Innovative Leadership Management:
The Pattern of School Quality Development at SMP Muhammadiyah 2 Inovasi Malang

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Abstract

This study aimed to examine innovative school leadership management in order to improve school quality. Innovation strategies in the aspects of school leadership include the promotion of the work ethic of human resources, implementation of the curriculum, learning methods and media, and school facilities and infrastructure. This research was conducted by direct field observation at SMP Muhammadiyah 2 Inovasi, Malang, thus involving in depth interview and repeated observations. This research applied qualitative approach with descriptive analysis to describe the object of study comprehensively. The results showed that school management based on innovation as a strategy to improve school quality had proven successful. In the end, the school experienced an increase in the number of enrolled students, academic and non-academic achievements. Moreover, the number of graduates who continued to a higher level was doubled.

Keywords: Innovation, School Management, Principle, School Leadership, Teacher Quality
Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji manajemen kepemimpinan sekolah yang inovatif dalam rangka meningkatkan kualitas sekolah. Strategi inovasi pada aspek kepemimpinan sekolah di antaranya meliputi bidang pemajuan etos kerja sumber daya manusia, implementasi kurikulum, metode dan media pembelajaran, serta sarana dan prasarana sekolah. Penelitian ini dilakukan dengan observasi lapangan di SMP Muhammadiyah 2 Inovasi Malang secara langsung, sehingga melibatkan penggalian data wawancara tatap muka secara mendalam dan pengamatan secara berulang-ulang. Metode penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan analisis deskriptif yang bertujuan menggambarkan obyek kajian secara komprehensif. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa manajemen sekolah berbasis inovasi sebagai strategi meningkatkan kualitas sekolah terbukti berhasil. Pada akhirnya, sekolah tersebut mengalami peningkatan jumlah siswa pendaftar, prestasi akademik dan non-akademik meningkat, dan jumlah lulusannya seratus persen melanjutkan ke jenjang yang lebih tinggi.

Kata Kunci: Inovasi, Manajemen Sekolah, Kepala Sekolah, Kepemimpinan Sekolah, Kualitas Guru

Introduction

The modern era demanded a transformation in the field of education, including management aspect of the principal’s leadership. In Indonesia, for example, a number of reports from mainstream media had found gaps in the management of Islamic education (Sahin, 2018). One of the reasons was that the school’s leadership capital was not strong enough to bring innovation to make the schools they lead well qualified. Other gaps that occurred started from teachers, management, facilities, curriculum, and so on. However, the main cause of the gap was the principal’s leadership model. The principal was the spearhead of the school itself (Brooks & Mutohar, 2018; Nurabadi et al., 2021; Hidayat & Wulandari, 2020)

The development of educational institutions, especially Islamic educational institutions, was progressing rapidly (Aquino et al., 2021). This could be seen from the number of Islamic schools or madrasas that had achieved academic and non-academic achievements at various levels (Muhsin & Ahmad, 2019). Muslims were starting to rise and were aware of the importance of advanced and superior education, since superior education would produce a generation that was able to compete in modern era that full of competition (Abdullah, 2019; Ahmad &
Rochimah, 2021). In addition, it could also be seen through the large number of conglomerate communities or the upper middle class who put their children to Islamic educational institutions, ranging from early education to higher education. This showed that Islamic educational institutions had started to rise and were able to face the flow of globalization with the spirit of working hard and tirelessly (Saputra et al., 2020).

This situation was certainly different from the situation in 1984, where Muslims tended to be lagging behind in the aspect of education. Based on research conducted by Ahmad Tafsir in 1984, Islamic schools were still left behind Catholic schools. Of course, it was only in general or just average, because there were also Islamic schools that were able to compete or become favorites and were even prestigious at national level. However, even then that was not much (Ommaya, 1995). The measurement used to determine the quality of schools was the number of graduates who continued to higher education. After further research, it turned out that the cause that lowering the quality of Islamic schools was school management, principals, and that Islamic school teachers who did not able to achieve national education quality standards (Alkouatli, 2018).

