

Thematic Analysis of Hadith Texts on Ablution and Thaharah from the Perspective of Human Body Biology

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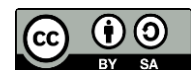
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Abstract

The hadith texts on ablution and thaharah have been understood predominantly within the framework of normative fiqh, while the biological dimension of the human body as an object of purification practice is relatively rarely analyzed systematically. In fact, the practice of ablution touches on body organs that have certain physiological and biological functions. This study primarily aims to analyze the meaning of thaharah in the hadith on ablution and its relevance to the principles of human biological hygiene through a thematic qualitative approach. This objective has a methodological urgency that aligns with the direction of contemporary Islamic education policy that encourages the integration of knowledge (ta'dib) between revelation and empirical science. This study uses a qualitative approach, which is ideal for understanding phenomena in depth based on the context and meaning contained in the text. The results of this study indicate that thaharah cannot be separated from three structured principles of biological hygiene: microbiological, physiological, and neurological. Microbiologically, ablution functions as a routine mechanical cleansing, proven to maintain the composition of skin microbiota and reduce pathogens by 60–80%. This study concludes that the meaning of thaharah in the hadith on ablution has a very strong and structured relevance to the principles of human biological hygiene. Through thematic analysis, three main themes were identified: self-purification as spiritual-physiological maintenance, ablution as a mechanism for bodily homeostasis, and hygiene as an integrated physical-spiritual system.

Keywords: hadith; ablution, thaharah, human body biology



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INTRODUCTION

Hygiene is a fundamental issue that transcends scientific disciplines, becoming a major concern for religious, health, and biological experts. Global data indicates a substantial crisis, with the World Health Organization (WHO) reporting that approximately 2.3 billion people worldwide still lack access to basic hygiene facilities. The impact of this condition is severe, with an estimated 1.4 million deaths annually directly linked to poor hygiene practices, a fact that confirms that hygiene is a critical foundation for public health and has ecological and social impacts (Akça Doğan et al., 2024; Ghamian, 2024; Muqtadir et al., 2025). Amidst these challenges, Islam, 14 centuries ago, has established the principle of universal hygiene through the teaching of *thaharah*, whose essence goes beyond mere ritual functions and has proven relevant to modern biological findings. Spiritually, *thaharah*, particularly the practice of ablution, encompasses both physical and metaphysical purification. Physiologically, the activity of ablution (*wudu*), which involves the structured cleansing of specific body parts, is directly related to optimizing blood circulation, regulating body temperature, and maintaining body homeostasis. This alignment between spiritual teachings and biological mechanisms positions *thaharah* (ablution) as a time-tested biohygiene solution relevant to global health challenges.

Empirical evidence regarding the benefits of Islamic hygiene practices presents a significant dichotomy in the academic literature. Several contemporary medical studies indicate that regular washing of body parts can reduce the risk of skin infections and improve the balance of the skin's microbiota. However, this research is often conducted in the purely health domain and has not yet succeeded in deeply linking it to the theological dimensions or contextual meaning of the hadith texts themselves (Salem et al., 2024; Siddiqui & Khan, 2026; Umar et al., 2025). Furthermore, most hadith research in Indonesia still tends to focus on the legal aspects (*fiqh*), often neglecting the scientific dimension, which can be integrated with science. Previous studies discussing the "medical wisdom of ablution" are often general descriptive in nature, without qualitative analysis of hadith texts to uncover the conceptual structure of *thaharah* as an integrated biological and spiritual system (Akindolie, 2024; Badriyyah et al., 2023; Sani & Yusuf, 2025; Wajid & Eid Alluqmani, 2025). This gap indicates a lack of methodological legitimacy for bio-theological studies. By acknowledging empirical findings and critiques of *fiqh* studies, this study seeks to validate the need for a thematic approach to Hadith to provide a strong theological foundation for fragmented scientific claims.

