

The Existence of the Mecula Haroano Laa Tradition for the Protection of Farming Communities

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Abstract: *The substantial demand for agricultural products promotes extensive land clearing. This has inadvertently resulted in a growing scarcity of land availability. Furthermore, to satisfy the rising demand for agricultural production, farmers are urged to utilize chemical products to accelerate harvest and achieve substantial yields. This behavior and habit will lead to latent and long-term issues concerning the quality and productivity of crops, resulting in challenges for the farming community in marketing and obtaining low selling prices. The social repercussions perpetuate farmers' entrapment in poverty and economic disparity. This study seeks to elucidate the opportunities and resources associated with the Mecula Haroano Laa tradition, which safeguards the agricultural community. The methodology employed is qualitative, utilizing a case study approach to elucidate the essence of the events that transpired. Data collection was conducted through interviews, with informants selected via a purposive sampling technique, where the researcher made intentional selections based on predefined criteria aligned with the research objectives. The interview results were analyzed using QDA Miner software. The study's findings indicate that Mecula Haroano Laa effectively mitigates farmers' socio-economic vulnerabilities. Through this tradition, farmers in North Buton Regency engage in positive social interactions and share a collective responsibility for environmental stewardship and agricultural sustainability.*

Keywords: mecula, haroano, tradition, farmer, poverty

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Introduction

Sustainable agriculture is a critical topic in the discourse on agricultural development. The notion of sustainable agricultural development has emerged as a collective obligation among nations that must be honored and upheld (Rivai & Anugrah, 2016). Initiatives to cultivate sustainable agriculture can enhance the resilience and safeguarding of environmental ecosystems. (Jatav & Naik, 2023; Singh, 2020). Sustainable agricultural development focuses on practices that enhance agricultural yields, preserve ecological sustainability and balance, protect biodiversity, and improve the quality and quantity of agricultural products. Sustainable agricultural practices aim to achieve three primary objectives: environmental health, economic advantages, and social and economic equity, ensuring the long-term fulfillment of societal needs without compromising resource availability and environmental integrity. (Liu et al., 2024).

Sustainable agriculture also pays attention to local communities' social welfare and economic sustainability to develop the capacity of community economic resources (Hounnou et al., 2024). Sustainable agricultural practices encompass environmentally conscious farming techniques, including minimizing pesticides and chemical fertilisers, effective water management, and applying technologies that align with ecological principles. Sustainable agricultural practices aim to preserve soil fertility, mitigate environmental harm, enhance crop yields, boost economic income, and promote food security and human and soil health. North Buton Regency, located in Indonesia, possesses abundant agricultural resources and serves as a primary source of labor absorption within the framework of sustainable agriculture. To realise the principles of sustainable agriculture and positively influence the environment, it is essential to address and surmount social and cultural challenges. North Buton Regency possesses a diverse and distinctive heritage of local wisdom, exemplified by the *Mecula Haroano Laa* tradition.

Mecula Haroano Laa is a tradition encompassing local ecological knowledge, cultural systems, and climate and environmental change adaptation. Humans require adaptive strategies for survival based on their knowledge and technology. (Salem & Mesra, 2020). An essential facet of this local wisdom is enhancing an individual's capacity to coexist with nature and utilize resources sustainably. *Mecula Haroano Laa* encompasses cultural values and social norms employed by the community to address the challenges they encounter. Agricultural conditions reliant on chemical fertilizers and competition among farmers for buyers can establish *Mecula Haroano Laa* as a robust foundation for fostering social cohesion within the North Buton community, particularly among the farming populace. *Mecula Haroano Laa* is a principle that governs the interactions and collaborations of farming communities in their pursuit of producing agricultural products that are transmitted through

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generations. This is substantiated by the perspective that local wisdom emerges from community adaptation, shaped by interactions with others.

Agricultural communities profoundly comprehend the necessity to sustain equilibrium among humanity, nature, and culture in their farming practices. Social cohesion is crucial for advancing sustainable agriculture as it enables communities to exchange information, share resources, and collaborate in implementing sustainable practices. Robust social cohesion can indirectly foster positive social connections, mutual trust, and reciprocal support among community members. (Addas et al., 2023). This is, undoubtedly, a catalyst for active engagement in executing sustainable agriculture initiatives and the collective development of a sustainable agricultural framework. *Mecula Haroano Laa* underscores collaborative endeavors characterized by cooperation, assistance, and unity in agricultural development, thereby enhancing social interaction within the community.