The current situation is different from the New Order era. It turns out that Muslims are aware of their setbacks and are trying to catch up with them in various ways along with the times. Muslims, in terms of education, continue to improve themselves and learn from mistakes in order to catch up. Especially in Islamic educational institutions, Muslims have fixed all lines of problems that exist in educational institutions so that Islamic educational institutions are ready to move forward and compete globally (Huda, Muawanah, et al., 2020). This can be seen from the emergence of new schools that get achievements and then attract public interest to put their children to these Islamic educational institutions. Among the Islamic educational institutions that have been able to have lunch are MAN Insan Cendikia Serpong, Banten, MAN 3 Malang, Malang, MAN Model in various places, MTsN 1 Malang, MTs Surya Buana Malang, Islamic educational institutions Hidayatullah and Sabilillah Malang, SD Muhammadiyah Sapen Yogyakarta, SD Muhammadiyah Samarinda, and many others. This is one of the indications that Muslims are starting to rise and move forward.

Leadership is an important role in an educational institution because it is a direction and a goal (The Wallace Foundation, 2013). Leadership quality of the principal plays an important role in running the school, because it is the principal who determines policies, regulations, discipline, and others that are strategic and innovative. It is the principal who determines whether the school has good quality or not. Effective principal leadership can be demonstrated by the ability of innovation and strategy in reading situations and conditions related to the work climate in an organization that is shown (Alammar, 2015), For example,
with the high and low rate of absenteeism from subordinates at work, the number of employees who ask to quit, the low work discipline of employees, the high and low productivity of employees, and the number of complaints from employees, both openly and secretly.

The success of the principal’s leadership as an educational institution requires the role of a leader, manager, and administrator who is able to make changes and maintain the sustainability of the school. Madrasas principals are required to be able to optimize all madrasas resources that contribute to improve the quality of education in madrasas (Sunaengsih et al., 2019). Furthermore, the success of schools in carrying out their educational aspects depends on the leadership strategy of the principal in running their organization in educational institutions or schools. The principal as the leader of the educational institution unit is the manager of existing resources in the school and the implementer of the concept of leadership (Wibowo & Saptono, 2017). If the principal’s leadership is successful and able to make changes in such a way and is able to optimize the existing resources in the school, then the school will run more advanced and of high quality. In fact, it is possible that the school could become a leading school at the national level.

Schools that are of high quality and become excellent schools also face problems and obstacles in the process. However, how can the principal’s persistence be tested to be able to make changes in all elements to make the school superior? This is where the readiness and leadership quality of the principal in running the organization must be able to face obstacles, problems, conflicts so that the organization can still exist (Farah, 2013). To face challenges in the world of organizations, how do leaders innovate in order to adapt to the conditions of the times while reading, running, and anticipating the possibilities of all the obstacles they will face in order to achieve their goals? Furthermore, the task of a school principal is not only in management (organizing and managing) and administration as happened in a backward school, but also building motivation and work initiatives to work orientation (providing instructions to teachers, emphasizing the importance of carrying out tasks well, instilling confidence in subordinates in carrying out the work) (Everard et al., 2004). This is where the innovation ability of the principal with all the power, ability, knowledge, and experience of a principal is tested.

Principals are successful if they understand the existence of the school as a complex and unique organization, and are able to carry out the role of the principal as someone who is given the responsibility to lead, act and make changes (Msila, 2011). It is complex and unique in nature. Schools, as organizations, require a high level of coordination. It is complex because school is an organization in which there are various dimensions that are interrelated and mutually determine each other. While the unique nature shows school as an organization that has certain characteristics that are not shared by other
organizations. The success of a school is a reflection of the success of every principal’s innovation. The success and failure of subordinates is a direct reflection of the success or failure of a leader. Even research about successful schools in New York shows that you will never find a good school led by a low-quality principal (Hartinah et al., 2020). Good schools will always have good principals and good principals are able to innovate and are ready to face all risks from the causes they do. Thus principal must be responsible for all actions taken by subordinates.

