Available online at: http://ijer.ftk.uinjambi.ac.id/index.php/ijer
IJER (Special Edition)
The 3rd International Conference on Education (Icon 2023)
Vol.8 No.3 (103-111)

A New Vocational Education Marketing Mix in Indonesia

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Abstract

Based on the experience of vocational high school students, this article aims to present a new marketing mix. Opinions and perspectives on vocational high school marketing efforts in Indonesia. In their attempt to attract students to vocational education, the vocational educational market becomes increasingly aggressive. Over the years, conventional marketing tools grouped into four P (product, price, location, promotion), and 5 P (adding people), and 7P (adding processes and facilities physically). This tool may be short on the market today. This method uses a quantitative survey of vocational school students in the city of Cirebon. Finding: The factor data analyzed showed seven very different key factors in marketing these vocational high school activities. Some of these factors include traditional integration elements of marketing such as people, promotions, and prices. Nevertheless, there are four different components: program, excellence, prospectus, and premium. This study only looked at small and medium-sized students in the city of Cirebon. However, the results suggest that, as initially assumed, the marketing of this mixed traditional service may not benefit the vocational secondary education sector. With this 7P, the development of marketing strategies can be done better.

Keywords*: Marketing, Vocational High School, Stakeholders, Marketing Mix*

1. Introduction

The number of vocational school graduates continues to increase every year, and the provider of tuition fees also continues to increase. There is a government policy to close up high schools and open up more vocational schools, making competition between public and private high schools escalate (Widodo et al., 2020). Marketing is becoming more important in student admission as there are more vocational school choices to choose from (Blakcori & Sullivan, 2019; Raj et al., 2013). In these circumstances, many vocational education institutions have experienced a decline in the number of students enrolled (Chen, 2020). It has raised awareness of the importance of using marketing strategies in the student recruitment process (Kay et al., 2018; Bapat, G., & Gankar, 2020).

The more vocational school options available to students, making decisions about which school they will choose becomes more difficult, and it takes longer for prospective students to see competing vocational school choices. According to James et al., (2019), perceptions of both vocational school offerings and imagery should be monitored. Although the collection and evaluation of information about vocational schools is important, vocations provide only some information that will help prospective students make a better impression of the vocational school. Publications in the media also affect student choices. As many vocational schools' face increasing financial pressures and increasing competition, it becomes important for them to promote.

Marketing in vocational education is nothing new. Many authors have recognized how important marketing is in student recruitment (Lukić & Lukić, 2016). Study programs are more likely to be successful when vocational high schools provide capabilities that meet students' needs, distribute educational costs in accordance with student expectations, provide data that can be used to make decisions about the choice of qualifications, and price programs according to student expectations. The tools mentioned here are the most basic components of the marketing mix, namely, products, prices, locations, and promotions used by institutions to increase student enrollment.

Institutions use mixed marketing strategies to get the desired response from their various target markets. It covers everything that an educational institution can do

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to change the demand for the services it offers. Manufacturers use the 4P model traditionally, while service providers use the 7P approach to meet the needs of their customers. It includes products, prices, locations, promotions, people, physical facilities, and processes. The curriculum must be created and adapted appropriately to meet students' needs.

The product is what is sold. It's more than just a complex collection of features and benefit bundles that meet customer needs. What is sold in vocational high schools is still up for debate. What is sold in vocational high schools is still up for debate. Some argue that students who enroll to acquire skills and expertise are the raw material of education; graduates are the product, and employers are the customers. Although this argument is correct, companies rarely pay for graduates to attend vocational high schools. Instead, far more often, students pay tuition fees at vocational high schools to get the services and skills they expect. Thus, students are considered consumers and have product expertise. One of the main components of the product marketing mix is expertise. The duration of the program also impacts the choice of vocational high school.

Tuition fees or skills required to enroll in a vocational high school. These are the main factors in determining prices in integrated service marketing. Pricing influences vocational high school revenues and students' perceptions of quality. The cost of education can impact students' ability to enroll in vocational high schools (Thomsen & Haaren-Giebel, 2016). Some researchers have found a direct relationship between tuition costs and demand for skills (Rolfe, 2001; Chapman et al., 2008). Vocational high schools are expected to finance themselves without government budget support. Many vocational high schools established in this way are also expected to contribute to the school's finances and provide cross-subsidies for other vocational school activities. Therefore, pricing is a very important component in the daily operations of many vocational high schools.