The advancement of sustainable agriculture in North Buton Regency necessitates a thorough and profound comprehension of the *Mecula Haroano Laa* concept and its potential as a protective instrument. The *Mecula Haroano Laa* tradition study seeks to analyze social cohesion and networks that foster sustainable agriculture within the cashew farming community in North Buton Regency.

Method

The employed research method is a qualitative (Gill, 2020) Model utilising a case study approach, enabling the author to investigate and comprehend specific phenomena or events within real-life contexts through a comprehensive analysis of one or more particular cases. The case study method enables researchers to examine a case by analysing multiple influencing factors, including the social, cultural, political, and historical contexts, along with the dynamics present within that environment (Bhandari, P., 2020).

This qualitative study employs the interview method to examine the experiences of informants. (Cohen et al., 2017). The author employed the purposive sampling method, which involves intentional selection based on specific criteria. The interviews concentrated on their comprehension of *Mecula Haroano Laa*, conventional agricultural methods, the significance of local wisdom in fostering social cohesion, and their initiatives in promoting sustainable agriculture. Comprehensive interviews were performed with key informants, including local farmers, traditional leaders, relevant stakeholders, and community members possessing knowledge and experience of the local wisdom, *Mecula Haroano Laa*. (Flynn, 2023). The authors identified informants based on the criteria mentioned above. All informants gave verbal consent to be interviewed. Informants agreed to

collect and store the interview results in written form that were conducted during the interview. This study has received ethical permission from the Research and Community Service Institution of Halu Oleo University through letter number 405/UN29.20/KS/2023.

Researchers utilize QDA Miner 6 software, developed by Provalis Research, to analyze interview transcripts, focus group discussions, and documents during the data processing phase. This software aids researchers in organizing, coding, annotating, retrieving, and analyzing document collections. For data analysis, the author employs a four-stage pattern: category collection, direct interpretation, pattern formation, equivalence seeking among categories, and the development of naturalistic generalizations. The method employed offers several advantages: sensitivity to detect all symptoms within the research subject (social situation), the capacity to investigate data sources through comprehensive interviews, and the ability to communicate research findings to the broader community.

Results And Discussion

Field data collection was executed at the research site by acquiring interview data and organizing it into tabulated results. The interview results are processed using QDA Miner software, version v6.0.11, developed by Provalis Research. This software is utilized for qualitative and quantitative data analysis, particularly for text data such as interviews, articles, or surveys. QDA Miner enables researchers to categorize text, discern themes, analyze interrelations among categories, and generate data visualizations.

Initially, the researcher inputs all tabulation results for processing utilizing the functionalities provided by QDA Miner. Before initiating the processing phase, the researcher must establish categories or codes that will subsequently serve as the foundation for coding all interview tabulation documents. The resultant categories encompass community network structure, community adaptation patterns, individual and community awareness, and community norms and values. The four categories were subsequently refined into twelve codes: cooperation traditions, social network formation, social awareness, environmental awareness, participation, collective responsibility, social concern, togetherness, community participation, social feelings, interaction patterns, and utilization of local institutions. The subsequent step involves quantifying the percentage of words constituting the code, as illustrated in Figure 1.

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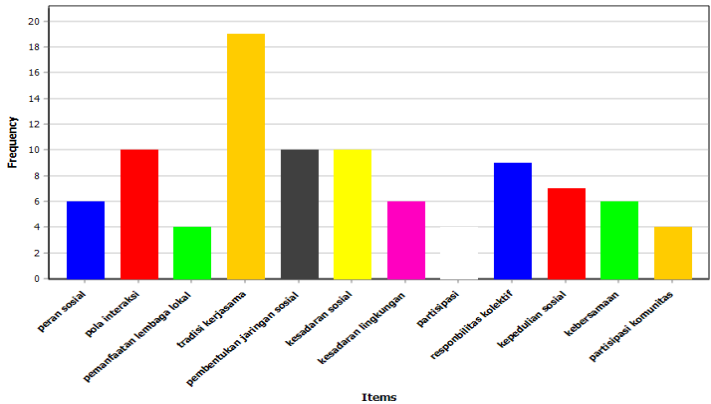


