKU examination served as a medium for character formation, not merely evaluation	The SKU examination became a means of practicing initiative, courage, and self-control.	SKU functioned as a pedagogical instrument for instilling independence values in Cub Scout activities in a concrete and measurable manner.

Source: Processed by the authors (2026).

Table 1 shows that the independent implementation of the General Proficiency Requirement (SKU) Examination functions as a pedagogical strategy for developing students' independence in Cub Scout activities. Students were not only assessed on their mastery of learning materials, but were also trained to take initiative, courageously approach the Scout coach, select the competency to be assessed, and demonstrate their abilities without relying on direct guidance. The coach's passive-observational position, together with assistance limited to keywords or simple cues, strengthened this process. Thus, the SKU Examination became a space for character learning that fostered responsibility, self-confidence, discipline, moral courage, and the ability to manage the learning process independently from an early age within an educational, directed, and consistent evaluative setting aligned with the principles of student development.

Based on the findings, the mechanism of the Independent SKU Examination indicates a shift in the Scout coach's role from an active instructor to an evaluative facilitator who maintains pedagogical distance. This distance does not represent a withdrawal of responsibility, but rather a strategy to provide psychological space for students to activate their own memory, courage, and cognitive readiness. When students forgot the answer, the coach provided only minimal assistance in the form of keywords or simple cues, ensuring that the thinking process remained with the students. This pattern aligns with the principle of limited assistance, in which support is given sufficiently without taking over the learning process. Consequently, the SKU Examination not only measures competency achievement but also develops independent dispositions through direct experiences of facing challenges, managing anxiety, making decisions, and taking responsibility for the abilities demonstrated

before the Scout coach in a conscious, orderly, and repeated manner within scouting practices that emphasize sustained and contextual character training and responsibility.

Systematic habituation and the internalization of students' behavioral discipline

Systematic habituation in the Scout program serves as an important foundation for the internalization of students' behavioral discipline. Discipline is not developed through authoritative pressure, but through repeated, structured, and institutionalized routines in daily and weekly activities. Through compliance with schedules, uniform use, and activity procedures, students learn to understand orderliness as part of personal responsibility and collective life. This process affirms that discipline grows through consistent real-life experiences that are educationally meaningful.

This was explained by an external Scout coach, who described in detail how disciplinary routines were structurally integrated into each activity: "We integrate disciplinary values into weekly training routines through concrete actions, such as starting and ending training activities according to schedule, checking the completeness of the attributes worn by students before the activity begins, reviewing the previous week's assignments, and requiring students to be orderly before they are allowed to rest." (Interview, November 14, 2025). Furthermore: "At present, the assessment is conducted gradually according to the material. Collaboration with internal school assistant teachers occurs particularly when students' complete religious items in the SKU, because some students are of different religions and require validation from their religious teachers or school assistant teachers." (Interview, November 14, 2025). Thus, Scout discipline is developed through structured routines, while its effectiveness depends on adaptive collaboration between external coaches and internal teachers to ensure that character development remains inclusive, contextual, and pedagogically valid.

Figure 2
Weekly Attribute Checks and Readiness of Cub Scouts

Source: Researcher's documentation, 2026.

Figure 2 shows that mandatory roll calls and attribute checks before Scout activities constitute an important part of the disciplinary habituation mechanism. These activities function not only as initial procedures, but also as a transitional space that prepares students to enter an orderly, directed, and organized training environment. Analytically, the roll call can be understood as a behavioral filter as well as a ritualized gateway that shapes students' mental readiness, procedural compliance, and orderly attitudes in participating in the entire sequence of Scout activities.

Table 2
Systematic Habituation and the Internalization of Behavioral Discipline

No.	Finding	Concise Description	Implication
1	Weekly training routines served as a medium for	Discipline was developed through repeated, scheduled, and	Students became accustomed to following orderly and structured

	habituating discipline	consistent activities in Scout training.	activity patterns.
2	Roll calls and uniform-attribute checks functioned as gateways to discipline	Mandatory roll calls and attribute checks were conducted before activities began to ensure students' readiness.	These practices fostered readiness, procedural compliance, and awareness of shared rules.
3	Evaluation of previous weekly assignments strengthened continuity in character development	The Scout coach reviewed previous assignments as part of disciplinary control and students' responsibility.	Students learned to maintain commitment, complete assignments, and take responsibility for their obligations.
4	Punctuality fostered disciplinary awareness	Activities were started and ended according to schedule as a habituation practice for valuing time.	Students understood the importance of orderliness, compliance, and time management.
5	Orderliness became a prerequisite for obtaining the right to rest	Students were required to remain orderly before being allowed to rest or leave.	This practice cultivated self-control, patience, and awareness that rights are connected to responsibilities.
6	Discipline developed through self-control rather than coercion	Disciplinary formation was carried out through consistent routines and rules, rather than authoritarian pressure.	Discipline became part of students' character because it was developed through awareness and repeated experience.

