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DIGITAL SERVICE IMPLEMENTATION GAPS IN LONG HUBUNG ULU VILLAGE: A DOCUMENT-BASED CASE STUDY

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Abstract

This study aims to analyze the implementation of digital services in Long Hubung Ulu Village, Mahakam Ulu Regency, East Kalimantan, by examining documented conditions of digital infrastructure, administrative capacity, citizen-facing service processes, and gaps between development priorities and administrative practices. The research employed a qualitative, document-based single-case study design using two institutional documents: the Revised Village Medium-Term Development Plan (RPJM Kampung) 2025–2029 and the village administrative-data document issued in 2026. Data were analyzed through structured document extraction and thematic coding. The results show that the village has basic digital infrastructure, including eight official laptops, electricity supplied by PLN, Starlink internet access, and routine use of the Village Financial System (Siskeudes). However, digitalization-related training needs, limited operator knowledge, the absence of a formal written public-service standard operating procedure (SOP), and connectivity constraints remain documented challenges. Citizen-facing administrative services are still predominantly conducted face-to-face, despite digitalization being included in village development priorities. The study concludes that digitalization in Long Hubung Ulu Village is present but uneven across administrative functions, reflecting a descriptive gap between formal development priorities and recorded service practices

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INTRODUCTION

Digital transformation in government is broader than the acquisition of computers, connectivity, or isolated applications. Research distinguishes digitization and digitalization from deeper transformation because meaningful change involves organizational routines, capabilities, service processes, institutional arrangements, and relationships with users (Haug et al., 2024; Mergel et al., 2019; Verhoef et al., 2021; Vial, 2019). In public administration, this distinction is important because technology may be present while service delivery remains organized around existing procedures. Studies of e-government have long identified gaps between investment, adoption, organizational change, and realized public value (Bannister & Connolly, 2014; Twizeyimana & Andersson, 2019). The problem is particularly relevant in developing-country and rural settings. Earlier design–reality research showed that e-government initiatives can underperform when technological designs are poorly aligned with organizational, human, and contextual realities (Choi et al., 2016; Heeks, 2003).

More recent public-sector studies similarly emphasize that successful

transformation depends on organizational capability, management, skills, institutional coordination, and process change rather than technology alone (Crusoe et al., 2024; Tangi et al., 2021). Rural e-governance research further cautions that connectivity, administrative capability, local institutional arrangements, and citizen conditions interact in ways that make rural digitalization different from urban or central-government settings (Su et al., 2026).

Indonesia has established a national policy framework for electronic-based government. Presidential Regulation No. 95 of 2018 establishes the Electronic-Based Government System (Sistem Pemerintahan Berbasis Elektronik/SPBE), while Presidential Regulation No. 132 of 2022 provides the national SPBE architecture and Presidential Regulation No. 39 of 2019 provides the One Data Indonesia framework. Village government operates under Law No. 6 of 2014 on Villages as amended by Law No. 3 of 2024, and village financial administration is also shaped by Ministry of Home Affairs Regulation No. 20 of 2018. These policies create a strong administrative rationale for examining how digital tools are embedded in public administration, but they do not imply that every village service must be moved online regardless of local demand, connectivity, legal authorization requirements, or citizen readiness.

Empirical research on village-level digitalization in Indonesia is growing but remains uneven. Sihotang et al. (2023), studying village information-system adoption in Gunungkidul, show that interoperability, workload, human resources, local-government support, civil-society involvement, and vendor roles affect adoption. Fiestiandani et al. (2026) using interviews across rural villages in Banyuwangi, emphasize institutional, operational, and social dimensions of policy capacity in digital public-service delivery. These studies are valuable because they move beyond a technology-only explanation. However, their richer interview-based designs differ from villages where only institutional documents are currently available for analysis. The present study addresses that narrower setting by asking what can—and cannot—be concluded from official planning and administrative documents alone. This study focuses on Long Hubung Ulu Village in Mahakam Ulu Regency, East Kalimantan. Rather than presuming that digital service expansion is inherently superior to face-to-face service, the analysis treats digitalization as an empirical administrative question. The two available documents do not provide sufficient evidence on population size, service volumes, travel distance to the village office, citizen preferences, digital literacy among service users, or the availability of regency-level online service platforms. Accordingly, these factors are treated as missing evidence and plausible alternative explanations, not as established conditions.

