



**Ishraqi**

P-ISSN : 1412-5722, E-ISSN : Process

Received: 11-01-2025, Revised: 03-03-2025

Accepted: 05-05-2025, Published: 15-06-2025

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.23917/ishraqi.v24i1.10861>

## **The Tradition of Reading Selected Surah (Al-Kahfi, Al-Mulk, Beginning and End of Surah Al-Baqarah) Living Qur'an Study in Majelis Taklim Nurul Huda Ciwastra Bandung**

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### **Abstract**

*The tradition of reading selected letters in the Qur'an, especially Surah Al-Kahfi, Al-Mulk, as well as the beginning and end of Surah Al-Baqarah, at the Nurul Huda Ciwastra Taklim Council in Bandung, is the focus of this study. This research aims to understand how the practice of reading is lived in the daily lives of pilgrims and the meaning contained in it. The method used is qualitative with the Living Qur'an approach, which emphasizes social interaction and cultural context in understanding the Qur'an. Data was collected through observation, interviews with 8 informants, and documentation. The results show that the reading of these letters is not only a ritual of worship, but also a means to strengthen faith, gain blessings, and build social solidarity among community members. The understanding of these letters evolves over time, influenced by life experiences and diverse sources of knowledge, including digital media.*

**Keywords:** Tradition; Qur'an recitation; Living Qur'an; Social.

## Introduction

The Qur'an as a guideline for Muslims is important in daily communication and social interaction [1]. The Qur'an also provides the right alternative, that in worship, we must also consider the element of essence [2]. Islam around the world believes that the Qur'an is an eternal guide to life (*ṣāliḥ liḥayāt al-ḥalīq wa zamān*). As a revelation of Allah SWT which was revealed to the Prophet Muhammad (saw). The Qur'an is the source of law in living human life. It contains instructions from Allah SWT regarding what is right and what is wrong. The biggest challenge for Muslims is how to make the Qur'an function in real life, understand the messages it contains, and disseminate it in the community [3].

In addition to serving as a source of law, the Qur'an is also a holy book that is a guide to life and guidance for Muslims. The Qur'an is not only read, but also studied, believed, and practiced with the aim of achieving happiness in this world and as a guide to happiness in the hereafter [4]. Therefore, the Qur'an is seen as a guide to life and a solution to the various tests that Allah gives to His servants [4]. Most Muslims believe that the Qur'an is a miracle, that is, a holy book whose reading is considered a form of worship and brings rewards. People use the Qur'an as a testament to get something they want, including in terms of health, peace of mind, protection from magic and so on. This shows that the Qur'an occupies an important place in their lives [5].

Religion is an identity that must be possessed by every living and intelligent human being [6]. Muslims accept the Qur'an as a guide for life, the reading of the Qur'an is a daily activity of Muslims commanded by Allah SWT. To receive His blessing [7]. Based on history, the behavior or practices of functioning the Quran have actually occurred since the time of the Prophet PBUH, including when Surah Al-Fatihah was used as a medium to cure diseases through ruqyah and When Surah Al-Mu'awidzatain was read as a rejecter of magic [9]. Muslims certainly believe that reading the Qur'an is a worship that gets rewards [10]. Diverse readings and understandings of the Qur'an can then give birth to diverse behaviors [8]. Thus, behaviors based on this understanding often become a tradition in the Muslim community.

The activity of reading the Qur'an can give rise to a variety of understandings, depending on the capacity of each individual, and from this understanding arises various traditions that reflect the collective response of certain societies or groups to the Qur'an, which is seen through the social behaviors that they build communally [11]. With the advancement of time, the study of the Qur'an is no longer limited to textual analysis alone, but has

evolved towards social and cultural studies, where religious communities are the main focus of research.

This study is known as *the Living Qur'an*. The term Living Qur'an according to M. Mansur departs from the phenomenon of the Qur'an in daily life in society, in other words the Qur'an in everyday life, namely the meaning and function of the Qur'an that is really understood and experienced by the Muslim community [9]. This approach has not been widely discussed in the classical study of Qur'anic sciences, as it focuses on how the Qur'an is applied outside its textual context [10]. In other words, the practice of accepting the Qur'an has been going on since the time of the Prophet Muhammad PBUH until the current contemporary era [14]. Since the time of the Prophet, the Qur'an has been used in a practical context, not just to interpret or analyze the meaning of its language and then practice [15]. Therefore, the form of reception of the Qur'an that has been passed down from generation to generation, especially through oral speech and tangible actions, continues to this day [16]. This pattern of acceptance is very likely to be developed creatively, depending on the process of inheriting knowledge and the form of acceptance carried out, both through text and practice [17].