Based on data from the Ministry of Education and Culture, there were 208,000 school principals in Indonesia. Information from Institute for the Development and Empowerment of Principals (LPPKS) stated that the appointment of school principals by regional heads had not fully complied with the provisions of Ministry of Education and Culture. Only 275 districts or cities had followed the design of Ministry of Education and Culture for the preparation of school principals. Even Muhammad Hatta as the Head of the Center for Educational Personnel Development of the Ministry of Education and Culture said, “principals or supervisors still tend to carry out administrative tasks. In fact, leadership in learning was needed so that education services in each school run according to standards” (Kompas, April 4, 2015). To make a school that can provide educational services according to standards, it takes qualified principal who is able to make strategies and innovations to face all problems and challenges of the times.

Strategy is a plan that contains a comprehensive way and integrates all available resources and capabilities to work and strive for long-term goals to win the competition. Strategy is a powerful and unavoidable management instrument, not only for survival and winning the competition but also for growth and development (Yildiz & Selim, 2015). School strategy describes the methods and approaches used to achieve strategic objectives. In determining a strategy, whether for an organization that has written or unwritten directions and goals, it is necessary to pay attention to various things, including the ability of human resources and budget. Therefore, herein lies the principal role in determining strategic steps to bring changes in order to win the competition (Felisardo et al., 2019).

Principals are expected to have skills, knowledge, and training in diagnosis and application in order to understand change. Leaders must be able to identify problems, analyze it, and implement the result (Torii & Carmen, 2013). Even the strategies that must be considered to win the competition, one of the main focuses is understanding the position and movement of competitors; First, who should be the target of the school’s competitors and what steps should be taken; Second, what is the competitor’s strategic move and how seriously must it be considered and what must be strengthened to face competitors; and Third, what to do to avoid an emotional response that can ultimately win the competition.
Therefore, once the school has decided how the school is going to be managed, consistency is needed. The three components above are processes that must be carried out by a school principal on how he will innovate in all lines of educational life or institutions.

The innovations made by the principal have an effect on the environment, subordinates, school activities, learning models, and even up to the example. Schools that can compete are schools led by innovator principals (Wibowo & Saptono, 2017). As leader in school, the principal must be aware that the success of leadership is strongly dependent and influenced by all school members (Jayanti & Senam, 2017). Therefore, the principal plays an important role and is a part in success or failure. The principal must be able to understand and deal with various problems that arise, then deal with it quickly and appropriately and must be open to receiving suggestions and criticism, and accepting constructive renewal ideas.

This is in line with what happened at SMP Muhammadiyah 2 Innovation, Malang, which was led by a leader who was able to change the condition of his school for being better. In 2010/2011 school year, the school only got two new students. However, in 2010, the school principal changed and was continued by a new leader. The results were extraordinary with the changes that occurred, marked by an increase in the number of students from year to year. In the first academic year, the school accepted 18 students, then got 38 students in the 2nd year, then got 58 students in the 3rd year, then got 80 students in the next 4th year, so that until now the number of students who entered each year is about 75-80 students. Initially, this school was difficult to compete with other schools. Now it has grown rapidly and can compete and its graduates continue to higher education levels.

In addition, the new school principal made some policies. The first was that teachers should focus on teaching only at SMP Muhammadiyah 2 Inovasi Malang and should not hold concurrent teaching positions in other schools. The second was that teacher salaries are increased, so teachers could work enthusiastically and that their discipline were emphasized and should be accompanied by a sense of sincerity and struggle, constructing new buildings, involving teachers for training, and re-training teachers who were considered less qualified (Interview with the Principal). Moreover, SMP Muhammadiyah 2 Inovasi had been used as a reference for comparative studies of 80 junior high school principals throughout West Java, as reported by the Malang Post, August 10, 2016 edition. This was inseparable from the struggle of a leader who served to successfully change the school’s management to be of high quality.

**Research Method**

This research used qualitative approach. The type of research in this case was a case study. Case study is a comprehensive description and explanation of
various aspects of an individual, a group, an organization (community), a program, or a social situation. Therefore, the researcher collected complete information by using various data collection procedures based on predetermined time (Arikunto, 2006). Case study is a suitable strategy to answer the research questions regarding how or why on events to be investigated in real life contexts (Dwijoyo, 2018).