The research gap is therefore methodological and substantive. Substantively, village digital-government studies often discuss adoption, capacity, and service innovation, but there is still value in documenting how formal digital-development priorities coexist with everyday service arrangements at the micro level. Methodologically, a two-document case requires stricter evidentiary boundaries than interview- or observation-based research. The study therefore asks: (RQ1) What conditions concerning digital infrastructure, administrative capacity, and citizen-facing administrative processes are documented in Long Hubung Ulu Village? (RQ2) What implementation gaps can be identified between formal development priorities and recorded administrative practices? These are descriptive questions; the study does not attempt to establish causal explanations of actor behavior.

The article makes a deliberately modest contribution. It offers a bounded case

description of uneven digitalization in village administration and uses the case to formulate propositions for future research rather than to claim a new universal concept. This approach responds to the broader digital-government literature, which increasingly stresses context, user orientation, implementation capability, and the distinction between digital ambition and operational performance (Eom & Lee, 2022; OECD, 2020, 2021, 2026; Weigl et al., 2024).

Digital government should not be used as a synonym for any use of information technology in public organizations. Janowski (2015) distinguishes stages of digital-government evolution, while Mergel et al. (2019) define public-sector digital transformation as broader organizational change rather than simple digitization. Vial (2019) and Verhoef et al. (2021) similarly stress that transformation involves changes in value creation, structures, capabilities, and processes. In public administration, these distinctions matter because the use of a digital application in one function does not demonstrate transformation of the wider service system. The public-value and user-centred literatures also caution against equating online delivery with better government. Bannister & Connolly (2014) show that ICT-enabled change should be assessed against public values, while Twizeyimana & Andersson (2019) identify improved services, administrative efficiency, openness, trust, and social value as expected e-government outcomes. Verdegem & Verleye (2009) emphasize user satisfaction, and Weigl et al. (2024) show that user-centred service design can itself generate value conflicts and digital-exclusion risks. Therefore, the appropriate analytical question is not simply whether services are online, but whether the chosen channel fits administrative requirements, users, and local conditions.

Implementation-gap thinking is well established in e-government research. Heeks (2003) argues that large differences between project design assumptions and public-sector realities can contribute to failure. Choi et al. (2016) extend this perspective in the Indonesian context by examining strategy, technology, organization, people, and environment in e-procurement implementation. Savoldelli et al. (2014) similarly describe an e-government paradox in which substantial investment can coexist with limited adoption or impact. These studies indicate that visible technology is an incomplete indicator of implementation quality. Contemporary studies reach comparable conclusions using different concepts. Tangi et al. (2021) identify interacting driving and impeding factors in digital-government transformation. Escobar et al. (2023) synthesize success factors across public-sector digital transformation cases, while Haug et al. (2024) show that digitally induced change is often incremental and accumulative rather than immediately transformative. Crusoe et al (2024) describe decoupling between transformation ambitions and public-sector operations. Together, these studies support a cautious, alignment-oriented interpretation rather than a simple infrastructure-to-outcome sequence. Rural contexts add further complexity. Su et al. (2026) argue that rural e-governance must connect digital design with public policy and local context. In Indonesia, Sihotang et al. (2023) identify technological, organizational, and environmental factors in village information-system adoption, including interoperability, human resources, workload, local-government support, and external actors. Fiestiandani et al. (2026) similarly show that rural digital public-service delivery depends on policy capacity across institutional, operational, and social dimensions. These studies suggest that village digitalization should be analyzed as a multilevel implementation process involving village capacity, regency support, technological arrangements, and user conditions.

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Because the present study does not include interviews or observations, its analytical framework is deliberately non-causal. It organizes documentary statements into three dimensions: digital infrastructure, administrative and procedural capacity, and citizen-facing service processes. A fourth category—implementation gaps—records contrasts between formal priorities and documented practices without treating the contrast itself as an outcome variable. This avoids the circularity of defining the framework with the same conclusion later reported as a finding.