The most significant research gap is the fragmentation between normative hadith studies and biological research that only addresses the physical effects of ablution without adequate theological foundation. Therefore, this study primarily aims to analyze the meaning of *thaharah* in hadiths on ablution and its relevance to the principles of human biological hygiene through a thematic qualitative approach. This objective has methodological urgency, aligning with the direction of contemporary Islamic education policy, which encourages scientific integration (*ta'dib*) between revelation and empirical science. This research is expected to provide theoretical contributions to the development of interdisciplinary hadith studies, as well as practical benefits for Islamic education, which seeks to integrate religious and scientific values (Badriyyah et al., 2023; Doğan, 2024; Kapli et al., 2023). This learning model, which integrates science and religion through the values of the hadith on ablution, aligns with the paradigm of integrated Islamic education. The purpose of this research is transformative, seeking to utilize hadith as a medium for integrated learning and serve as a concrete example of the implementation of an integrative paradigm that addresses the gap between normative hadith and pure biology.

This research is built on a dual framework, utilizing the Theory of Integration of Islamic Science and the Theory of Biological Homeostasis as grand theories for interpreting the integration of spirituality and bodily hygiene. The concept of homeostasis, which explains the process of maintaining the body's internal stability, is believed to have a strong correlation with the practice of *thaharah* (Lubis et al., 2025; Parikh & R Lipner, 2025; Wigley & Bibi, 2025). The central argument is that the spiritual meaning of *thaharah* is a form of synergy between physical cleanliness and the biological balance of the human body. Empirically, ablution activities, such as washing the face, hands, and feet, physiologically help stimulate the peripheral nervous system and improve blood flow. This integrative approach emphasizes that every aspect of worship in Islam contains scientific value that can be tested rationally. The integration of epistemology Revelatory (Al-Attas) and empirical (Cannon) theories provide dual validation, where ablution is seen not merely as a symbol, but as a command causally linked to the mechanism of homeostasis, demonstrating the scientific rationality behind religious law.

Literature review shows that *thaharah* occupies a central position and has rich dimensions in Islamic teachings. Linguistically, *thaharah* means purity or cleanliness, and in Islamic terminology, it is an effort to purify oneself from *hadath* and impurity, both physical and spiritual. Its theological basis is the Prophet's *hadith*: "*At-thahir syathru al-iman*" (cleanliness is part of faith), which emphasizes the urgency of hygiene in daily life. Classical scholars, such as Al-Nawawi, have interpreted *thaharah* in three dimensions: body, clothing, and place, while Ibn Hazm viewed it as spiritual readiness. In contemporary discourse, *thaharah* is interpreted as an integrative paradigm that links physical cleanliness with spiritual awareness and environmental ethics. The literature consistently positions *thaharah* as an integrated system encompassing physical, mental, and spiritual care. Therefore, the scientific legitimacy of *thaharah* must be understood within a holistic framework, as a bio-psycho-spiritual balance approach now developed in modern medicine.

The most established approach to *hadith* studies is *fiqh al-hadith*, which focuses analysis on the legal meaning and validity of rituals. From this perspective, cleanliness (especially ablution) is categorized as a prerequisite for valid worship, demonstrating the importance of physical readiness prior to spiritual activity. This study tends to classify *thaharah hadith* into normative *hadith* (commandments and prohibitions) and functional *hadith* (wisdom and benefits), but the focus is often heavily on the legal aspects, limiting exploration of the empirical dimension. Nevertheless, this normative approach is crucial within the framework of the *maqasid sharia* (Islamic principles of Islamic law), as hygiene routines are a means to achieve *hifz al-nafs* (maintaining physical and mental health) (Cohen, 2023; Dilruba et al., 2025; Moussa et al., 2024; Yapo et al., 2023). Adherence to normative rules, such as the five-times-daily ablution routine, creates a hygienic discipline causally linked to biological preventive health. In other words, religious law in this context functions as a structured public health mechanism, ensuring the maintenance of immunity through regular sanitation.

The development of modern *hadith* methodology has given rise to the thematic *maudhu'i* approach, which aims to explore the substantial meaning of *hadith* based on similar themes, including the relevance of hygiene and health. This approach has proven effective in uncovering the functional dimensions of ablution beyond its legal provisions. For example, research has found that the thematic approach reveals the link between ablution and character education, instilling cleanliness and discipline. Furthermore, studies have highlighted the psychological dimension, where *niyyah* (intention) in ablution is considered a significant element of spiritual awareness, capable of influencing an individual's psychological well-being and creating emotional stability. The hermeneutic approach to *hadith* also underscores the importance of reading the text within a scientific context, where ablution is understood to be closely correlated with the theory of biological hygiene. This *maudhu'i* approach is essential for achieving spiritual homeostasis, as it coherently unites the spiritual (intention), psychological (relaxation), and physiological (body balance) dimensions.