One of the traditions that is also quite popular is the recitation of surah al-Kahfi and the beginning and end of surah Al-Baqarah. Many Muslims read Surah al-Kahfi because it is believed to have various forms of virtue [18]. Among them are obtaining rewards from Allah, getting light that stretches between two Fridays, being protected from the slander of the Dajjal at the end of time, and gaining peace when reading and practicing it [13]. Meanwhile, reading the beginning and end of Surah Al-Baqarah is believed to bring blessings and protection from the interference of Satan or jinn [12].

In this modern era, various traditions have emerged that reflect the social response of certain communities or groups to the existence of the Qur'an. One example is the routine activities at the Nurul Huda Ciwastra Bandung ta'lim assembly which consistently maintains and carries out the reading of selected papers every night [20]. The letters read include Surah Al-Mulk, Al-Kahfi, the Beginning and End of Surah Al-Baqarah [21]. The tradition of reading selected letters in the Qur'an at the Nurul Huda Ciwastra Taklim Council in Bandung shows a significant role in the spiritual and social life of the pilgrims [22]. The recitation of suras such as Al-Kahfi and Al-Mulk is not only seen as a ritual obligation, but also as a means to obtain blessings and protection from Allah [23]. This activity creates a space for pilgrims to support each other and share understanding, thus strengthening social bonds between them [24].

This research started from the researcher's interest in the tradition of reading these letters which is carried out regularly in mosques and in their respective homes [13]. This activity began after the mothers carried out tahsin learning, then continued by reading the selected letters [25]. Therefore, this study is considered important as part of the treasure of knowledge in understanding the application of the Qur'an in daily life, which is known in the study of Qur'an science as *Living Qur'an*.

## Method

This research is a qualitative research [26] with a *Living Qur'an approach*, which highlights how the Qur'an is lived in the practice of reading selected letters such as Al-Kahfi as well as the beginning and end of Al-Baqarah at Majlis Taklim Nurul Huda Ciwastra Bandung.

The data sources in this study are divided into two categories, namely primary data and secondary data. The primary data in this study is based on interviews conducted with the women of Majlis Taklim Nurul Huda Ciwastra Bandung who are directly involved in the practice of reading selected Surah [27]. Meanwhile, secondary data is obtained from books, scientific articles, journals, and other relevant literature [28],[29]. Data collection techniques are carried out in several ways, namely interviews, observations, and documentation [30],[31]. Interviews and observations were conducted with the women of the Nurul Huda Ciwastra Bandung taklim council who were purposively selected to gain a deeper understanding of the motivations, perceptions, and meaning of Qur'an recitation in their lives [32]. as well as documentation during the activity which included audio recordings and field notes to support the validity of the data and analysis [33].

Data analysis uses a qualitative descriptive method, with the analysis of the theory of *horizon of expectation* from Jauss. This theory explains that the meaning of the verses of the Qur'an is influenced by the background and expectations of the reader, resulting in different receptions [34]. Thus, this study reveals how pilgrims understand, respond, and interpret selected letters that are read regularly in their religious context [35].

## Result

### History of the Reading of Selected Surah (Al-Kahfi, Al-Mulk, Beginning and End of Surah Al Baqarah) in Majelis Ta'lim Nurul Huda Ciwastra

The phenomenon of *living Qur'an* reflects the social response of a community or community group in interpreting the presence of the Qur'an in their lives. One example can be seen in the activities of mothers who every night on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Saturday hold routine activities in the form of reading Surah Al-Kahfi in congregation at the Mosque. This tradition has been going on since 2023, with the aim of obtaining blessings from the verses read [5].

