

Trilingual *Muhadharah* as a Pedagogical Tool: Enhancing Public Speaking Skills in Pondok Pesantren Raudhatul Muta'allimin

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Abstract

This study aims to describe the implementation of the *muhadharah* activity in developing the public speaking skills of students at Pondok Pesantren Raudhatul Muta'alimin, Pacet, Bandung. This research employed a qualitative method with a descriptive approach, using observation, interviews, and documentation involving the pesantren leaders, mentors, and students participating in *muhadharah*. The findings reveal that *muhadharah* is conducted three times a week in Indonesian, English, and Arabic alternately, with a structured agenda including an opening session, Qur'an recitation, speech delivery, summary extraction, and entertainment. Supporting factors include clear regulations and successful classroom learning, while inhibiting factors consist of a lack of extrinsic motivation, limited facilities, and varying students' language proficiency. *Muhadharah* has proven effective in improving students' confidence, fluency, and language skills, although improvements in mentoring and facility provision are still needed.

Keywords: Arabic; Language; *Muhadharah*; Oratory; Pesantren

Muhadharah Tiga Bahasa sebagai Alat Pedagogis: Meningkatkan Keterampilan *Public Speaking* di Pondok Pesantren Raudhatul Muta'allimin.

Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mendeskripsikan pelaksanaan kegiatan *muhadharah* dalam mengembangkan keterampilan *Public Speaking* para santri di Pondok Pesantren Raudhatul Muta'alimin, Pacet, Bandung. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode kualitatif dengan pendekatan deskriptif, melalui observasi, wawancara, dan dokumentasi yang melibatkan pimpinan pesantren, pembimbing, serta santri peserta *muhadharah*. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa *muhadharah* dilaksanakan tiga kali dalam seminggu dengan menggunakan bahasa Indonesia, Inggris, dan Arab secara bergantian, dengan agenda terstruktur meliputi sesi pembukaan, tilawah Al-Qur'an, penyampaian pidato, pengambilan kesimpulan, dan hiburan. Faktor pendukung pelaksanaan meliputi adanya peraturan yang jelas serta keberhasilan pembelajaran di kelas, sedangkan faktor penghambat terdiri dari kurangnya motivasi ekstrinsik, keterbatasan fasilitas, dan perbedaan kemampuan bahasa antar santri. *Muhadharah* terbukti efektif dalam meningkatkan rasa percaya diri, kefasihan, dan keterampilan bahasa santri, meskipun perbaikan dalam aspek pembimbingan dan penyediaan fasilitas masih diperlukan.

Kata kunci: Arab; Bahasa; *Muhadharah*; Pesantren; Retorika

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INTRODUCTION

In the era of globalization, competition in the field of education is becoming increasingly intense. Educational institutions are required not only to produce graduates with strong academic performance but also to equip them with essential twenty-first-century skills such as effective communication, leadership, critical thinking, and the ability to convey ideas clearly in public forums. According to the Indonesian Law on the National Education System (Undang-Undang Sistem Pendidikan Nasional, No. 20 of 2003), national education functions to develop capabilities, shape character, and build the civilization of a dignified nation. It also aims to develop learners into human beings who are faithful and devoted to God Almighty (*Allāh Subḥānahu wa Ta‘ālā*), possess noble character, are healthy, knowledgeable, competent, creative, independent, and become democratic citizens who are responsible.

Within the framework of the Indonesian education system, pesantren—Islamic boarding schools—represent a distinctive and essential sub-system that integrates religious knowledge with character building. Historically, Pesantren have functioned not only as centers for religious instruction but also as institutions for cultural preservation, social cohesion, and leadership development. The role of pesantren has evolved over time, adapting to contemporary challenges while maintaining their core values rooted in Islamic teachings. One of the defining features of pesantren life is its emphasis on the *ṭarīqah al-ta’līm* (methods of instruction) that blend formal lessons with non-formal and extracurricular activities, aimed at developing both intellectual and moral capacities of the *ṭālib al-‘ilm* (students).