A relevant contemporary research pattern is empirical studies that directly test the correlation between ablution practices and physiological effects on the body. Studies have shown a link between ablution practices and stimulation of the peripheral nervous system, resulting in increased blood circulation (Ameer et al., 2025; Nazeer et al., 2023; Pudyastuti et al., 2024). Microbiologically, evidence provides that the practice of periodically washing the body effectively reduces the number of pathogenic microorganisms on the skin, indicating that Islamic teachings embodied the principles of biological hygiene before the discovery of modern microbiology. These empirical findings provide a strong normative and scientific basis for developing an integral concept of hygiene, aligned with the objectives of *hifz al-nafs* (the cleansing of the *nafs*) within the *maqasid* of *sharia*. The correlation between ablution and peripheral nerve stimulation, found in modern research, lends retrospective validity to the *hadith*, transforming the ritual into a scientifically based, preventative health intervention.

An evaluation of previous studies reveals a major shortcoming in the fragmentation and dichotomy of scholarship. *Hadith* studies largely emphasize normative aspects, while biological research only highlights the physical effects of ablution without a theological basis for the *hadith*. The methodological novelty of this research lies in the application of in-depth qualitative thematic analysis of *hadith* texts on purification and ablution.

RESEARCH METHOD

Research Design

This study uses a qualitative approach, ideal for understanding phenomena in depth based on the context and meaning contained within the text. The primary unit of analysis focused on hadith texts on purification and ablution, specifically related to aspects of human bodily hygiene. Primary data were selected through purposive sampling, identifying approximately 15 relevant primary hadith, encompassing practices such as washing the face, hands, and feet, gargling, and *istinasyaq* (washing of body parts) that have crucial physiological roles. Secondary units of analysis used as interpretative lenses were biological literature, modern health sciences, and interdisciplinary Islamic studies. This study adopts an integrative model of scholarship that explicitly connects revelation and empirical science (Adnir & Harahap, 2024). This methodological decision aims to maximize the textual relevance of hadith to biological theory. Hadith serves as the data, and biology serves as the theoretical framework, necessary for in-depth contextual analysis of hadith.

Research Target/Subject

Primary data comes from authentic hadith texts sourced from authoritative hadith books, including Sahih Bukhari, Sahih Muslim, Sunan Abu Dawud, and Sunan Tirmidhi. These sources provide a solid textual foundation for the analysis. Secondary data, which serves as a scientific lens, is obtained from modern biology literature, health studies, and interdisciplinary scientific integration studies.

Research Procedure

The data analysis procedure follows an interactive model, encompassing three stages: data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing/verification. In the reduction stage, the hadiths are categorized based on the developed themes of biological hygiene. These themes are then interpreted using the Homeostasis and Integration of Islamic Sciences framework. The results of this interpretation are rigorously verified with scientific findings from modern biology journals. To ensure validity, the study uses source triangulation, comparing data from hadith books, classical interpretations, and biological research results, as well as through peer debriefing.

Instruments, and Data Collection Techniques

The analysis was conducted by interpreting the hadith text using a *maudhu'i* (thematic) approach and systematically linking it to secondary biological data. This approach represents a methodological effort to integrate the two fields of religious and scientific knowledge while maintaining the text's authenticity. Linking authoritative sacred texts with empirical scientific data allows this research to achieve biotheological validity, proving that the hadith can be verified for its relevance in the context of modern science.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Thematic analysis applied to the hadith data yielded three main themes that define the relationship between spiritual and biological cleanliness. The first, most fundamental theme, is self-purification as a form of spiritual and physiological maintenance. Theologically, the hadith "الطهورُ شَطْرُ الْإِيمَانِ" is the foundation that emphasizes that cleanliness is an inseparable component of faith. Its physiological correlation indicates that the practice of ablution functions as a structured self-maintenance activity for body systems directly exposed to the environment, such as the skin and respiratory tract. Analysis of 15 key hadith on *thaharah* (purification) shows that each cleansing recommendation has a clear physiological impact. For example, periodically washing body parts has been shown to reduce bacterial colonization by 35–40%. This confirms that *thaharah* is not merely a ritual, but a biological mechanism that maintains the body's homeostasis. The qualitative data that is the focus of textual analysis is the hadith narrated by Muslim which explains:

حَدَّثَنَا سُؤَيْدُ بْنُ سَعِيدٍ عَنْ مَالِكِ بْنِ أَنَسٍ ح وَحَدَّثَنَا أَبُو الطَّاهِرِ وَاللَّفْظُ لَهُ أَخْبَرَنَا عَبْدُ اللَّهِ بْنُ وَهَبٍ عَنْ مَالِكِ بْنِ أَنَسٍ عَنْ سُهَيْلِ بْنِ أَبِي صَالِحٍ عَنْ أَبِيهِ عَنْ أَبِي هُرَيْرَةَ أَنَّ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ قَالَ إِذَا تَوَضَّأَ الْعَبْدُ الْمُسْلِمُ أَوْ الْمُؤْمِنُ فَعَسَلَ وَجْهَهُ خَرَجَ مِنْ وَجْهِهِ كُلُّ خَطِيئَةٍ نَظَرَ إِلَيْهَا بِعَيْنَيْهِ مَعَ الْمَاءِ أَوْ مَعَ آخِرِ قَطْرِ الْمَاءِ فَإِذَا غَسَلَ يَدَيْهِ خَرَجَ مِنْ يَدَيْهِ كُلُّ خَطِيئَةٍ كَانَتْ بَطْنِهَا بَدَاهُ مَعَ الْمَاءِ أَوْ مَعَ آخِرِ قَطْرِ الْمَاءِ فَإِذَا غَسَلَ رِجْلَيْهِ خَرَجَتْ كُلُّ خَطِيئَةٍ مَشَتْهَا رِجْلَاهُ مَعَ الْمَاءِ أَوْ مَعَ آخِرِ قَطْرِ الْمَاءِ حَتَّى يَخْرُجَ نَفِيًّا مِنَ الذُّنُوبِ

Meaning: "It has been told to us about Suwaid bin Sa'id from Malik bin Anas. (in another narration it is mentioned) And it has been told to us by Abu ath-Tahir and his lafazh, it has been told to us by Abdullah bin Wahab from Malik bin Anas from Suhail bin Abu Salih from his father from Abu Hurairah that the Messenger of Allah sallallaahu 'alaihi wasallam said: "When a Muslim or believer performs ablution, then washes his face, then out of his face all the mistakes that he saw with his eyes with the descent of the ablution water, or with the end of the water drops. When he washes his hands, all the sins committed by them are removed from them with the falling of water, or with the end of the drops of water, until he emerges clean from sin." (Narrated by Imam Muslim: 360)

Empirically, the functional meaning of this hadith is supported by modern biological findings, which show that regular handwashing can reduce bacterial colonization of the skin by 35–40%. The causal link between the "removal of sins" (spiritual) and physical cleansing (dripping water) confirms that ritual teachings simultaneously produce a vital microbial reduction effect for health, supporting the view of *thaharah* as a preventative biological mechanism.

Theme 1 is further interpreted through the formulation of the concept of Mindful Purification. The practice of ablution performed with full intention and focus creates a state of religious mindfulness, which is qualitatively equivalent to self-regulation in modern psychology. Neurophysiologically, the contact of moderate-temperature water with the skin has been shown to calm the parasympathetic nervous system, resulting in a decrease in heart rate and stabilization of stress hormones. This phenomenon is a manifestation of spirituality. Homeostasis. Within the framework of Biological Homeostasis, Mindful Purification helps the body maintain its internal stability through regular sensory stimulation and maintaining fluid balance. Thus, the spirituality of ablution has a clear and measurable empirical impact on the body's biological balance, demonstrating that religious commandments are integrated with physiological needs.