**Table 1.** Aspects of the Tradition of Reading Selected Letters in Majelis Taklim Nurul Huda

Aspects	Information
Readeable Surah	Al-Kahfi (Verse 1–10), Al-Mulk, Al-Baqarah (Verse 1–5, 255–257, 285–286)
Implementation Time	Monday Night, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Saturday (5x/week after Isya)
Place	Nurul Huda Mosque and their respective houses
Initiator	Hj. Neng Setyaandini Sholihat
Purpose of Reading	Getting blessings, protection from slander, peace of mind
Approach	Living Qur'an (people's reception of the Qur'an in daily life)
Method	Interviews, observations, documentation
Participant Understanding	Obtained through tajweed learning, repetition, and digital lectures
Supporting Activities	Tahlilan, marhabanan, manakiban, shalawat Nariyyah
Psychological Benefits	Inner calm, gratitude, self-reflection, strengthening social solidarity

Indonesia, as a country with a majority Muslim population, has a strong foundation in the process of teaching and disseminating Islamic teachings, especially related to the Qur'an. One of the indicators of success in teaching, maintaining the authenticity, and grounding of the Qur'an in the Muslim community is because its maintenance is carried out not only through writing, but also through oral traditions [36]. Muslims in Indonesia show their commitment to the Qur'an by reading it consistently in their daily lives. This

activity of reading the Qur'an has become part of the tradition which is understood as a form of worship or practice in various life activities [37].

**Tabel 2.** Frequency of Letter Reading by Jamaah

Surah	Frequency (per week)	Spiritual Function
Surah Al-Kahfi	2x (Thursday & Friday)	Protection from the slander of the Dajjal, the light of Friday
Surah Al-Mulk	1x (Friday night)	Savior in the grave
Surah Al-Baqarah	5x (every night Isya)	Protection from jinn, inner peace

The tradition of reading Surah Al-Mulk, Al-Kahfi, Beginning and End of Surah Al-Baqarah at the Nurul Huda Ciwastra Mosque in Bandung, began with the role of a chairman of the ta'lim council who was the pioneer of the birth of this custom, namely Mrs. Hj. Neng Setyaandini Sholihat. He explained how this tradition first began. Previously, he had received a diploma to read the letters from his teacher, it was stated that Surah Al-Kahfi (verses 1-10) was believed to be able to provide light between the 2 Fridays and protect against the slander of the dajjal. Surah Al-Mulk is believed to be a light in the grave [38]. Surah Al-Baqarah (verses 1-5,255-257,285-286) is believed to be a protection from the interference of the jinn and the devil, as well as a calming heart [39]. As stated by the chairman of the Taklim Council Nurul Huda:

*"Many people say that we should practice the letters in the Qur'an because it means that it is really meaningful. For example, if we read Al-Kahfi verses 1-10, there are many virtues that we can get. We can be protected from the slander of the Dajjal, get light between the two Fridays, and also our sins are forgiven between the two Fridays. This is all in accordance with the direction of the teachers."*[19].

As for the explanation of Surah Al-Kahfi, namely, this surah belongs to the group of Makkiyah surahs, even though some verses, namely verses 38 and verses 83 to 110, were revealed in Medina, so they are classified as Madaniyah verses. This surah consists of 110 verses and was revealed after Surah Al-Ghasyiyah. In the order of mushaf, this surah is after Surah Al-Isra', precisely as the 18th surah [41]. The name *Al-Kahfi*, which means "cave", is taken from the story of a group of young men who escaped the pressure and oppression of the rulers of the time by hiding in a cave, where they slept for hundreds of years. The name of this surah has been known since the time of the Prophet PBUH, even he himself named it that way [42].

## Mothers' Understanding of Surah Al-Kahfi, Al-Mulk, and Al-Baqarah

The recitation mothers understand the letters through a gradual process that includes collective practice in the taklim assembly, tajweed and makhraj learning, and repetition at home. Their understanding was obtained from the guidance of ngaji teachers (Hj. Neng Setyaandini Sholihat, Hj. Ade, etc.). As expressed by one of the participants of the taklim assembly:

*"Usually it is read while learning tajweed and makhraj letters. The letter was read together, then after all participants read, it was continued with tajweed learning. It is all taught and guided by Mrs. Hajj (Neng Setyaandini Sholihat) or others who already understand tajweed and makhraj"* [43]

Surah Al-Kahfi (verses 1–10) is understood to have the virtue of protection from the slander of the Dajjal and the light between the two Fridays. Surah Al-Mulk is believed to be a savior in the grave, while parts of Surah Al-Baqarah are believed to be a protector from the interference of jinn and devils as well as a provider of inner peace. As said by some participants of the routine recitation Majelis Taklim Nurul Huda :