Table 1.
Analytical lens for the document-based case study

Dimension	Documentary question	Examples of admissible evidence	Interpretive boundary
Digital infrastructure	What technologies and supporting infrastructure are documented?	Hardware, electricity, connectivity, applications	Presence does not establish adequacy, utilization quality, or service transformation.
Administrative and procedural capacity	What capability, training, standards, and procedural needs are documented?	Training needs, operator knowledge, SOPs, role arrangements	Planning needs indicate recognized issues but do not prove causal incapacity.
Citizen-facing service processes	How are administrative services recorded as being delivered?	Service channels, signatory requirements, completion conditions	The documents do not capture citizen experience, demand, satisfaction, or digital readiness.
Implementation gaps	What contrasts exist between policy priorities and recorded practices?	Digitalization priorities versus current procedures	Contrasts are descriptive; possible causes remain propositions for future research.

RESEARCH METHODS

Research Design and Case Selection

This study uses a qualitative, document-based single-case design. The unit of analysis is the Village Government of Long Hubung Ulu, Long Hubung District, Mahakam Ulu Regency, East Kalimantan. Case-study research is appropriate for context-dependent inquiry, but the evidentiary strength of a case depends on the sources actually analyzed (Yin, 2018). Here, the evidence base is intentionally narrow: two institutional documents produced by the village government. The study therefore seeks analytical description rather than statistical generalization or causal explanation.

Data Sources, Provenance, and Limitations

Two documents were analyzed. The first is the revised Village Medium-Term Development Plan (Revisi Rencana Pembangunan Jangka Menengah Kampung/RPJM Kampung) 2025–2029, issued by the Village Government of Long Hubung Ulu in 2025. It is a formal planning document containing the village development direction, identified problems, governance priorities, human-resource needs, and proposed programs. As a planning document, statements about needs and problems are treated as institutional claims and planning priorities, not as independent verification of actual performance. The second source is a village administrative-data document compiled by the Village Government of Long Hubung Ulu in 2026 for the purpose of documenting administrative-service and digital-infrastructure conditions.

It contains information on official laptops, electricity and internet access, application use, examples of administrative services, the absence of a formal written public-service SOP, the face-to-face service flow, and conditions affecting completion.

This source is also institutionally produced and therefore is not independent of the RPJM. The study consequently does not claim source triangulation; it uses cross-document comparison to examine consistency and differences between planning statements and administrative records. Several data categories are incomplete or absent. The documents do not establish the total number of village officials, the ratio of laptops to staff, total population, distance travelled by service users, annual service volumes, citizen demand for online channels, citizen digital readiness, detailed service-time distributions, or the full set of regency-provided digital platforms. Because those data are unavailable, the study does not infer them. This limitation also means that the adequacy of eight laptops, the desirability of online service delivery, and the efficiency of existing face-to-face services cannot be conclusively assessed.

Researcher Role, Access, and Ethical Considerations

The first author is professionally familiar with village administration and assisted in identifying the two institutional documents and interpreting administrative terminology. This insider familiarity creates a potential risk of over-interpretation. To address that risk, professional knowledge, informal conversations, and personal observations are not treated as data. All empirical statements in the results section are restricted to information traceable to the two documents. No interviews, direct observations, citizen surveys, or individual-level personal data were collected for this study. The document-based design therefore did not involve human participants. The authors should retain the village government's document-access authorization in the research record; no personal or confidential citizen information is reproduced in the manuscript.

Data Extraction and Coding

Document analysis followed a structured extraction process consistent with qualitative document analysis (Bowen, 2009). Relevant passages were entered into a matrix recording the source, section, statement, analytical dimension, preliminary code, and interpretive note. The coding categories were derived from the analytical lens in Table 1, while case-specific subcodes were allowed to emerge from the documents. Thematic analysis principles informed familiarization, coding, category review, and synthesis (Braun & Clarke, 2021). The original study record did not document a formal intercoder-reliability statistic. This revised manuscript therefore does not claim independent coder agreement or a reliability coefficient. Instead, transparency is supported by a document-to-claim audit trail: each result is linked to a traceable statement in one of the two sources, and interpretive claims are explicitly separated from documentary facts. This approach is consistent with the broader qualitative emphasis on credibility, dependability, and confirmability, while acknowledging that a richer multi-source design would provide stronger evidence (Lincoln, 1985).

Table 2.
Documentary sources and evidentiary limits

Source	Year / producer	Evidence used	What it can support	Key limitation
Revised RPJM Kampung 2025–2029	2025; Village Government of Long Hubung Ulu	Governance priorities, HR issues, training needs, connectivity needs, development direction	Formal priorities and institutionally recognized needs	Planning claims are not independent evidence of actual performance.