Among these extracurricular activities, *muḥāḍarah*—a structured public speaking practice—is widely recognized as an effective method for enhancing communication skills. The term *muḥāḍarah* (محاضرة), literally meaning “lecture” or “speech” in Arabic, refers to an oratorical session where students (*santri*) deliver speeches before an audience, often with themes related to Islamic teachings, moral values, social issues, or cultural heritage. In many pesantren, *muḥāḍarah* is considered an integral part of the curriculum, functioning as a platform to train students in articulation, persuasive communication, self-confidence, and leadership.

At Pondok Pesantren Raudhatul Muta‘allimīn, located in Pacet, Bandung, West Java, *muḥāḍarah* sessions are conducted three times a week, alternating between three languages: Bahasa Indonesia, English, and Arabic. This multilingual approach not only strengthens linguistic competence but also exposes students to the dynamics of intercultural communication. Each *muḥāḍarah* session follows a well-structured sequence: an opening segment led by a master of ceremonies (MC), the recitation of verses from the *al-Qur’ān al-Karīm*, the delivery of speeches by selected students, a summary of the main points presented by a designated member of the audience, and a closing entertainment segment that fosters camaraderie among participants.

The significance of *muḥāḍarah* as a pedagogical tool can be analyzed through several perspectives. From a linguistic standpoint, it provides students with practical exposure to language use in real-time, enhancing vocabulary acquisition, pronunciation accuracy, and syntactic fluency. From a psychological perspective, it builds self-efficacy and reduces public speaking anxiety—a common barrier in both academic and professional contexts. From a socio-cultural angle, *muḥāḍarah* reinforces pesantren’s communal values by encouraging mutual respect, attentive listening, and constructive feedback among peers.

Despite its longstanding tradition, the implementation of *muḥāḍarah* in various pesantren faces diverse challenges, such as the variation in students’ language proficiency, the availability of adequate facilities, and the presence (or absence) of systematic mentoring from teachers. Research in educational communication has shown that structured speaking activities, when accompanied by consistent feedback, significantly improve learners’ performance in public speaking. However, in many cases, *muḥāḍarah*

activities lack standardized evaluation frameworks, making it difficult to measure their effectiveness in a quantifiable manner.

This study is situated within the broader discourse of Islamic education and language pedagogy, seeking to explore the practice of *muḥāḍarah* at Pondok Pesantren Raudhatul Mutaʿallimīn as a case study. The research aims to answer the following questions: (1) How is *muḥāḍarah* implemented in this pesantren in terms of structure, frequency, and content? (2) What are the supporting and inhibiting factors that affect its execution? and (3) To what extent does *muḥāḍarah* contribute to the development of students' public speaking skills and overall educational experience?

The novelty of this research lies in its focus on the integration of multilingual public speaking training within the pesantren context, a relatively underexplored area in current academic literature. While numerous studies have discussed pesantren pedagogy in general, few have examined the *muḥāḍarah* program in detail, especially with regard to its role in bridging religious knowledge and modern communication skills. Furthermore, this study employs a qualitative descriptive approach, collecting data through observation, interviews, and documentation, to provide a rich, contextualized understanding of the phenomenon.

The findings of this research are expected to offer both theoretical and practical contributions. Theoretically, it adds to the body of knowledge in Islamic educational practices and public speaking pedagogy. Practically, it offers actionable recommendations for pesantren administrators, educators, and policymakers on how to design and implement *muḥāḍarah* programs that are linguistically inclusive, pedagogically sound, and culturally relevant. By doing so, pesantren can strengthen their role as holistic educational institutions capable of producing graduates who are not only grounded in Islamic values but also competent in navigating the complexities of modern communication landscapes.

METHODOLOGY

This study employed a qualitative descriptive method as the most appropriate approach to address the research objectives. The focus was not on measuring numerical data but on exploring and portraying the actual process of *muḥāḍarah* implementation at Pondok Pesantren Raudhatul Mutaʿallimīn. Through this design, the research was able to capture the dynamics of activities, the perspectives of participants, and the educational values embedded in the practice of public speaking within a pesantren setting.

The research location was determined purposively, namely Pondok Pesantren Raudhatul Mutaʿallimīn in Pacet, Bandung. This institution was selected because of its consistent application of trilingual *muḥāḍarah*—Indonesian, English, and Arabic—making it a relevant site for examining multilingual pedagogy in Islamic education. The research subjects consisted of pesantren leaders who provided institutional direction, mentors who guided the activity, and students who actively participated in the weekly sessions.