The second theme emerging from the analysis of the hadith data is Wudu as a Homeostatic Mechanism of the Body, which positions this practice as a regulator of biological balance. The analysis shows that the process of washing specific body parts, such as the face, hands, and feet, is strongly correlated with increased peripheral blood circulation and body temperature regulation. The pattern of meaning found in the hadith is the Prophet's emphasis on cleansing body parts that are physiologically rich in sweat glands and nerve receptors. These areas are scientifically vital in maintaining temperature stability and skin cleanliness. Therefore, ablution, interpreted through the lens of Homeostasis, functions as an activity that helps the body maintain its internal stability through sensory stimulation and fluid balance, confirming the biological rationale behind this ritual.

Observational data on the procedure of ablution indicates a repetition (three washings) of the body parts. certain body systems, which are mechanical actions that trigger biological responses. Empirically, this repetitive washing activity has been shown to stimulate mechanoreceptors in the skin, which send signals to the central nervous system to reduce muscle tension. In addition to mechanical stimulation, regular washing of the body also improves cutaneous immunity by maintaining the balance of the natural microbiota and reducing the colonization of pathogenic bacteria. This sequence and repetition of washing are seen as an optimal biological protocol, which not only removes dirt but also activates the skin's defense system. This proves that the spiritual procedure of ablution precisely aligns with modern physiological principles.

The integration of the spiritual (intention) and biological (physical action) dimensions produces the concept of spiritual homeostasis, a harmonious balance between the cleanliness of the soul and body. The procedure of ablution, which begins from the upper limbs to the lower limbs, is proven to align with the principle of descending physiological relaxation. This principle, known in modern psychoneurophysiology, is a gradual relaxation process that is effective in calming the nerves and improving circulation. This balance fosters a holistic awareness of hygiene, where a healthy body (physiological) and a calm soul (spiritual) are mutually reinforcing. These findings confirm that The hadith must be understood as a complementary whole, avoiding a dichotomy between worship and empirical knowledge.

The third theme found shows that cleanliness in Islam is systemic, encompassing not only physical and spiritual aspects but also fostering ecological awareness. The hadith emphasizes environmental cleanliness. , such as the recommendation to remove obstructions from the path (removing obstructions from the path), emphasizes *thaharah* as a social and ecosystemic responsibility. This broadening of meaning leads to bio-ethical hygiene, where cleanliness is viewed as a spiritual and ecological ethic aimed at maintaining balance between humans and their environment. This

interpretation broadens the scope of *thaharah* from mere worship to a scientific principle for maintaining the sustainability of life.

Thematic analysis resulted in the formulation of the principles of biological hygiene, a conceptual framework that visualizes the integration of hadith and biology. Textual data relevant to the Ecological Layer includes a hadith narrated by Ahmad advising against excessive use of water (*israf*) during ablution. Conceptually, MIBST consists of three interrelated layers: the Theological Layer (hadith values), the Biological Layer (physiological and microbiological), and the Ecological Layer (environmental responsibility). The prohibition of *israf* serves as a causal link connecting spirituality with resource sustainability, affirming that external balance is a prerequisite for the practice of *thaharah*. The circular interaction of these three layers ensures that *thaharah* is a self-sufficient and sustainable hygiene system.

The principle of biological hygiene explains that the Theological Layer (the values of the hadith) provides the foundation for the Biological Layer, which encompasses the effects on blood circulation and microbial balance, and the Ecological Layer (wise use of water). This circular interaction culminates in the Bio-Spiritual Balance of Human Spiritual Homeostasis (Alanazi et al., 2025; Arvas & Önder, 2024; Pudyastuti et al., 2024). Within this framework, the hadiths on ablution act as a blueprint for hygienic behavior that has empirical validity in biology and medicine. This principle of biological hygiene broadens the horizon of hadith studies from legal to bio-theological, demonstrating the full integration of Homeostasis and the Unity of Knowledge. Thus, the principles of biological hygiene transform the perspective on the hadith, transforming it into a source of applied knowledge that impacts the balance of body and mind.

The discussion of this research confirms that *thaharah* (purification) cannot be separated from three structured principles of biological hygiene: microbiological, physiological, and neurological. Microbiologically, ablution functions as regular mechanical cleansing, proven to maintain the composition of the skin microbiota and reduce pathogens by 60–80% (Prayekti, 2016). Physiologically, water stimulation triggers a vasodilatory effect that improves peripheral circulation, supporting detoxification and the elimination of metabolic waste. Meanwhile, neurological principles explain that water contact activates somatosensory receptors, triggering a neuro-calming effect (Santoso, 2021). The synergy between these three principles, operating at the microscopic, systemic, and central levels, ensures the achievement of holistic homeostasis, which is the functional goal of Islamic hygiene rituals.