Figure 1. Persentase Kata yang Membentuk Kode

Source: Field Data Processing Utilising QDA Miner v6.0.11 Software

In qualitative data analysis utilizing software like QDA Miner, the percentage of words constituting a code denotes the ratio of words categorized under a specific code relative to the total word count in the text. In Figure 1, the words constituting the cooperation tradition code comprise 19 percent of the words utilized. In contrast, the words comprising the participation code, utilization of local institutions, and community participation represent the minor codes in terms of word count.

Frequency distribution data of informants serves as a method to analyze and comprehend the distribution of information or data among different informants in a study. Researchers enhanced data processing by analyzing the frequency distribution of informants within each category to elucidate the distribution in greater detail.

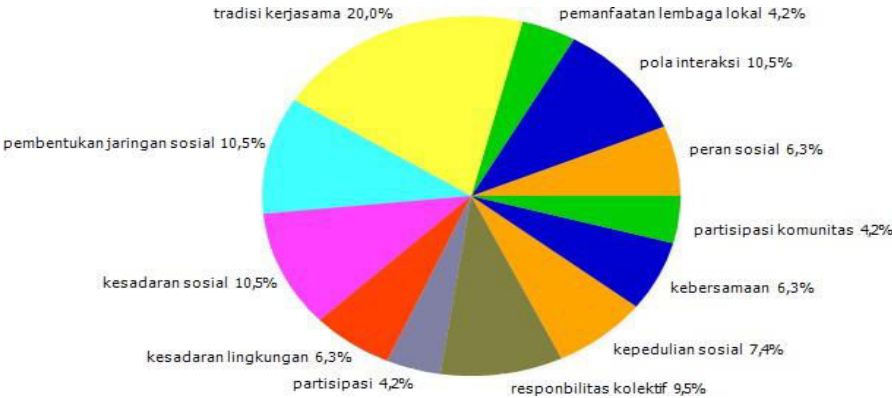


Figure 2. Classification of Code into Four Categories

Source: Field Data Processing Utilising QDA Miner v6.0.11 Software

Figure 2 illustrates the code of cooperation tradition as a distinct code within all categories related to employing *Mecula Haroano Laa* as a framework for safeguarding agricultural communities. The allocation of codes across four categories indicates the existence of 12 code variations. Analyzing the code distribution in Figure 6, researchers can determine that the discourse surrounding the use of *Mecula Haroano Laa* as a model for safeguarding farmer communities emphasizes the code of cooperation tradition.

The subsequent step involves utilizing the *Co-occurrences Coding* feature, wherein the co-occurrence network is a graphical depiction of the frequency with which codes appear in conjunction. This network is frequently utilized to quantify the frequency of the co-occurrence of two words within a document. The co-occurrence network enables the analysis of multiple pairs of concurrent codes. In constructing the co-occurrence network, each code is depicted as a node, with an edge or link connecting two nodes signifying the occurrence between the two variables, as illustrated in the subsequent figure.