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Source	Year / producer	Evidence used	What it can support	Key limitation
Village administrative-data document	2026; Village Government of Long Hubung Ulu	Laptops, electricity, Starlink, Siskeudes use, service examples, face-to-face flow, SOP status, completion conditions	Recorded operational conditions at the time of compilation	Institutional self-report; incomplete staff, population, volume, demand, and user-experience data.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Documented Digital Infrastructure

The 2026 administrative-data document records eight active official laptops, electricity supplied by PLN, internet access supported by Starlink, and routine use of the Village Financial System (Siskeudes) in financial administration (Pemerintah Kampung Long Hubung Ulu, 2026). The 2025 RPJM also records connectivity-related needs, including areas described as black spots, indicating that connectivity is not uniformly reliable across the locality (Pemerintah Kampung Long Hubung Ulu, 2025). These documents support the limited conclusion that basic digital resources are present, but they do not establish whether the number of devices is adequate because the total number of officials and workload are not reported. The use of Siskeudes should also be interpreted cautiously. Siskeudes is a formal village-financial-management application embedded in Indonesia's village financial-administration system; its use indicates participation in a digitalized back-office function but does not by itself demonstrate broad digital capability or citizen-facing digital-service maturity. The documents do not report how many officials can independently operate the application, how frequently technical assistance is required, or whether skills transfer to other applications.

Documented Capacity and Procedural Needs

The revised RPJM identifies digitalization-related training and limited operator knowledge of village digital applications as development needs. It also identifies broader human-resource capacity issues among village-government apparatus and local institutions (Pemerintah Kampung Long Hubung Ulu, 2025). These statements demonstrate that capacity strengthening is an institutional priority. However, because they come from a planning document, they do not establish the magnitude of any skill deficit or prove that capacity limitations cause the current service configuration. The 2026 administrative-data document records that a formal, standardized written SOP for citizen-facing administrative services was not yet available (Pemerintah Kampung Long Hubung Ulu, 2026). This is a clearer procedural condition than the training statements because it refers to the presence or absence of a specific administrative instrument. Even so, the documents do not show whether informal routines are consistently applied, whether service standards exist in other forms, or whether the absence of a written SOP measurably affects service quality.

Citizen-Facing Services Remain Predominantly Face-to-Face

The administrative-data document records services such as population-related recommendation letters, business certificates, certificates of financial incapacity, domicile certificates, and other general administrative documents. The recorded service process remains predominantly face-to-face: residents visit the village office and interact with the relevant Head of Affairs (Kaur), Section Head (Kasi), or operator

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(Pemerintah Kampung Long Hubung Ulu, 2026). The documents do not record an integrated online mechanism for submission, status tracking, or delivery of these administrative services. The same source states that services are generally completed on the same day, although completion can depend on the availability of an authorized signatory and on network and electricity conditions (Pemerintah Kampung Long Hubung Ulu, 2026). This evidence complicates any assumption that face-to-face delivery is necessarily inefficient: same-day completion may already be satisfactory for some users. Because service volumes, queue times, repeat visits, citizen satisfaction, travel distance, and demand for online access are not documented, the study cannot determine whether an online channel would create net benefits for users.

A Descriptive Planning-Practice Gap

The RPJM places improved government management, public services, administrative organization, human-resource development, digitalization training, and internet support among village development priorities (Pemerintah Kampung Long Hubung Ulu, 2025). The administrative-data document, meanwhile, records face-to-face service channels and the absence of a formal written service SOP (Pemerintah Kampung Long Hubung Ulu, 2026). The contrast can therefore be described as a planning–practice gap: formal priorities emphasize administrative and digital development, while the recorded citizen-facing process remains largely conventional. This contrast should not be interpreted as proof that the village has failed to implement digital services. Several alternative explanations remain possible but untested: citizen demand may be low; required signatures may limit end-to-end online processing; regency-level systems may not provide online modules for the relevant services; digital identity or interoperability requirements may not be available; citizen digital readiness may vary; and low service volumes may make full online channels less cost-effective. The two documents do not provide sufficient evidence to choose among these explanations.