Data collection techniques applied in this research were interview, observation, and documentation. In this case, the researcher observed directly and recorded events of change that took place from time to time during the school leadership. The main interview informants were the principal, teachers, employees, and other staffs as the main and additional data. Observation was done by observing the phenomenon in the object of research. Researchers observed patterns of management, organization, learning activities and the completeness of school facilities and infrastructure. Data collection, then documentation, was defined as an effort to obtain data and information in the form of written notes or images stored related to the problem under study. The data obtained were in the form of school master documents, policy data, curriculum, learning tools, student data, list of facilities and infrastructure, and photographs.

The data analysis began with examining the available data sources from various sources that have been obtained, then continued by carrying out data reduction which is done by making abstractions, compiling in the form of data presentation units, then categorizing according to the order to be concluded temporarily, and checking the validity of the data (verification).

Result and Discussion

Educational innovation is a process that must be carried out continuously in order to face ever-changing life and at the same time solve educational problems (Guzman & Jaillier-Castrillon, 2021). The innovation process is divided into three stages: producing, evaluating, and implementing ideas. Experts in the field of innovation assumed that innovative behavior consisted of two stages; the stage of idea generation (initiation) and implementation (Zimmerman & Moylan, 2009). As the data obtained, innovation of educational institutions or schools at SMP Muhammadiyah 2 Malang This innovation was realized due to the seriousness of the principal who had ideas and implemented ideas and dared to take risks to make changes to revive the spirit of developing school quality so that they could compete with other schools (Raihani, 2017). Previously, the quality of schools was in a state of decline from year to year until its peak in 2010 only had 2 students enrolled. After the appointment of a new leader, many ideas and changes were made to improve the quality of the school again.

This was as expressed by Udin Saefuddin that educational innovation was important and needed to be carried out continuously from time to time, due to
changing and uncertain times, conditions, social, and nature. Educational innovation was carried out in order to answer the demands of modern times and at the same time to adapt to changing conditions (Sugiyono, 2016). The same thing was also expressed by Hasbullah that education reform is a new response to educational problems. The main task of educational reform is to solve the problems encountered in the world of education, both conventionally and in innovative ways (Janíková & Kowaliková, 2017).

The strategies and steps for educational innovation carried out by school principals were as follows; Spiritual strategies had a meaning to achieve the goals of social change determined by the help of the spiritual dimension (spirit, divinity). The spiritual dimension was always directly related to the divine reality, God the Almighty (tawhid). The trick was that the principal invites his subordinates or staffs to make social changes together by understanding and internalizing His attributes in living life according to Allah instructions and imitating Allah Apostle and sincerely whose goal was to get Allah pleasure (Munifah et al., 2019). Doing work as teachers and employees in schools is not solely because of material needs, but because of God’s command to convey knowledge and educate generations to become people who have faith and piety and are able to master technology.

Facilitative strategies means that in order to achieve the social change goals that have been determined, the provision of facilities is prioritized, so that the social change program will run easily and smoothly. The principal of SMP Muhammadiyah 2 Innovation Malang has tried to provide school facilities and infrastructure in various ways and experiences taken to meet school needs.
Previously, SMP Muhammadiyah 2 Inovasi Malang only has 2 locations for infrastructure (buildings) for classrooms and a teacher’s office, which were outdated and in disrepair. As the latest data in the field, Muhammadiyah Middle School has classrooms, library rooms, laboratory rooms, educator rooms, administrative rooms, educational equipment, educational media in the form of IT, books and the like. This refers to government regulation or the minister of education and culture, number 19 of 2005 article 42 point 1, that every education unit is required to have facilities which include furniture, educational equipment, educational media, books, and other teaching resources, consumables, and other equipment. needed to support an orderly and continuous learning process. Furthermore, Article 42 point 2 adds that every education unit is required to have infrastructure which includes land, classrooms, education unit leadership room, educator room, administration room, library, laboratory, workshop room, production unit room, canteen, power and service installations, sports venues, places of worship, places to play, places to be creative, and other places needed to support an orderly and continuous learning process.