Vocational high schools use the place distribution method to distribute tuition fees to the market by fulfilling student expectations. Alternative educational methods develop significantly. Students and teachers can now get the information they need to fulfill educational requirements without being confined to the classroom. Access to lecture materials increases through virtual learning media, such as Zoom and Google Meet. Distance learning opportunities also expand through block release, email, web, video and teleconferencing options, and most recently, pod-casts.

Promotion includes all the tools that a vocational high school can use to provide the market with information about its offer: advertising, publicity, public relations, and sales promotion efforts. Using a prospectus or school website alone is not effective considering the diversity of society that vocational high schools must communicate with. Different elements are used for different demographics. Certain societal groups, such as prospective students, are so important that they are given a number of promotional tools for admission. Schools use a variety of tools, including open days, vocational education fairs, conventions, direct mail, and advertising, to inform and inspire prospective students to choose their institution.

The intangible nature of services results in the addition of another element, namely humans. Marketing mix involves all vocational high school staff interacting with prospective students, even after they have enrolled. It's possible they are academic, administrative, or support employees. Students' perceptions of instructors' reputations can play an important role in the process of selecting students in vocational high schools. However, the role of academic staff image and status in student recruitment is still debated (Jung, 2020; Foroudi et al., 2018). For example, the number of academic staff with master's degrees may influence some students, while the public profile of academics may influence others. In terms of administrative and academic support, there has been major progress in the provision of secondary education services. This impacts how students view service quality. According to McGrath-Champ (2001), there is no element more important than selecting people for positions in vocational high schools. In this opinion, simply addressing questions over the phone may have a greater impact than a reputable publication or research note.

In addition to physical evidence, processes and physical evidence are a tangible part of the service offering. The target market for a vocational high school looks at various real elements, starting from teaching materials to the appearance of the building and educational facilities at the vocational high school.

However, the process covers all the bureaucratic and administrative functions of vocational high schools, from handling inquiries to registration, educational evaluation to exams, results dissemination to graduation, and much more. Vocational high school education requires payment before “consumption”, no exchange of ownership, and often a longer and closer face-to-face relationship. This is different from purchasing tangible products that are owned and then taken home by customers to consume. To gain expertise, vocational high school students must attend classes for at least three years. During the student registration period, processes need to be in place to ensure that the student is

registering for the correct education, has the grades correctly calculated and entered into the student's name, and is ultimately awarded the correct qualifications. While this may seem straightforward, there are many other processes that need to be implemented simultaneously (with financial, accommodation, time management, and library systems) to ensure the highest level of student satisfaction.

2. Method

The aim of this study was to determine whether students use traditional marketing mix services when choosing a vocational high school. Might there be a different underlying framework if the service mix was not used in the same way when selecting a business school as other service sector organizations? In other vocational high schools, researchers distributed questionnaires to students entering or leaving vocational high schools.

A cross-sectional study was conducted on more than 500 newly enrolled vocational high school students in Cirebon City to measure their perceptions of the different marketing tools they faced when choosing a vocational high school. 12 vocational high schools received self-completion questionnaires. In other vocational high schools, researchers distributed questionnaires to students entering or leaving vocational high schools. 1,450 questionnaires were distributed personally or through school principals. A response rate of 35% was considered satisfactory for a self-completed questionnaire, and a response rate of 15% was considered normal (Rolstad et al., 2011).

To measure attitudes towards twenty-five different marketing tools, covering all the main components of the traditional services marketing mix, a highly structured questionnaire was created using a five-point Likert scale. In addition, various standard and demographic factors were measured. The Likert scale produced consistent results if measurements were carried out repeatedly, as measured by Cronbach's alpha. Coefficients above 0.7 were considered normal, and coefficients above 0.8 were considered good (Rolstad et al., 2011). In this survey, the 25 marketing items had a Cronbach's alpha of 0.903. Any variables that might not correspond to other variables could be identified using item-to-total correlations. In this study, all items had significant correlations with the total, indicating a high level of internal consistency.