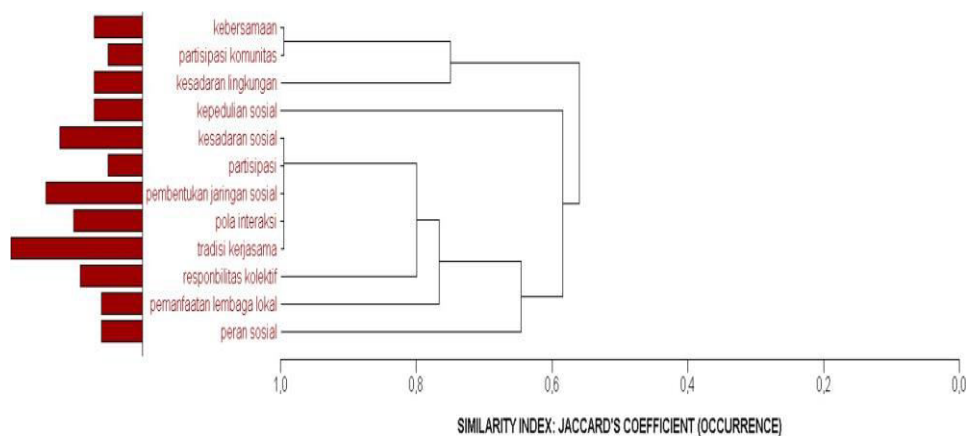


Figure 3. Inter-Code Framework for the Complete Category

Source: Field Data Processing Utilising QDA Miner v6.0.11 Software

Figure 3 illustrates that togetherness and social participation are consistently coded across all categories, alongside social awareness, participation, social network formation, interaction patterns, and cooperation traditions. Togetherness and environmental awareness are the least frequently co-occurring codes among all categories.

Correspondence Analysis (CA) is a statistical technique employed to investigate and illustrate the relationships among multiple categories or codes within

Figure 5 illustrates the frequency and intensity of the relationships among all codes within the four categories. The predominant frequency pertains to the tradition of cooperation, participation, togetherness, social concern, and establishing social networks, reaching 1,000.

Figure 6 illustrates the relational patterns among various segments, with the social awareness code serving as a fulcrum that exhibits a robust connection to several directly associated codes.

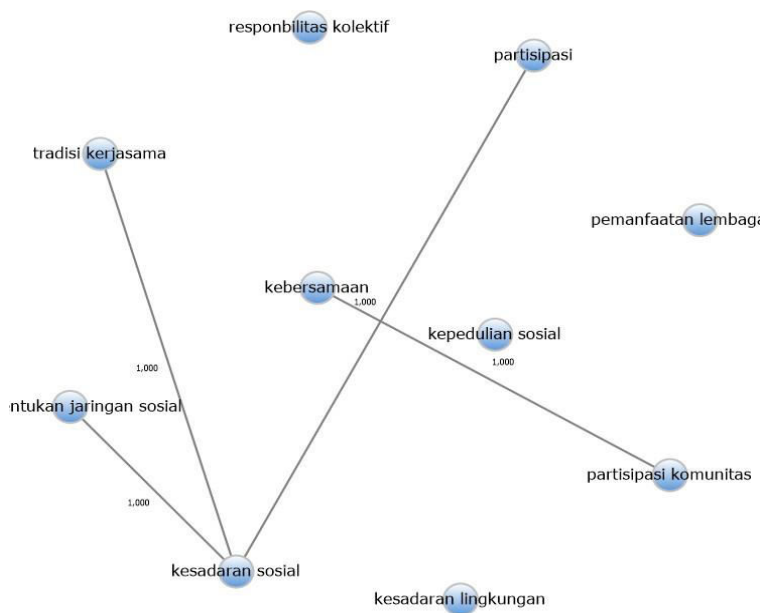


Figure 6. Patterns and Correlations Among Distinct Code Segments
Source: Field Data Processing Utilising QDA Miner v6.0.11 Software

The activities conducted by the farming community at the research site are intrinsically linked to those that foster social cohesion. (Parani et al., 2024). Social cohesion denotes the connections and solidarity within a group or community. It encompasses the extent to which members experience a sense of connection and share values, objectives, and identities. (Alcaide Manthey, 2024). Figure 1 indicates that the terminology constituting the cooperative tradition code accounts for 19 percent, signifying that informants concentrate their discourse on the subject of cooperative traditions. The social cohesion intrinsic to the cooperative tradition encompasses the degree to which members perceive mutual reliance and the presence of a fair and equitable environment.

The analysis of social cohesion in the *Mecula Haroano Laa* distribution encompasses land preparation, which involves numerous individuals clearing grass,

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small trees, or rocks that may obstruct cashew planting and growth. The participation of farmers and their relatives fosters robust social connections. Maintenance is conducted until harvest, following land clearing and seedling planting. Harvesting crops is intrinsically linked to social cohesion due to farmers' communal support for one another. The camaraderie and collective identity established encourage community members to engage in harvesting, which is conducted in rotation within the agricultural community.