Table 3.
Findings, evidence, and evidentiary boundaries

Finding	Documentary evidence	Supported interpretation	What cannot be concluded
Basic digital resources are present	Eight laptops, PLN electricity, Starlink, Siskeudes	Digital tools support at least some internal administration	Adequacy of devices, overall staff capability, or service quality.
Capacity development is a formal need	RPJM training and operator-knowledge needs	Capacity strengthening is recognized in planning	Capacity deficits are the proven cause of current service practices.
A formal written public-service SOP is absent	2026 administrative-data document	Procedural standardization is incomplete in documented form	That service is inconsistent or poor in practice.
Citizen-facing services are mainly face-to-face	Residents visit office; Kaur/Kasi/operator handle services	Digitalization is more visible in selected back-office functions than service channels	That citizens prefer online service or that face-to-face service is inefficient.
Planning priorities exceed recorded practice in some areas	RPJM digitalization priorities versus current service flow	A descriptive planning–practice gap is present	A causal explanation for the gap.

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The Case Reflects a Familiar Infrastructure-Implementation Gap

The Long Hubung Ulu documents describe a pattern that is familiar in e-government research: technology can be available without equivalent change across administrative processes. This is consistent with design–reality gap scholarship (Choi et al., 2016; Heeks, 2003), the e-government paradox literature (Savoldelli et al., 2014), and more recent research showing that public-sector digital transformation requires organizational and process change (Haug et al., 2024; Mergel et al., 2019; Tangi et al., 2021). The present case should therefore not be presented as evidence of a wholly new phenomenon. Its value lies in illustrating how that wider problem appears in a specific village administrative setting with a very limited documentary evidence base. The distinction between back-office and citizen-facing digitalization is also not novel in itself. Digital-government evolution has long involved different rates of change across internal administration, service delivery, engagement, and contextual adaptation (Gil-Garcia et al., 2018; Janowski, 2015). The routine use of Siskeudes alongside face-to-face general administrative services is best interpreted as uneven functional digitalization rather than as proof of a new theoretical category. This revised interpretation deliberately reduces the novelty claim made in the earlier manuscript.

Indonesian Village Research Points to Organizational and Intergovernmental Conditions

The case is consistent with Indonesian village research that identifies organizational and environmental conditions as important for digital adoption. Sihotang et al. (2023) find that village information-system adoption is shaped by interoperability, human resources, workload, local-government support, civil-society involvement, and vendors. Fiestiandani et al. (2026) emphasize institutional, operational, and social policy capacity in rural Indonesian digital service delivery. These studies use richer field data than the present document-only case, so they cannot be treated as direct confirmation of the mechanisms operating in Long Hubung Ulu. They do, however, identify plausible variables for future investigation. The role of higher levels of government is especially important. National SPBE policy promotes integrated and user-oriented digital government (Republic of Indonesia, 2018, 2022), while village-government authority and financial administration operate within broader national and regency systems (Republic of Indonesia, 2014, 2024; Ministry of Home Affairs, 2018). For Long Hubung Ulu, the documents do not establish whether the regency provides online service modules, interoperable data access, digital-signature infrastructure, shared platforms, or technical support for the relevant citizen-facing services. Consequently, the implementation gap cannot responsibly be attributed to the village government alone.

Administrative Capacity Is a Proposition, not a Proven Cause

The earlier manuscript treated administrative capacity as a critical missing link. The revised evidence does not justify that causal wording. The RPJM records training and operator-knowledge needs, and the administrative-data document records the absence of a formal written SOP. These facts make capability and procedural institutionalization plausible explanatory conditions, but they do not establish that either condition causes the continued use of face-to-face services. Public-sector research shows that employee capability, organizational arrangements, management, and operational alignment matter for digital transformation (Crusoe et al., 2024;

Escobar et al., 2023), yet causal application to this case requires interviews, observation, performance records, or comparative evidence. Similarly, the use of Siskeudes should not be interpreted as proof of comprehensive digital competence. A mandated or externally supported application can become routine even when broader digital transformation remains limited. The more defensible interpretation is that the village has experience operating at least one digital back-office system. Whether that experience reflects transferable organizational capability remains an empirical question.