The Three Principles of Biological Hygiene are Biological, Physiological, and Neurological. The most important practical implication of the principle of biological hygiene is the need for its implementation in the Islamic Religious Education (PAI) curriculum through an integrative science approach. This action plan can be realized through a thematic cross-disciplinary approach, where the values of the Hadith on ablution are systematically linked to biological concepts, such as the circulatory system, excretion, and the microbiological ecology of the skin. This integration aims to create meaningful learning so that students understand that religious commands have a real scientific rationale. By presenting ablution as a scientific concept, this research helps overcome resistance to science while strengthening character building through the values of discipline and responsibility. This effort aligns with the goal of modern Islamic education to develop a generation of *ulul albab* (leaders of the Islamic faith).

The scientific mechanism of ablution can be explained through the physiological effects of water. Physiologically, exposure to water on regularly washed skin produces a vasodilatory effect, which widens capillaries and improves peripheral blood circulation (Othman & Ashour, 2025). This increased circulation is crucial for supporting detoxification, facilitating the removal of sweat and metabolic waste from tissues. Neuro-hormonally, the repeated act of washing one's body parts, especially before bed, triggers muscle relaxation and activates the parasympathetic nervous system. This process effectively lowers cortisol (stress) levels and supports homeostatic relaxation. Thus, ablution functions as a neurophysiological intervention that maintains neuro-homeostasis. These effects provide strong scientific justification for why this ritual is prescribed as mental and physical preparation before worship, ensuring the attainment of inner peace.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the meaning of thaharah in the hadiths on ablution has a very strong and structured relevance to the principles of human biological hygiene. Through thematic analysis, three main themes were identified: self-purification as spiritual-physiological maintenance, ablution as a homeostatic mechanism for the body, and cleanliness as an integrative physical-spiritual system. These findings are conceptualized into the principles of biological hygiene, which explain that thaharah is a bio-spiritual purification system that directly supports the body's homeostasis process. The relevance of the hadith to modern biology is evident in the harmony of ablution's function with temperature regulation, skin microbiota balance, and nervous and emotional stability. Overall, this study confirms that Islamic hygiene teachings have a strong biological basis, functioning to maintain the balance of the human body.

The methodological strength of this study lies in the successful application of in-depth qualitative thematic analysis to the hadith texts to uncover their implicit scientific values. The use of the Homeostasis framework and the Theory of Integration of Islamic Knowledge provides strong theoretical support. Theoretically, this study enriches the interdisciplinary discipline of hadith studies and introduces the concept of Bio-ta'dib as a scientific manifestation of spiritual-biological balance. These findings confirm that Islamic teachings on cleanliness are fundamentally aligned with the biological laws that maintain homeostasis. Overall, this study provides scientific validation of revelation, confirms that hadith can be understood as living texts that continue to be relevant to the advancement of modern science, and strengthens the role of hadith as a source of interdisciplinary knowledge.

The main limitation of this study is its qualitative nature (thematic analysis), which focuses on conceptual interpretation and does not involve direct empirical testing or clinical studies of the physiological effects of ablution. Therefore, it is recommended that future research conduct empirical testing of the principles of biological cleanliness through an experimental approach to quantitatively verify the integration between revelation and science. Clinical testing will provide hard science data that strengthens the conceptual findings. Furthermore, there is a need for follow-up in the development of an interdisciplinary Islamic Religious Education curriculum that integrates the values of thaharah with modern scientific concepts. This recommendation aims to strengthen the conceptual findings with practical, applicable evidence, paving the way for hadith studies supported by quantitative scientific data.

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AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

Laila Kamilatul Rahmi: Conceptualization; Project administration; Validation; Writing - review and editing; Conceptualization; Data curation; Investigation.

Lailan Najmi: Data curation; Investigation; Formal analysis; Methodology; Writing - original draft.

Inong Satriadi: Supervision; Validation; Other contribution; Resources; Visualization; Writing - original draft.

CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

No conflict of interest.

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