3. Results and Discussion

Factor analysis survey results are an interdependence technique that is generally used to discover the main dimensions (or factors) that explain the correlation between a number of measured and interrelated variables. This study used factor analysis to identify the basic relationships or structures between twenty-five marketing tools that vocational high school students value regarding vocational school selection. This study used factor analysis to identify the basic relationships or structures between twenty-five marketing tools that vocational high school students value regarding vocational school selection—many of which may be highly correlated with each other— Factor analysis was used as a data reduction technique to combine a large number of variables – into a smaller set of factors that were easier to analyze.

Principal component factor analysis grouped highly correlated variables into the same independent factor. Eigenvalues, also known as latent roots, were widely used to determine how many factors to create. Standard limits in factor analysis required an eigenvalue of 1.0, meaning that each factor created could account for more than the variance of one variable. Only factors with eigenvalues above 1.0 were considered effectively significant. According to Santoso & Istiyono (2022) and Zeynivandnezhad et al., (2019), if there are more than 20 variables, eigenvalues can be used to determine the most reliable factors. Therefore, a seven-factor solution, which accounted for 61.3% of the variance, was generated through the use of the eigenvalue method.

Table 1 showed the seven factors derived from the 7P vocational school marketing mix, and Figure 1 showed the variables that made up each element mix. This was done using principal component factor extraction and varimax rotation.

a. 7P vocational school marketing mix

The names for the seven factors were chosen intuitively based on the suitability of the labels to represent each variable included in the factors. The variable with the highest loading on the factor was considered the most important, so that variable had the greatest influence on the choice of factor name. In this factor solution, for example, the promotion factor was named after the variables that measured media communication, publicity, and advertising. However, the labels “tuition fees” and “education fee payment management” were the source.

b. Premiums

Premiums are items that provide incentives or increase the value of an item. The premium factor here consisted of seven unrelated tools and increased the value of the Vocational High School offer in the view of prospective vocational school students. These tools include “availability of accommodation at school” (loading 1/4 0.733), “number of subjects” (loading 1/4 0.570), “diversity of enrolled students” (loading 1/4

0.523), “place requirements stay for skills” (loading ¼ 0:520), and “vocational school class size” (loading ¼ 0:414). Cronbach's alpha of 0.856 indicated a very strong factor.

Table 1. Marketing Tool Factors

Variable	Premium	Prominence	Promotion	Price	Programme	Prospectus	People
Availability of on-school accommodation	0.733	0.035	0.179	0.055	20.012	0.151	0.010
Total number of credits for the degree	0.570	0.078	0.266	0.280	0.227	0.209	0.194
Student exchange opportunities provided	0.566	0.413	0.267	20.023	0.136	20.088	0.152
Availability of computer laboratories	0.523	0.335	0.082	0.205	0.133	20.019	0.328
The racial diversity of the students in the degree	0.519	0.167	0.056	0.151	0.236	0.310	0.137
The residential requirements of the programme	0.513	0.040	0.256	0.348	20.018	0.195	20.117
The size of the vocational classes	0.415	0.461	0.072	0.126	0.221	0.178	0.189
The reputation of school staff	20.002	0.759	0.126	0.046	20.053	0.246	0.178
Reviews such as the “Best expertise report” or “Expertise survey”	0.291	0.712	0.095	0.174	0.097	20.081	20.005
Information on the institution’s web site	0.028	0.567	0.225	0.228	0.235	0.269	0.017
Advertising in the local press	0.115	0.051	0.806	0.068	0.063	0.058	0.078
Publicity you saw for academic staff research	0.215	0.311	0.658	0.022	0.254	0.034	0.086
Electronic media marketing communications	0.368	0.294	0.498	0.257	0.127	0.215	0.054
Availability of financial aid	0.235	0.064	0.451	0.195	20.105	0.228	0.324
The flexibility of payment arrangements of tuition fees	0.313	0.1172	0.174	0.736	0.101	0.079	0.057
The tuition fees of expertise	0.291	0.202	0.046	0.726	0.016	0.093	20.093
The flexible tuition approach	20.363	0.014	0.134	0.577	0.284	20.017	0.206
The duration of the programme	0.298	0.190	20.172	0.408	20.097	0.468	0.221
The range of electives in the degree	0.110	0.197	0.079	0.014	0.811	0.145	0.033
The choice of “majors” in the degree	0.122	0.009	0.131	0.165	0.790	0.268	0.095
The expertise prospectus	0.148	0.098	0.085	20.018	0.247	0.733	0.068
Direct mail received	0.126	0.142	0.247	0.154	0.287	0.606	20.001
Providing face-to-face tuition where I live	0.003	0.064	0.175	20.076	0.018	0.154	0.805
Personal contact with expertise graduates	0.350	0.301	20.127	0.170	0.226	20.214	0.486
Open days and information evenings I attended	0.375	0.165	0.308	0.172	0.205	0.039	0.432
Eigen value	7.789	1.622	1.425	1.294	1.143	1.047	1.000
Percent of variance	31.2	6.5	5.7	4.2	4.6	4.2	4.0
Cumulative percent of variance	**31.2**	**37.6**	**43.3**	**48.5**	**53.1**	**57.3**	**61.3**