Source: Processed by the authors (2026).

Table 2 shows that systematic habituation in Scout activities serves as the main mechanism for internalizing students' behavioral discipline. Discipline is developed through repeated, scheduled, and consistent weekly training routines, such as mandatory roll calls, attribute checks, task evaluation, punctuality, and the regulation of orderliness before students are allowed to rest or leave. This process indicates that discipline does not emerge through authoritative pressure, but through concrete experiences that are continuously repeated within a structured environment. Thus, Scout activities function as a space for character development that gradually instills procedural compliance, responsibility, self-control, commitment, and collective awareness of shared rules in students' lives, both within the training environment and in daily school routines, in a sustainable, consistent, and educationally meaningful manner.

Based on the findings, the habituation pattern in Scout activities shows that discipline is developed through an environmental design that repeatedly regulates students' behavior. Roll calls, attribute checks, task evaluation, and punctuality function as pedagogical tools that connect rules with direct experience. When students are required to be orderly before obtaining the right to rest or leave, discipline is no longer understood merely as an external command, but as a social prerequisite for participating in collective activities. This mechanism indicates a shift from coach control toward students' self-control. Consistent routines enable the value of discipline to be internalized, as students learn to manage time, fulfill obligations, comply with procedures, and understand the relationship between rights and responsibilities in Scout practices. Thus, disciplinary habituation becomes a planned, measurable, and relevant pedagogical process for the sustainable and contextual formation of elementary school students' character.

Discussion

This study on the Independent Scout General Proficiency Requirement (SKU) Examination in developing students' independence and discipline found that: 1) the Independent SKU Examination fostered students' independence through the initiative to approach the Scout coach, competency demonstrations without direct guidance, and limited assistance that strengthened responsibility, courage, and learning control; and 2) Scout habituation instilled discipline through weekly routines, roll calls, attribute checks, task evaluation, punctuality, and orderliness, enabling students to gradually develop self-control

and procedural compliance. Thus, the Independent Scout SKU Examination is not merely an instrument for assessing competencies, but also a pedagogical arena for character formation. Independence and discipline develop through a combination of autonomy, limited assistance, structured habituation, and self-control that is gradually built through school-based Scout practices.

Socially, these findings are relevant to the current challenges of elementary education, as students live in a fast-paced and highly stimulating digital culture that tends to encourage instant gratification. Such conditions may weaken perseverance, emotional regulation, responsibility, and the ability to delay gratification in real-life contexts (Larson, 2006). In this context, the Independent SKU Examination and Scout habituation offer a concrete corrective space. Students are trained to face consequences, prepare themselves, comply with procedures, and complete tasks gradually (Zamiri & Esmaeili, 2024; Brandmo & Gamlem, 2025). Roll calls, attribute checks, punctuality, and limited assistance become social practices that balance children's tendency to depend on adult direction. Thus, Scout activities serve not only as extracurricular activities but also as a social mechanism for developing independence and discipline amid the current crisis of children's self-control, particularly in increasingly complex urban elementary school environments (Li et al., 2021; Johnson et al., 2023).

Theoretically, these findings can be interpreted through Self-Determination Theory, which emphasizes the importance of autonomy support in developing students' intrinsic motivation (Ruzek et al., 2016). The passive-observational role of Scout coaches does not indicate a withdrawal of pedagogical responsibility, but rather creates space for students to take initiative, assess their own readiness, and demonstrate competencies independently. Limited assistance in the form of keywords or simple cues functions as minimal scaffolding that keeps the thinking process within the students (Demetriadis et al., 2008; Magnusson et al., 2023). At the same time, routines such as roll calls, attribute checks, and orderliness demonstrate a consistent structure, as emphasized by Jang et al. (2010), that a structured learning environment can support autonomy without eliminating discipline. Therefore, the Independent SKU Examination shows a productive relationship between autonomy, structure, and character formation within a directed, measurable, and sustainable assessment practice consistently implemented through Scout development in elementary schools.

This study provides an understanding that character does not develop merely through verbal advice, but through small experiences that are repeated, structured, and given meaning (Lester et al., 2022). The Independent SKU Examination shows that elementary school children are able to learn responsibility when they are entrusted to initiate, try, fail, improve themselves, and reapply for assessment. This process is consistent with the concept of self-regulation, namely children's ability to consciously direct their actions toward achieving developmental goals (Gestsdottir & Lerner, 2008; Iwasaki, 2016). From a scholarly perspective, this study highlights the importance of viewing simple practices, such as roll calls, attribute checks, and coaches' cues, as meaningful pedagogical events. Independence and discipline emerge from a balance between freedom, boundaries, and measured assistance in children's daily learning experiences, which require responsibility, courage, perseverance, and social awareness in student development (Man et al., 2020; Jilink et al., 2025).