Data were obtained through three main techniques: observation, interviews, and documentation. (Rusandi & Rusli, 2021). Direct observation allowed the researcher to follow the flow of *muḥāḍarah* activities, from opening to closing segments, while also noting students' performance and interactions. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with leaders, teachers, and santri to gather more detailed explanations of their experiences and challenges. Supporting documents, such as institutional guidelines, schedules, and written reports of activities, were collected to enrich and validate the field data.

The research applied validity strategies to strengthen the trustworthiness of the findings. Data triangulation was carried out by comparing information obtained from different techniques and sources. The researcher also practiced member checking, inviting participants to review and confirm the accuracy

of interpretations. These steps helped ensure that the analysis remained grounded in actual practice and minimized subjective bias.

Finally, the process of data analysis was carried out continuously from the beginning to the end of the study. Following the interactive model of Miles and Huberman, analysis included reducing data by selecting relevant information, organizing it into meaningful categories, and displaying it in narrative and thematic form. The last stage was drawing conclusions and verifying them against the data until a coherent understanding of the role of *muḥāḍarah* in developing public speaking skills was achieved.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Implementation of *Muḥāḍarah* in Pondok Pesantren Raudhatul Muta'allimīn

The *muḥāḍarah* program at Pondok Pesantren Raudhatul Muta'allimīn is one of the flagship extracurricular activities designed to cultivate students' oratory competence within a religious framework. Conducted on a regular basis three times each week, the program alternates among three languages—Bahasa Indonesia, English, and Arabic—ensuring that linguistic proficiency develops alongside public speaking ability. This multilingual format is not incidental; rather, it reflects a conscious pedagogical strategy to equip *santri* with the versatility needed to communicate in both local and global contexts.

Each *muḥāḍarah* session is intentionally structured to mirror formal public events, thereby immersing students in a realistic communication environment. The proceedings begin with an opening by a designated master of ceremonies (MC), who not only introduces the event but also sets the tone for the audience. This role is rotated among students, giving multiple individuals the opportunity to develop skills in event management, audience engagement, and stage presence. Such experiential exposure supports the cultivation of leadership qualities and confidence in front of an audience.

Following the opening, the recitation of verses from the *al-Qur'ān al-Karīm* serves as both a spiritual grounding and a cultural anchor for the session. This segment reinforces the pesantren's identity as an Islamic educational institution and reminds participants of the moral and ethical values underpinning the art of speech. Moreover, the recitation is performed by students, thereby integrating elements of *tajwīd* practice and Quranic memorization into the broader skill set being developed.

The central component of *muḥāḍarah* lies in the delivery of speeches by selected *santri*. These speeches typically address topics ranging from religious themes, social and moral issues, to contemporary challenges in the Muslim world. The content is often prepared in advance under the guidance of teachers, ensuring that students engage in research, organization of ideas, and coherent message construction. The emphasis on originality and thematic relevance nurtures critical thinking and the ability to articulate ideas persuasively.

An integral yet often overlooked element of the program is the “extraction of key points” stage, wherein a designated participant summarizes the main messages conveyed by the speakers. This practice serves a dual pedagogical purpose: it trains the summarizer in active listening and analytical thinking, while also reinforcing the audience's retention of the material presented. In addition, it fosters a culture of attentive engagement, as participants know that they may be called upon to reflect publicly on the speeches they have heard.

The session concludes with a closing segment, often incorporating light entertainment such as *nasyīd* (Islamic songs), poetry recitals, or short dramatizations. While seemingly informal, this segment plays a crucial role in building camaraderie among students, reducing the formality-induced tension, and sustaining motivation for future participation. By blending structured seriousness with moments of relaxation, the program maintains a balance between discipline and enjoyment.

From a pedagogical perspective, this structure embodies the principle that learning is most effective when embedded within a consistent and predictable framework (Slavin, 2018). Familiarity with the sequence allows students to anticipate their roles, prepare adequately, and focus on refining specific competencies over time. The repeated exposure to each stage of the event gradually builds mastery, transforming initial nervousness into confident delivery.