Figure 2 illustrates 12 code variations derived from the analysis of interview results, all of which exhibit a robust correlation with social cohesion, encompassing themes such as cooperative traditions, social network formation, social and environmental awareness, participation, collective responsibility, social concern, togetherness, community engagement, social sentiments, interaction patterns, and the utilization of local institutions.

The enactment of the *Mecula Haroano Laa* tradition through cooperation and thanksgiving rituals signifies the robust cohesion established within the community. The ritual observed in the *Mecula Haroano Laa* tradition primarily expresses gratitude to Allah SWT for providing sustenance and health and safeguarding the village from all perils. This tradition imparts that humans should recognize the value of all beings, both visible and invisible. Within the *Mecula Haroano Laa* tradition, the community collaboratively supports one another to ensure the event's success, from the preparation of materials to the execution of the implementation. The community voluntarily contributes assistance through donations, including human resources for event needs and garden produce, as a gesture of gratitude, which all villagers will collectively enjoy.

The *Mecula Haroano Laa* tradition serves as an identity for the farming community in North Buton Regency, perpetually reminding them of the Creator's greatness. The *Mecula Haroano Laa* tradition comprises three components, including *haroano ta'u*, which encompasses seven intrinsic values: brotherhood, mutual cooperation, friendship, economic principles, and social values to reinforce unity and camaraderie. Simultaneously, *kaago-ago / kakadiuno liwu* is a ceremony conducted at the onset of the planting season. Farmers preparing to cultivate their land commence with preparations and engage in *wawono ta'u*, a traditional practice for opening new land, followed by a calculation of auspicious days and local cultural performances. These three traditions are not distinct from the *Mecula Haroano Laa* tradition; they are alternative names or designations for the same tradition across several villages, with the essence remaining consistent.

The value content associated with social cohesion is evident in the presence of robust social ties among communities that facilitate the continuation of traditions. (Bottoni & Addeo, 2024), social exchanges that satisfy ritualistic needs, and

cooperation towards shared values and norms inherent in the *Mecula Haroano Laa* tradition (Van Assche et al., 2023). Figure 3 illustrates social awareness, participation, the establishment of social networks, interaction patterns, and cooperative traditions as they relate to individuals' perceptions of the *Mecula Haroano Laa* tradition.

Tradition and resource utilization are closely interconnected, particularly in communities heavily relying on natural resources, such as agricultural communities in North Buton Regency. (Matema & Kariuki, 2022). Tradition can affect the management and utilization of natural resources, while the availability and condition of these resources can, in turn, shape the traditions and lifestyles of a community. (Nyamweno, 2024). Figure 4 illustrates a pattern of robust relationships associated with the *Mecula Haroano Laa* tradition, evidenced by informant responses that disclose patterns of interaction, social network formation, cooperative traditions, social awareness, social roles, and collective responsibility.

Mecula Haroano Laa is a tradition belonging to the farming community, serving as a means to establish and sustain social cohesion and networks within this group. It also upholds traditional agricultural practices, including prohibiting chemical fertilizers for soil enrichment, regulating planting and harvesting seasons, and land-burning restrictions. *Mecula Haroano Laa* is a crucial tool for sustaining agricultural land for the farming community. Numerous societies possess traditional agricultural practices that have demonstrated sustainability for centuries. (Xu et al., 2024). For instance, the terracing system adopted by Asian countries has enabled farmers to utilize land efficiently and sustainably. (Liu et al., 2024).

Traditional farming practices denote agricultural methods and techniques employed for centuries by communities before the agricultural revolution and the advent of modern technology. These practices are frequently grounded in indigenous knowledge and wisdom transmitted through generations. For instance, *Mecula Haroano Laa* governs the new land cultivation initiation and the farmers' agricultural harvest period. (Xu et al., 2024). The farming community engages in three daily activities: land preparation, plant care, and crop harvesting, all associated with the *Haroano Laa* tradition. The correlation between community activities and *Haroano Laa* can be examined through the social cohesion instrument, the binding force among community members. Figure 5 illustrates the dynamics present in the *Mecula Haroano Laa* tradition, where the informants' responses link cooperation, participation, togetherness, social concern, and the establishment of social networks as interrelated codes derived from the study of *Mecula Haroano Laa's* existence.