**Improving the Quality of Human Resources**

Teachers act as managers of the teaching and learning process, act as facilitators who create teaching and learning conditions, develop learning materials well, improve students’ ability to receive lessons (Huda, Muawanah, et al., 2020). To improve competence and change functions and make teachers as facilitators, motivators, mediators, counselors and evaluators, it is necessary to develop further quality, such as attending courses, training, workshops, lectures to a higher level, and other activities related to improving education. Data found at SMP Muhammadiyah 2 Inovasi Malang shows that the principal told teachers to always attend training activities, workshops, courses held by institutions (universities), city education offices and central government agencies.

The principal required all teachers to attend workshops in order to improve skills and hone teacher knowledge (Huda, Tsani, et al., 2020). The teacher’s role eventually changed from being a source of knowledge to becoming a facilitator, motivator, mediator and so on. This was in line with what was expressed by Usman, that the teacher acted as a manager of the teaching and learning process, acted as a facilitator who created teaching and learning conditions, developed lesson materials well, increased student’s ability to receive lessons (Brooks & Mutohar, 2018). Previously, principals used a persuasion strategy. Persuasive strategies (persuasive strategies), which means to achieve the goals of social change by persuading or seducing so that the target of change or the client would follow the planned social change. Principals using a persuasion strategy by becoming a teacher at Muhammadiyah Junior High School Innovation should be fully focused and loyal, not allowed to be a teacher...
in other schools. Then the principal provided a guarantee in the form of an increase in salary to the Malang City Average Minimum Wage so that their needs were fulfilled. This is in line with Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs in (Lafrarchi, 2020) which includes physiological needs, security & safety, self-esteem, social, and self-actualization.

The 2013 design curriculum and school culture curriculum or full day school is a clear path that is traversed by educators or teachers who train people to develop their knowledge, skills, and attitudes (Sagala et al., 2019). The 2013 curriculum is a form of the latest curriculum innovation as an answer to an increasingly modern world and increasingly sophisticated technology and learning media. In the 2013 curriculum the learning models have changed and varied, such as active learning, cooperative learning, discovery learning, quantum, independent and so on, all of which are student-centered (student center) (Maxwell et al., 2004). The curriculum applied at SMP Muhammadiyah 2 Inovasi Malang is the 2013 curriculum. The 2013 curriculum is a character and competency-based curriculum that was born as a form of innovation and answers the problems faced by the world of education. As a follow-up to the character-based program, SMP Muhammadiyah 2 Inovasi Malang also created a school culture curriculum or full day school. In the school culture curriculum or full day school, material for practicing characters of daily life is taught, such as morals, etiquette, manners, worship practices, mental spirituality and others.

**Improving Learning Strategies**

Learning actually functions to equip students' abilities to access various information needed in learning (Ghavifekr & Rosdy, 2015). The learning model used by teachers at SMP Muhammadiyah 2 Innovation Malang was no longer classic method. They already applied the latest learning method. In the latest learning theory, the function of the teacher was to equip students with the ability to select the information needed. In the applied learning model, there were several learning models that had been found by researchers. The latest learning methods include active learning, cooperative learning (Tran et al., 2014), discovery learning, quantum, and independent learning. The form of learning was “student centered” implemented through active learning, independent learning, cooperative learning, and collaborative learning. Students were not treated according to their wishes, but were treated as they should be students who were active, creative, and developing. This learning model was based on the statement of Confucius 2400 years ago, “what I heard, I forgot; what I see, I remember; what I do, I understand (Sharma, 2018).

Furthermore, learning is not only in the classroom, but also outside the classroom/school environment. Learning outside the classroom is the application of learning materials taught in the classroom that are character building. Therefore, in order for the material to be understood by students, it must be done
in the form of practice or experience in the surrounding environment. Learning outside the classroom includes worshiping activities (dhuhur, dzuhur and ashar prayer). Learning outside the classroom is the application of several subject matter delivered in classroom, such as social studies, Civic Education, Islamic Education, and Muhammadiyah.