Overall, the implementation of *muhāḍarah* at Pondok Pesantren Raudhatul Muta'allimīn represents a well-calibrated blend of religious tradition, linguistic training, and modern communication pedagogy. By anchoring public speaking practice in an environment that values both spiritual integrity and professional competence, the pesantren creates a learning model that is deeply contextual yet adaptable to broader societal demands. This integration of faith, language, and oratory skill positions the *muhāḍarah* program as an exemplary practice within Islamic boarding school education.

Supporting Factors

One of the most significant enablers of the *muhāḍarah* program at Pondok Pesantren Raudhatul Muta'allimīn is the presence of clear institutional regulations that explicitly require students' participation. These rules are not merely administrative formalities; they serve as a behavioral framework that ensures consistent engagement from all students. In educational psychology, such structures are known to foster habitual participation, as students internalize the expectation that *muhāḍarah* is a non-negotiable component of their learning journey (Ormrod, 2020).

Beyond formal regulations, the integration of classroom learning into *muhāḍarah* content provides a seamless connection between theory and practice. Topics assigned for speeches are often derived from recent lessons in fiqh, tafsīr, or language classes, allowing students to revisit and reinterpret their academic knowledge in a performative context. This practice not only reinforces retention but also enhances the depth of understanding through articulation and public discourse—a process supported by the *transfer of learning* principle in cognitive science (Mayer, 2019).

Another critical factor is the supportive environment created by both peers and teachers. Feedback sessions, typically held after the speeches, allow for constructive criticism that focuses on clarity of expression, content accuracy, and delivery style. This peer-review mechanism promotes collaborative learning, where students develop the capacity to assess others' performance critically while applying the same standards to their own work. Teacher involvement ensures that corrections remain aligned with both linguistic norms and Islamic ethical guidelines.

The pesantren also benefits from a culture of mutual encouragement. Senior students often mentor juniors, guiding them in speech preparation and delivery. This inter generational dynamic fosters a sense of belonging and collective responsibility for the success of the program. Such mentoring relationships are consistent with Vygotsky's concept of the "zone of proximal development," wherein learners achieve greater competence through the support of more experienced peers.

Inhibiting Factors

Despite the program's strengths, several obstacles hinder its optimal implementation. A primary challenge is the lack of strong extrinsic motivators for all participants. While some students embrace *muhāḍarah* as an opportunity to hone their skills, others participate solely out of obligation. This variation in motivation can influence the overall energy and engagement levels during sessions. According to self-determination theory, sustained high-quality performance emerges when extrinsic motivations are supplemented by intrinsic interest and personal value alignment (Deci & Ryan, 2017).

Facility limitations also pose a tangible barrier. The absence of high-quality sound systems, adequate stage lighting, or professional-grade microphones can diminish the audience's ability to engage

fully with the speakers. In some cases, technical shortcomings lead to reduced vocal projection or unclear speech delivery, both of which can negatively affect learning outcomes. The issue extends beyond equipment to include the physical arrangement of the venue, which may not always be conducive to optimal audience interaction.

Another inhibiting factor lies in the uneven distribution of language proficiency among students. Since *muḥāḍarah* rotates between Bahasa Indonesia, English, and Arabic, students with weaker abilities in foreign languages often struggle to deliver speeches confidently and fluently. This challenge is compounded when limited preparatory resources—such as bilingual dictionaries or model speech scripts—are available. Research in second language acquisition underscores the role of consistent exposure and scaffolded practice in overcoming such disparities (Lightbown & Spada, 2021).

Finally, time constraints within the pesantren's packed daily schedule can affect the quality of preparation. With commitments ranging from formal classes, Qur'anic memorization, to other extracurricular activities, some students may have insufficient time to rehearse their speeches. This rushed preparation can manifest in unstructured content or underdeveloped arguments, reducing the pedagogical value of the exercise. Addressing this issue may require a more deliberate scheduling strategy that balances academic, religious, and skill-development priorities.

Contribution to Public Speaking Skills

The *muḥāḍarah* program has emerged as a powerful vehicle for cultivating public speaking abilities among the *santri* at Pondok Pesantren Raudhatul Muta'allimīn. By providing a regular platform for verbal expression, the program addresses one of the most common challenges in communication—overcoming the initial fear of speaking in front of an audience. Repeated exposure to the speaking environment allows students to gradually replace anxiety with confidence, a transformation that is well-documented in public speaking pedagogy (Lucas, 2020).