In communities characterized by robust social cohesion, individual and collective differences are acknowledged and esteemed. This encompasses variations in race, religion, sexual orientation, and cultural background. Members of such

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communities typically maintain intimate relationships, frequently engaging in shared activities and providing mutual assistance in diverse circumstances (Chanyau & Rosenberg, 2024). Regular and significant social interaction involves exchanging ideas, knowledge, and resources. Communities with strong social cohesion generally tolerate individual differences (Danquah & Ouattara, 2023). They acknowledge and appreciate the individuality of each person. Members of these communities generally possess analogous values and objectives, cultivating a sense of cohesion and collective identity. Due to elevated levels of social cohesion, community members generally experience enhanced security and stability and are more inclined to trust in their community's long-term survival and prosperity.

Mecula Haroano Laa sustains the agricultural community as a cohesive entity, ensuring equitable access to diverse opportunities for all its members based on familial connections. For instance, every farmer in the community will receive assistance with land clearing, new planting, and harvest implementation, thereby ensuring the involvement of community members in *Mecula Haroano Laa*. Engagement in social and communal activities is a crucial element of social cohesion. This may encompass involvement in civil society organizations, engagement in community activities, and similar endeavors. Figure 6 illustrates the correlation among various segments, emphasizing the social awareness code, which can be understood as social awareness serving as the community's capital in executing the *Mecula Haroano Laa* tradition.

Trust and respect among individuals and between individuals and communities, as exemplified in the *Mecula Haroano Laa* tradition, are vital for social cohesion. A cohesive community typically possesses a collection of shared values and social norms among its members, exemplified by *haroano ta'u*, which encompasses seven fundamental values, including brotherhood, cooperation, friendship, economic principles, and social values aimed at reinforcing unity and camaraderie. Simultaneously, *kaago-ago / kakadiuno liwu* is a ceremony conducted at the onset of the planting season. Farmers preparing to cultivate their land first engage in preparations and perform *wawono ta'u*, a traditional practice for opening new land, followed by a calculation of auspicious days and local cultural performances.

Resource management combines deep ecological knowledge with social norms and customary laws designed to promote equitable and sustainable use, such as determining who can use specific resources and how they can use them. (Cherng et al., 2019). In Polynesia, the concept of *ra'ui* is a traditional regulatory system used to protect and maintain marine resources (Tiraa, 2006). In addition, there are traditional systems for managing and protecting forests in tropical forest communities. For example, in the Amazon, indigenous peoples have deep knowledge of forest ecosystems and how to manage them sustainably. (Dutra et al.,

2023). *Mecula Haroano Laa* is a tradition that is an inseparable part of the traditional system, where this system regulates the management and distribution of resources, such as the arrangement of planting and cooperation systems. There are rules about who can use certain resources and when, as well as mechanisms within *Mecula Haroano Laa* for utilizing human resources within the community.

Conclusion

The *Mecula Haroano Laa* tradition is a customary instrument that governs social interactions within the farming community, serving as a manifestation of respect towards the Creator and an expression of gratitude. This tradition fosters a profound comprehension of the significance of preserving biodiversity, maintaining ecosystem equilibrium, and ensuring the sustainability of agricultural land. The practice of solidarity and cooperation in managing cashew farming initiated in *Mecula Haroano Laa* contributes to mitigating land degradation and enhancing social cohesion. This tradition fosters positive social interaction among farmers in the North Buton Regency, promoting a shared responsibility for environmental preservation and agricultural sustainability. *Mecula Haroano Laa*, as local wisdom, has emerged as the primary impetus for the advancement of sustainable agriculture among farmers in the North Buton Regency. In this context, local wisdom serves as both a cultural heritage that requires preservation and a source of environmental conservation values that benefit farmers collectively in the North Buton Regency.

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Author Contributions

S: devised and formulated the methodology for the study and research.

H: gathered data and performed interviews.

MCBU: composed the article up to the submission phase.

A: contributed to the analysis of the findings and assisted in drafting the article.

All authors participated in the article's development and endorsed the submitted version.

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Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that the research was conducted without any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

Data Availability

Data supporting the findings of this study are available from the authors, Syahrin, Muhamad, Chairul Basrun Umanailo, Halim, and Alias.

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