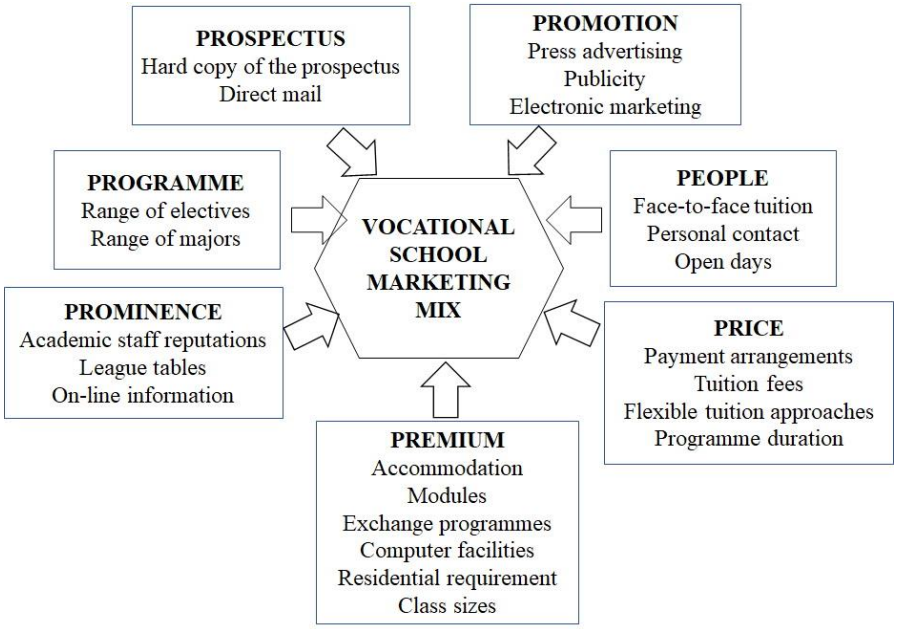

Figure 1. The Vocational School Marketing Mix

c. Prominence

For many years, vocational high schools used their image for student recruitment, which showed how important this was. The reputation of academic and vocational staff through leagues or press reviews dominated the excellence factor (loading 1/4 0:758). The third variable added, the institution's website (loading 1/4 of 0:566), was less clear. Someone could only imagine that the content and sophistication of an institution's website may be more closely tied to that institution's reputation and status. This was especially true for articles such as financial press league tables that could be added to a website and updated on research results and new employee recruitment. Like the premium factor, the superiority factor was also very strong, with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.761 and item-to-total correlation coefficients all exceeding 0.7.

d. Promotion

Vocational school marketing is divided into two parts: traditional advertising in the media and direct advertising. Prospectuses and brochures were included in their own components, while the traditional elements of the vocational school marketing mix were traditional press advertising (loading 1/4 0:805), publicity (loading 1/4 0:657), and electronic media (loading 1/4 0:497). Other vocational school elements mix had an acceptable Cronbach's alpha of 0.829, and an item-to-total correlation higher than 0.75 indicated the promotion element had high reliability.

e. Prospectus

The prospectus (loading 1⁄4 0:734) and vocational high school direct mail (loading 1⁄4 0:606) are the two main components of the prospectus. The third variable, "course duration", was included in the unclear factor (loading 1/4 0.469). The partial validity test placed the program duration variable on two different factors. In contrast, prospectus and direct mail variables were always paired. In addition to the low correlation between the items and the overall "program duration" variable, this showed that this variable had the potential to be included in program elements. Although the "program duration" variable was not well positioned, Cronbach's alpha of 0.772 suggested that there was a possible factor.