Beyond confidence-building, the program plays a critical role in enhancing linguistic competence. Delivering speeches in Bahasa Indonesia strengthens students' command of formal and persuasive registers in their native language. The inclusion of English and Arabic broadens their communicative range, giving them the ability to address audiences beyond their immediate cultural and linguistic contexts. This trilingual framework contributes to both cognitive flexibility and cross-cultural competence, traits increasingly valuable in a globalized society (Bialystok, 2018).

The structured nature of *muḥāḍarah* also trains students in speech organization—a core competency in effective communication. Students are expected to open with an engaging introduction, develop their main points in a coherent sequence, and conclude with a memorable closing statement. Mastery of this structure equips them with transferable skills applicable to academic presentations, community leadership, and even digital media engagement.

Another notable contribution lies in the development of critical listening skills. The segment where a designated participant extracts key points from the speeches compels the entire audience to listen actively. In doing so, students practice identifying essential ideas, evaluating the strength of arguments, and synthesizing information—abilities that are crucial in both academic and professional environments (Brownell, 2013).

The program also fosters improvisational thinking. Although most speeches are prepared in advance, occasional prompts or impromptu speaking sessions challenge students to organize their thoughts quickly and articulate them under time pressure. This ability to think on one's feet is invaluable in settings such as debates, interviews, and real-time negotiations.

From a socio-emotional perspective, *muḥāḍarah* strengthens interpersonal relationships and peer solidarity. Public recognition of a student's performance, whether through applause or verbal encouragement, reinforces a sense of belonging and mutual respect within the pesantren community. Such positive reinforcement can have lasting effects on self-esteem and motivation (Hattie & Timperley, 2007).

The multilingual aspect of the program also cultivates metalinguistic awareness. Switching between languages requires students to consciously consider vocabulary choices, grammatical structures, and cultural nuances, thus deepening their understanding of how language functions as a communicative tool. This awareness is particularly advantageous for those who aspire to careers in education, translation, or diplomacy.

In sum, the contribution of *muḥāḍarah* extends far beyond mere oratory practice. It integrates cognitive, linguistic, emotional, and social skill development in a single activity. By consistently engaging students in such multifaceted learning experiences, the pesantren ensures that graduates are well-prepared to navigate both religious and secular spheres with eloquence, confidence, and cultural sensitivity.

Discussion in Relation to Existing Literature

The findings of this study align with existing literature that highlights the role of structured speaking activities in language acquisition and personal development. For example, previous research on pesantren-based public speaking programs has emphasized their value in fostering self-confidence and moral articulation (Hidayat & Ma'mun, 2020). However, this study adds to the discourse by examining *muḥāḍarah* not merely as a religious oratory exercise but as a comprehensive pedagogical tool integrating multilingual competence and critical thinking.

One of the unique contributions of this research lies in its focus on the trilingual implementation of *muḥāḍarah*. While bilingual education in pesantren has been documented (Fauzi et al., 2021), the systematic rotation of three languages—each with distinct phonological, syntactic, and cultural characteristics—presents a more complex linguistic challenge. This approach not only broadens students' communicative repertoire but also aligns with global trends in multilingual education that advocate for cognitive flexibility through language diversity (Cenoz & Gorter, 2015).

The integration of audience participation through the "key point extraction" segment is another distinguishing feature. While many public speaking programs concentrate solely on the speaker's performance, this practice extends the learning benefits to the audience, promoting active listening and analytical synthesis (Newton, 2024). Such dual engagement is consistent with collaborative learning theories, which emphasize the interdependence of speaking and listening as complementary skills (Johnson & Johnson, 2019).

The study also sheds light on persistent challenges in implementing *muḥāḍarah*, particularly disparities in language proficiency and limitations in facilities. These findings mirror those in broader educational contexts, where resource gaps often hinder optimal learning outcomes (UNESCO, 2019). The parallel suggests that improving physical infrastructure and providing targeted language support could significantly enhance program effectiveness.

From a theoretical standpoint, the *muḥāḍarah* program can be seen as a practical application of Vygotsky's socio-cultural theory, in which learning occurs through social interaction within a culturally meaningful framework (Office of Educational Improvement, 2022). The rotating roles, peer mentorship, and communal reinforcement all contribute to a learning environment where students scaffold one another's growth.