*"In our opinion, reading Surah Al-Kahfi, Al-Mulk, and parts of Al-Baqarah is very important, because each surah has its own virtues. For example, Surah Al-Kahfi can protect us from the slander of the Dajjal and provide light between the two Fridays, while Surah Al-Mulk is believed to be a savior in the grave. In addition, part of Surah Al-Baqarah also serves as a protector from the interference of jinn and demons, as well as providing inner peace. So, practicing these letters is not only worship, but also a form of protection and serenity in our lives"* [44]

The women of the recitation pilgrims, especially those who are members of the evening and evening prayer activities, show a fairly deep understanding of selected letters such as Al-Kahfi, Al-Mulk, and the beginning and end of the letter Al-Baqarah. This understanding is not only based on regular reading, but also a joint learning process that involves tadabbur, translation, and the study of makhraj and tajweed. Some of the speakers stated that these letters were read repeatedly, even outside the assembly. As said by the participant of the Taklim Council Nurul Huda:

*"It is always read, both when it is in the assembly and at home. At home, we usually also read the letters while discussing their meaning. Mothers usually have their own Qur'an, both at home and in the assembly. So, if there is no activity in the assembly anymore, they can still read at home"* [43]

These letters were chosen not only because of ritual demands, but because they are believed to have fadhilah (virtues), such as protection from the slander of the Dajjal, illumination in the grave, and peace of mind. One of the informants said that reading the beginning and end of the letter Al-Baqarah is part of an effort to illuminate the nature of the grave, while Al-Kahfi is read every night to avoid the slander of the world and the hereafter. There are also those who interpret the reading of these letters as a form of gratitude and an effort to strengthen faith in daily life.

The understanding of the letters of the Qur'an by the mothers in the recitation is formed through repetition and recitation together, the repetition of the verses is carried out in congregation in the recitation assembly. This is in line with the theory that the understanding of religious texts can be strengthened through repetition carried out in the community [45].

## Motivation and Reading Practice

Reading motivations include spirituality (divine protection, reward, calm), social (preparation of tahlilan, recitation), and psychological (time filler, inner therapy). The recitation is done five times a week after the Isha prayer, and on Friday evening the recitation of Surah Al-Kahfi and Al-Mulk is the main focus. If they cannot attend the assembly, they continue to read privately at home. As expressed by several participants of the Nuruh Huda Taklim Council:

*"For example, if the mothers are unable to attend recitations or assemblies, they usually continue their own recitation activities at home. So, even though they do not meet in person with friends or teachers at the assembly, they still maintain the consistency of reading and studying the Qur'an at home so that they do not miss out and still get the benefits"[46]*

This ritual has been going on since 2023 and is guided by a local figure, Hj. Neng Setyaandini Sholihat. The reading pattern includes the first and final verses of Surah Al-Baqarah, the verse of the chair, Surah Al-Kahfi the first 10 verses, and Surah Al-Mulk in full. This activity is often accompanied by the practice of tahlilan, marhabanan, manakiban, and the recitation of Nariyyah prayers. As expressed by several participants of the Nuruh Huda Taklim Council:

*"So, the activity is carried out five times a week every night after the Isha prayer, starting from 2023. Initially, this activity was initiated by Mrs. Haji. For the reading, it starts with the first 10 verses of Surah Al-Kahfi, then continues with the beginning part of Surah Al-Baqarah, continues with the Verse of the Chair, then the beginning and end of Surah Al-Baqarah, and closes with Surah Al-Mulk."[44]*



Although the reading activity is carried out almost every night after the Isha prayer in congregation. This tradition has been going on since 2023 and was initiated by Hj. Neng Setyaandini Sholihat as the chairman of the assembly. The main reading is carried out in groups, the mothers also read it privately at home when they are unable to attend the assembly. Some even say that "*ari anu ngaos di majlis mah panginten sok ngaos di bumi*," indicating that this habit has become part of their personal spiritual routine [47].

The reading is carried out in congregation with a tartil approach and tajweed rules that are taught in stages. Mispronunciation errors are often corrected together, creating a process of collective introspection. In addition, learning makhraj letters strengthens technical competence in reading the Qur'an. This is in line with the idea of Living Qur'an as a practice that unites the dimension of ritual with pedagogy, where technical skills in reading become the door to a deeper spiritual understanding [48].