Compared with previous studies, this research has both points of convergence and an expanded contribution. Arianti et al. (2014) and Mahendra et al. (2023) have shown that Scout activities play a role in students' character formation. In line with these studies, this research also affirms the function of scouting as a space for character education. However, the difference lies in the depth of analysis of the micro-level mechanisms, namely how pedagogical distancing and limited assistance operate within the Independent SKU Examination. These findings also complement Juwantara (2019) and Haryanto et al. (2024), who emphasize the benefits of Scout activities for discipline, by demonstrating the role of roll calls and attribute checks as ritualized gateways. Thus, this study strengthens the operational

analysis of how character is formed through autonomous assessment and structured habituation among elementary school students in a more concrete, systematic, and field-evidence-based manner.

Based on the findings, schools need to position the Independent SKU Examination as a character assessment model integrated with learning programs and student development activities. First, the principle of self-paced learning progress should be institutionalized so that students become accustomed to assessing their own readiness before participating in evaluations. Second, Scout coaches and teachers need shared guidelines on limited assistance to ensure that support does not turn into the direct provision of answers. Third, roll calls, attribute checks, task evaluation, and orderliness should be implemented consistently as a system of disciplinary habituation. Fourth, schools need to establish coordination forums involving external Scout coaches, assistant teachers, homeroom teachers, and parents. Fifth, budgetary support should be directed toward coach training, the provision of facilities, and documentation of students' character development so that this good practice becomes a sustainable institutional culture and can be replicated in other educational units through clear development governance and routine evaluation mechanisms.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the Independent Scout SKU Examination is not merely an instrument for assessing competencies, but a pedagogical arena that actively develops students' independence and discipline through two complementary mechanisms. First, independence develops through students' initiative to voluntarily approach the Scout coach, demonstrate competencies without direct guidance, and receive limited assistance in the form of simple cues, which in turn strengthens responsibility and courage in decision-making. Second, discipline is internalized through structured habituation in weekly routines, roll calls, attribute checks, and punctuality, which gradually build self-control. These findings indicate that the combination of autonomy and consistent structure is key to character formation amid the challenges of a digital culture that promotes instant gratification. Thus, scouting functions as a corrective space that counterbalances children's tendency to depend on external guidance, while equipping them with perseverance and emotional regulation that are essential in real-life contexts.

This study contributes to enriching Self-Determination Theory by demonstrating how autonomy support can be realized through the passive-observational role of Scout coaches without eliminating pedagogical responsibility. Limited assistance functions as minimal scaffolding that keeps the thinking process within the students, while structured routines create a learning environment that supports autonomy without compromising discipline. Practically, these findings offer a measurable and sustainable character assessment model for elementary schools. Scout coaches and teachers can adopt the principle of pedagogical distancing in daily activities by providing space for students to initiate, try, fail, and improve themselves. Simple practices such as roll calls and attribute checks should not be viewed as mere formalities, but as pedagogical rituals that gradually and meaningfully build procedural awareness and individual responsibility.

This study has limitations related to the scope of the inquiry, which remains focused on the practice of the Independent SKU Examination at SD Hangtuah 11 Surabaya; therefore, the findings cannot yet be broadly generalized to different school contexts. This study also emphasizes students' experiences and Scout coaches' practices but has not measured character development longitudinally. Therefore, further research needs to be conducted across more diverse educational levels, regions, and school characteristics. Future studies may also employ a mixed methods design to measure changes in independence and discipline more systematically. In addition, comparative studies between the Independent SKU Examination

and conventional SKU examinations are important for assessing the effectiveness of character development models in greater depth.

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AUTHOR CONTRIBUTION STATEMENT

Mohamad Yusup Wisnu Wardana: Conceptualization; Data Curation; Formal Analysis; Investigation; Methodology; Writing Original Draft; Writing Review & Editing. **Dinda Ika Putri Yuniar**: Conceptualization; Data Curation; Formal Analysis; Investigation; Methodology. **Mar'atus Sholikhah**: Conceptualization; Data Curation; Formal Analysis; Investigation; Methodology. **Bagus Dwi Permana**: Conceptualization; Data Curation; Formal Analysis; Investigation; Methodology. **Abdul Saidullah**: Conceptualization; Data Curation; Formal Analysis; Investigation; Methodology; Supervision; Validation. **Susi Hermin Rusmiati**: Supervision; Validation Writing Review & Editing.

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