User Needs and Hybrid Service Design Require Evidence

Digital public-service literature increasingly emphasizes user orientation and public value rather than channel expansion for its own sake (OECD, 2020; Twizeyimana & Andersson, 2019; Verdegem & Verleye, 2009; Weigl et al., 2024). This matters because the Long Hubung Ulu documents report same-day completion for many face-to-face services. Without data on citizen travel burden, satisfaction, failed visits, service volumes, accessibility needs, and digital readiness, the study cannot conclude that online delivery would necessarily be better. A hybrid model may nevertheless be a reasonable policy proposition under rural conditions, especially where connectivity is uneven and administrative authorization remains person-dependent. Rural e-governance research stresses the need to connect digital design to local policy and institutional realities (Su et al., 2026), while the OECD (2021, 2026) emphasize inclusive, human-centred digital government. For this case, however, hybrid service design is presented as a testable recommendation, not as an empirically demonstrated solution.

Implications for Village and Regency Government

The practical implications are linked directly to the documented findings. First, because a formal written public-service SOP is not recorded, the village government can prioritize documenting current service requirements, responsible officers, authorization steps, expected completion times, and contingency procedures before deciding which stages should be digitized. Second, because the RPJM identifies digitalization training and operator-knowledge needs, the village and regency governments can jointly conduct a role-based capability assessment rather than assuming that generic training is sufficient. Third, because connectivity constraints and the availability of external systems affect feasibility, the regency government should clarify which administrative services can legally and technically be supported through shared platforms, digital signatures, interoperability, and technical assistance. Fourth, any pilot online or hybrid channel should be preceded by basic demand data: service volumes, user travel burden, citizen preferences, and digital-access conditions. These recommendations are intentionally conditional. They do not assume that every service should become fully digital. Rather, they translate specific documentary findings into responsible next steps for evidence gathering, standardization, capacity assessment, and intergovernmental coordination.

CONCLUSION

This document-based case study describes a gap between existing digital resources and the recorded configuration of citizen-facing administrative services in Long Hubung Ulu Village. The two analyzed documents report official laptops,

electricity, Starlink connectivity, and routine Siskeudes use, while also recording digitalization-related training needs, the absence of a formal written public-service SOP, connectivity constraints in some areas, and predominantly face-to-face service delivery. The most defensible conclusion is therefore descriptive: digitalization is present but uneven across administrative functions. The evidence does not support a causal claim about why this pattern exists. Administrative capability, procedural standardization, regency-level platform availability, signatory requirements, citizen readiness, service demand, and connectivity are plausible conditions that should be tested rather than assumed. The study's contribution is a bounded village-level illustration of an implementation gap already recognized in the wider digital-government literature, with explicit attention to what a two-document design can and cannot establish. The study is limited by its single-village design and reliance on only two documents produced by the same village government. These sources are not independent and do not capture the experiences of citizens, village officials, or regency-level actors. The documents also do not provide several indicators needed to assess service adequacy, including total population, distance to the village office, service volume, number of village officials, laptop-to-staff ratio, and detailed service-time records. Accordingly, the findings should be read as a bounded description of documented conditions rather than as a causal explanation or an assessment of citizen demand. Future research should combine village and regency perspectives and collect evidence from officials and citizens. Comparative case studies could examine villages with different levels of connectivity, administrative capacity, service demand, and access to regency digital platforms. Interviews, observation, service-performance records, and digital-system usage data would allow the propositions identified in this document-based study to be tested more directly and would clarify when digital, face-to-face, or hybrid service arrangements create the greatest public value.

Statement on the Use of Artificial Intelligence

AI was used in the preparation of this manuscript. The authors used artificial intelligence tools solely to assist with language improvement, grammar checking, and editing for clarity and readability. The authors remain fully responsible for the accuracy, originality, integrity, and academic content of the manuscript. All AI-assisted content was reviewed and verified by the authors before submission.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

Author Contributions

Conceptualization, Daniel Suherman Hibau and Kristyan Dwijosusilo; data collection and document identification, Daniel Suherman Hibau; data validation, Kristyan Dwijosusilo and Amirul Mustofa; formal analysis, Daniel Suherman Hibau and Kristyan Dwijosusilo; writing-original draft preparation, Daniel Suherman Hibau; writing-review and editing, Kristyan Dwijosusilo and Amirul Mustofa; supervision, Kristyan Dwijosusilo and Amirul Mustofa. All authors have read and approved the final version of the manuscript.

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