In relation to public speaking pedagogy, the program aligns with Lucas's (2020) framework for speech training, which advocates for regular practice, structured feedback, and exposure to diverse audiences. By embedding these elements in a religiously grounded context, the pesantren offers a model that could be adapted for other educational settings seeking to balance moral development with skill acquisition.

However, the findings also challenge certain assumptions in the literature. While some scholars argue that religious contexts might limit the scope of public speaking topics (Zainuddin, 2017), this study demonstrates that thematic diversity can flourish within an Islamic framework, provided that content is framed through ethical and cultural values. This suggests that pesantren-based oratory programs need not be constrained in topical breadth, as long as moral parameters are maintained.

Overall, the study affirms the enduring relevance of *muḥāḍarah* while proposing enhancements that respond to contemporary educational needs. It positions the program not as a relic of traditional pedagogy but as a dynamic, adaptable practice capable of preparing students for both religious leadership and active participation in an interconnected world.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusion

This study examined the implementation of the *muḥāḍarah* program at Pondok Pesantren Raudhatul Muta'allimīn, focusing on its structure, supporting and inhibiting factors, and contributions to students' public speaking skills. The findings reveal that *muḥāḍarah* is conducted three times weekly in a trilingual format—Bahasa Indonesia, English, and Arabic—through a structured sequence that includes opening remarks, Qur'anic recitation, speech delivery, key point extraction, and a closing segment. This consistent framework supports the gradual improvement of students' confidence, linguistic competence, and rhetorical abilities.

Supporting factors identified in this study include institutional regulations that mandate participation, integration of classroom learning into speech topics, constructive feedback from peers and teachers, and mentorship from senior students. These elements collectively create a conducive environment for skill development and personal growth. However, challenges remain in the form of limited extrinsic motivation, insufficient facilities, uneven language proficiency, and time constraints within the pesantren's schedule.

The study also demonstrates that *muḥāḍarah* contributes significantly to multiple dimensions of student development—cognitive, linguistic, socio-emotional, and cultural. By offering regular opportunities for structured speech practice in multiple languages, the program enhances critical thinking, listening skills, improvisation, and metalinguistic awareness. These outcomes align with contemporary educational goals that emphasize communication competence as an essential twenty-first-century skill.

In relation to existing literature, the findings affirm and extend previous research on pesantren pedagogy and public speaking training. The trilingual rotation, audience engagement through key point extraction, and integration of Islamic ethical values present a unique model that bridges traditional religious education and modern skill development. This positions *muḥāḍarah* as both a heritage practice and a forward-looking pedagogical tool adaptable to broader educational contexts.

Recommendations

Based on the results of this study, several recommendations can be made to enhance the effectiveness of the *muḥāḍarah* program:

1. Strengthening Motivation Mechanism; Introduce recognition systems such as best-speaker awards, certificates, or public commendations to foster both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation among participants.
2. Upgrading Facilities; Invest in better sound systems, lighting, and stage arrangements to improve the quality of speech delivery and audience engagement.
3. Language Proficiency Support; Provide additional training sessions or language workshops to help students, especially those with lower proficiency in English and Arabic, prepare more effectively for their assigned speeches.
4. Time Management Optimization; Adjust the pesantren's schedule to allocate adequate preparation time for *muḥāḍarah*, ensuring that students can research, rehearse, and refine their speeches without compromising other learning activities.
5. Expanding Thematic Scope; Encourage a wider range of topics within the ethical and cultural framework of the pesantren, allowing students to address contemporary issues alongside religious themes to broaden their perspectives.
6. Systematic Evaluation Framework; Develop clear assessment rubrics for evaluating speech performance, covering aspects such as content organization, language accuracy, delivery style, and audience engagement, to standardize feedback and track progress over time.

By implementing these recommendations, Pondok Pesantren Raudhatul Muta'allimīn—and other pesantren with similar programs—can further optimize *muḥāḍarah* as a holistic educational tool, preparing students not only for religious leadership but also for active participation in the global communication landscape.

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Conflict of Interest Statement

The authors affirm that there are no conflicts of interest, whether financial, institutional, or personal, that could have influenced the writing or publication of this article.

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