f. Price

The price element of the vocational school marketing mix was dominated by the flexibility of paying school fees (loading ¼ 0:737) and vocational school fees (0.725). The third variable in this factor (which also had a relatively low item-to-total correlation of 0.564) was the flexibility of the tuition fee approach. Although not directly related to costs, it may be related to opportunity costs, where students "paid the price" for giving up work to study full-time or family and social contacts to study vocationally. Although the loading and item scores on the total of this variable were lower, the factor as a whole had a high level of reliability with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.800.

g. Program

There were only two variables that made up this factor. Both were very closely related to the product elements in integrated services: range of major choices

(loading ¼ 0:811) and major choices (loading ¼ 0:791). Cronbach's alpha was at an acceptable level of 0.895, and the item-to-total correlation coefficient was 0.9.

h. People

This factor is not the same as what is expected of elements of society in the service sector. The vocational school marketing mix included "providing face-to-face education costs where I live" (loading ¼ 0:806), "personal contact with vocational school graduates" (loading ¼ 0:485), and "open days and information evenings" (loading ¼ 0 :413). With the exception of possible contact with vocational high school graduates (or alumni), the other two variables could be found in other service elements mix, face-to-face tuition provision may be more appropriately included in the place element of the service mix. Open day in promotion. Despite these possible differences, the factor appeared to be valid with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.735.

For each factor, a solution with a high Cronbach's alpha score was developed. In the process of selecting a vocational school to enroll in, the underlying structure of vocational education marketing must now be linked to how important each element is to vocational school students. Figure 2 shows how important each component of the vocational school marketing mix is in the student selection process. Five of the seven vocational school marketing mix elements have scores greater than the midpoint on the five-point Likert scale: program (mean ¼ 3:7; SD ¼ 0:96), excellence (mean ¼ 3:6; SD ¼ 0:93), price (mean ¼ 3:53; SD ¼ 0:93) , prospectus (mean ¼ 3:5; SD ¼ 0:85), and person (mean ¼ 3:2, SD ¼ 0:94). Although the other two elements are less important, namely promotion (mean ¼ 2:6; SD ¼ 0:96) and premium (mean ¼ 2:6; SD ¼ 0:91), vocational schools must be careful to ensure that these elements are not overly important. It is possible that accommodation for some students, especially those studying part-time, may not be an important aspect; however, this cannot be said for all students. Likewise, some variables in the premium factor may be considered "normal" in vocational schools; for example, not offering students access to a computer laboratory may come as a surprise to many students and is considered very important to some students in their selection process (Akomolafe1 & Adesua, 2016).

The items that form the program elements mix are considered the most important by many researchers (Badi, 2018; Singh, 2012; Tahir et al., 2017). The importance of program elements is clear: not offering prospective students the right skills program with an appropriate curriculum is unlikely to attract students to enroll.

Excellence is measured as "good teaching reputation" by Waluyo et al., (2021) and is the fourth most important tool of the 87 items measured. Aspects of institutional image are highly rated in a number of studies (Grunig, 1997; Qazi et al., 2021; Mahajan & Patil, 2021 Ma'rifah & Sinaga, 2023). Binsardi, A. & Ekwulugo (2003) found that "standards of education and qualifications recognized throughout the world" was the variable with the highest ranking.