This activity is also often combined with other traditions such as tahlilan, marhabanan, the recitation of Sholawat Nariyyah 4444 times every Friday, as well as manakiban in the tradition of Thariqah Qadiriyyah Naqsyabandiyah. This activity strengthens the social dimension of the reading of the Qur'an and strengthens the sense of togetherness and solidarity between members of the congregation. The learning carried out in this assembly also creates a supportive atmosphere, where each participant feels empowered and can share understanding. [49].

## Emotional and Spiritual Response

In the collective reading, mothers experience deep reflection: gratitude, self-introspection, and inner peace. Reading errors are corrected together, forming an active learning process. The recitation is done in a conducive atmosphere (at night), reinforcing the spiritual presence of the verses being read.

The emotional response felt by mothers when reading these letters is generally in the form of inner peace, gratitude, and self-introspection. This reading is not only considered a physical activity, but as a form that deepens their relationship with God. These activities have a positive effect on each individual [50]. The reading of these letters became a form of effort that was not only expected to bring worldly benefits, but also as a provision for their hereafter [51]. As expressed by several participants of the Taklim Council, Nurul Huda and also the chairman of the Majlis Taklim.

*"It feels like reading the Qur'an is very soothing to the heart and mind. Whenever I don't read the Qur'an, there is a feeling like something is missing or*

*missing in my daily life. So, reading the Qur'an is not just a routine, but it really gives me calm and makes me feel spiritually complete."* [43]

Then according to the chairman Majelis Taklim Nurul Huda :

*"I feel grateful because it can be done in congregation with other mothers, because if you read it yourself at home, there are quite a few distractions, whether from children or so on, while in the mosque you can be more solemn in reading it"* [40]

Some informants stated that reading in congregation allows corrections if there are errors in reading. This shows that reading is not only ritual but also a means of learning together. One of the informants said, *"If you don't read the Qur'an, it feels like something is missing [ 30].*

Mothers also feel more confident, valued in the community, and have an emotional connection to the letters. The Qur'an in this case has become a source of life force, not just a daily reading.

## **Surah Selection and Perception of Its Virtues**

The selection of these papers departs from a gradual process. Previously, mothers read short letters such as An-Naba and Al-Waqi'ah, then switched to Al-Kahfi and other surah which were considered more "easy" in terms of pronunciation and were often used in religious events. This shows that there is a functional understanding of the verses of the Qur'an that are often found in the daily lives of Muslims [44]. As expressed by several participants of the Nurul Huda Taklim Council:

*"So, previously, the process of learning these letters began gradually. We start from the recitation of Surah An-Naba, then progress to Surah Al-Waqiah, and finally to these letters. These letters feel easier because the letters are easy to remember, so when I read them, I feel more proficient in them and gain more knowledge. In addition, these verses are often read at various events or other places, so because they are practiced every day, I am more familiar and comfortable with them."*

The selection of letters is also influenced by the blessings that are believed to have been felt in real terms. For example, some mothers believe that by istiqamah reading these letters, they get sustenance in the form of ease in leaving for Umrah, or peace in living life.

## Responses to People Who Don't Read Regularly

The mothers showed an inclusive and non-judgmental attitude towards those who did not read regularly. They prioritize a persuasive approach and da'wah bil hikmah. Some mothers admitted that they still try to invite by giving examples and sharing stories about the virtues of letters

Some mothers respond with a tolerant attitude towards others who have not regularly read these letters. They revealed that whether or not a person reads depends on their personal awareness. However, they still try to invite and pray so that the people around them also get guidance and the willingness to recite. As expressed by the chairman of the Taklim Council, Nurul Huda,:

*"The response is that it cannot be forced, but we have tried to invite and share knowledge about the many virtues, but indeed the response of the community is different."*[40]

The answers from some participants when asked about the response to people who do not read regularly or have not read the Qur'an are not far as said by the chairman of the Taklim Council Nurul Huda. As answered by Mrs. Anis and Enci:

*"It goes back to each other's practices. We can't force it. Inviting people to pray is always done, but everyone has a different busyness. So it is returned to each individual."*[43]

This attitude reflects the value of internal tolerance and the awareness that everyone's spiritual process is different. They also recognize that domestic and social barriers can hinder a person's consistency in practicing the elective papers.