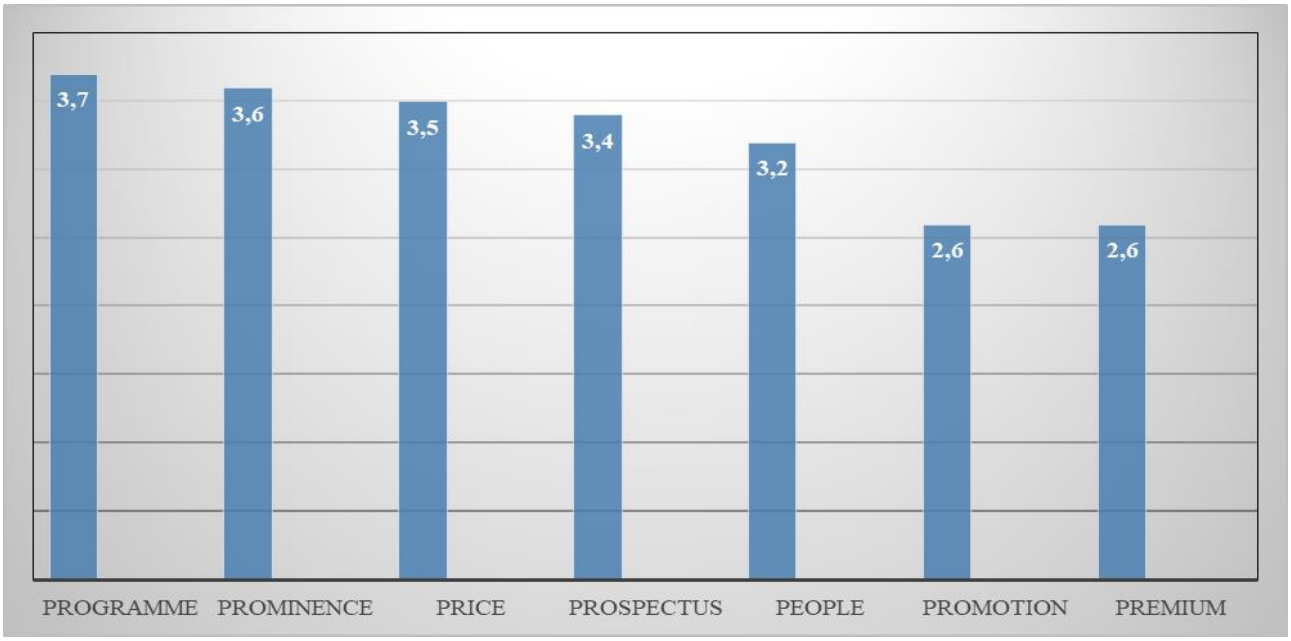

Figure 2. Importance of Each Element of The Business School Marketing Mix

The pricing element in the marketing mix at the vocational high school level has always been important in students' decisions to return to full-time studies. Mousumi, M.A. and Kusakabe (2022) and Chaturvedi (2021) found that future income also plays an important role in prospective students' personal reasons for returning to full-time education. BMRB found that education costs were the second highest-rated item.

The premium "all-inclusive" element was the least important among vocational school students. Given that all of these respondents had work experience and were older than secondary school students, it can be expected that some of the items that make up this tool are not very important. Accommodation in this study is not very important, but Binsardi, A. & Ekwulugo (2003) and Wahyudi et al., (2023) found that for vocational high school students, accommodation is a very important aspect in influencing student choices.

4. Conclusion

The findings of this research indicate that the traditional 4-, 5-, and 7P marketing services marketing mix may not be the best way to approach marketing vocational high school programs in Indonesia. Using principal component factor analysis on 25 commonly used marketing tools revealed four distinct and independent new elements along with three elements from the traditional marketing mix.

The seven-factor solution accounted for more than 60 percent of the variance, and by using a split-half approach to test validity and Cronbach's alpha and item-to-total correlation to test reliability, the resulting solution is very strong.

The new program elements of the new marketing mix consist of aspects related to the vocational high school curriculum and are the most important elements of the marketing mix. Title excellence is the second-most important element. These factors are dominated by the reputation of academic staff, position in league tables, or reviews of vocational high schools in popular media.

The traditional promotional elements of the marketing mix are divided into two areas: standard mass media advertising (promotion in the marketing mix of this vocational high school); promotional materials in printed form, such as school prospectuses and direct mail sent to prospective students, are called prospectuses in the vocational high school marketing mix.

The mix pricing elements are unchanged from the traditional mix. However, elements of society have undergone slight changes, including face-to-face teaching, personal contact with graduates, and open-day attendance. The final element of the new marketing mix is called premium. This is a multifaceted element, including accommodation, the number of modules in the degree, the student exchange program, school computer facilities, and class size. Although these elements are considered the least important marketing tools, some of them can seriously damage a vocational school's recruiting prospects. Indeed, some items will be considered standard vocational high school offerings and expected by students without further consideration or evaluation.

5. Acknowledgement

This article was written by Asep Kurniawan and Jamaluddin based on the results of independently funded research. The content is the sole responsibility of the author. We would like to take this chance to thank you for your work as a reviewer and your skill. We were able to complete the project on time and according to peer-reviewed journal standards thanks to your assistance

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