## Changes in Meaning and Sources of Knowledge

Knowledge about the virtues of letters comes from a combination of local authorities (Hj. Neng Setyaandini Sholihat, H. Lili Assidiqy), the book of Majmu' Syarif, and digital media (YouTube, TikTok). This shows the integration between traditional and modern sources, where religious authority is side by side with contemporary da'wah media

Some of the sources said that their understanding of the letters increased over time. At first, they read only based on the teacher's recommendation or follow along, but gradually they began to understand its meaning, especially after reading translations or watching lectures from ustadz such as Ustadz Adi Hidayat or studies from social media such as TikTok. This shows that there is a process of active reception of the Qur'an through various media and

contemporary learning resources. As expressed by some participants Majelis Taklim Nurul Huda:

*"At first, I read the letters only because of the recommendation of the teacher or just following my friends. But over time, I began to understand its meaning more, especially after I started reading the translations myself and also often watched lectures from ustadz such as Ustadz Adi Hidayat or participated in studies on social media such as TikTok. From there, my understanding became deeper and I felt closer to the contents of the letters."*[44]

Initially, some mothers followed the readings because of their encouragement or follow-along, but as time went by and the routine went by, their understanding grew. For example, reading Surah Al-Kahfi was initially only because of the belief in its fadhilah, but later it became a field of spiritual reflection and a source of peace of soul. This shows that their interpretation of the letters is dynamic and contextual, in accordance with Hans Robert Jauss's theory of Horizon of Expectation

The change in meaning is also influenced by life experiences. For example, Surah Al-Baqarah becomes more meaningful when experiencing disasters. Online lectures broaden the horizons of meaning and strengthen their emotional connection to the verses being read.

## Conclusion

This study reveals that the tradition of reading selected letters in the Qur'an, such as Al-Kahfi, Al-Mulk, and the beginning and end of Surat Al-Baqarah, which is carried out regularly by the congregation of the Nurul Huda Ciwastra Taklim Council in Bandung, plays an important role in the spiritual, psychological, and social aspects of the pilgrims' lives. This practice is not only carried out as a religious ritual, but has developed into a means to build community solidarity, strengthen faith, and provide inner peace for its members.

The results of the study show that this activity functions as a form of real application of the *Living Qur'an approach*, where the holy verses of the Qur'an are not only read as texts, but also lived and interpreted according to the context of the daily life of the pilgrims. The process of interpretation occurs through collective interaction, repetition of recitations in congregation, learning tajweed and makhraj letters, and supported by digital media such as online lectures from religious leaders. Pilgrims are actively developing an understanding of the virtues of these letters, both traditionally through ngaji teachers and through contemporary media such as YouTube and TikTok.

From a spiritual aspect, the reading of these selected letters helps pilgrims feel close to Allah, cultivate gratitude, and deepen the meaning of worship in daily life. The psychological aspect is also very prominent, with many pilgrims reporting that this activity provides inner peace, helps manage stress, and is a means of self-reflection. Socially, this tradition is a binding medium between community members. With regular readings, the women of worshippers feel that they have a safe and supportive space, and are more motivated to continue to be involved in religious activities.

Therefore, further research is recommended to extend the object of study to other Muslim communities with different social and cultural backgrounds, in order to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the practice of *Living Qur'an* in various contexts of Indonesian society. In addition, it is important to examine more deeply the role of the younger generation in maintaining the sustainability of the tradition, as well as evaluate the long-term impact of Qur'an recitation activities on mental health and the quality of social relationships between community members.

### Author's Contributions

**E. Siti Qoriatusholihat:** Conceptualization, Methodology, Writing - review and editing, Supervision, Project administration. **Dewi Luthfiyatul Hilawa:** Methodology, Writing - analysis and editing, Investigation. **Faris Abdullah & Haikal Ali Al Ghifary:** Conceptualization, Methodology, Writing - analysis and editing, Investigation.

### Acknowledgments

We would like to thank UIN Sunan Gunung Djati and the anonymous reviewers for all the valuable inputs that have been provided in the preparation of this article.

### Conflict of Interest Statement

The author states that there is no conflict of interest in this study.

### Funding

The Research study did not receive any financial support.

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