**Impact of Innovation on Graduates**

Quality in the field of education includes the quality of inputs, processes, outputs, and outcomes (Gull & Shehzad, 2015). The standard measure of the quality of graduates can be seen and assessed from the test scores and the percentage of graduates of SMP Muhammadiyah 2 Inovasi Malang. In addition, there are still things that are used in terms of assessing the quality of schools, which is how much output or graduates continue and are accepted in quality secondary schools. Graduates at SMP Muhammadiyah 2 Inovasi Malang, seem to have passed one hundred percent since the last five years or since the new leadership era of the principal. In fact, all students who pass will continue to a higher level, for example MAN 3 Malang, SMKN in the city of Malang and so on. This shows that SMP Muhammadiyah 2 Inovasi Malang meets the standards for measuring the quality of graduates. This is as expressed by Syaiful Sagala, that is a school can be said to be of quality if school achievement, especially students’ achievements, shows high achievement in academic achievement, namely report cards and graduation scores meet the specified standards, have honesty values, piety and decency, and then have a high responsibility and ability which is manifested in the form of skills in accordance with the basic knowledge he received at school (Gillies, 2016).

Innovation is a strategy that must be understood and implemented by every school principal in the face of increasingly fierce competition. Principals who are able to innovate will be able to win the competition, vice versa. If the principal is unable to make innovation, he will be left behind and not in demand by the community. Likewise, the incident that occurred at SMP Muhammadiyah 2 Inovasi Malang. Before there was a change of principal in 2010, the condition of SMP Muhammadiyah 2 Inovasi Malang declined from year to year, there was no significant innovation breakthrough, school facilities and infrastructure relied on what they were.

However, school quality improves after the change of principal. The new principal could create new ideas and innovations in all lines of SMP Muhammadiyah 2 Inovasi Malang, starting from improvement of facilities, human resources, and learning quality to change the ordinary school system into full day school system. This had an impact to the quality of graduates, and also the increase the quantity of graduates who were accepted in favorite schools. Furthermore, the number of registrants had increased dramatically from year to year. Of course, this is an innovation from the principal and his employees who
previously departed from the ideas he found. Therefore, innovation is an important thing that must be understood and done by every human being engaged in education.

The strategy of the principal of SMP Muhammadiyah 2 Inovasi Malang to improve the school, especially the quality of graduates, was to build strong interpersonal relationships, to keep the minds of employees open to criticism and constructive advice, to maintain a progressive attitude and look forward to the future, to be proud of and appreciate achievements and work, and to accept responsibility and attend training. This can be seen from the data found in the field, for example in building strong interpersonal relationships by sincerely working, keeping employees’ minds open between teachers by including trainings, workshops and so on, as well as providing salary increases for teachers who have high work integrity that does not calculate profit and loss (Firmansyah et al., 2022).

In addition, the principal also improved the ability of teachers by re-training teachers to the master level education. Furthermore, the procurement of learning media in the form of IT learning media technology (technology and information) and optimizing the use of these media. Next is the application of time discipline at work, because this is one indicator of a person's success in achieving educational goals. The last is a school promotion activity to elementary schools both public and private, aiming to introduce SMP Muhammadiyah 2 Inovasi Malang to the public. The strategy adopted by the principal is in line with Sagala’s statement, that strategy is a comprehensive plan that integrates all resources and capabilities with a long-term goal of winning the competition (Lestari et al., 2019).

Conclusion

Educational institutions or schools at the beginning of their emergence were conservative. In its development, educational institutions must be able to innovate and be ready to make changes either partially or completely to face the development of era. For this reason, innovation is the right step to answer the problems and challenges in the modern era like today. The main aspects of innovation in an educational institution include human resources (teachers and employees), educational curriculum, learning models, learning media, and infrastructure.

SMP Muhammadiyah 2 Inovasi Malang is one of the schools that is able to carry out various innovations in all lines of school components in a short time. His innovations cover these five areas; improving human resources (teachers and employees) by participating in various trainings, workshops, courses and lecturing teachers to the Masters level; designing the latest curriculum (2013) by collaborating with the full day school curriculum; changing the student-centered
learning model; optimization of IT-based learning media and; procurement of school infrastructure facilities to create a comfortable and conducive atmosphere for student learning.

The impact of the innovation made by the principal has produced something extraordinary. The number of students from year to year increases significantly. The achievements obtained continue to increase. The number of graduates is a hundred percent with satisfactory grades and is accepted at favorite schools in Malang. Even based on news information, SMP Muhammadiyah 2 Inovasi Malang has also became a reference for comparative studies by 80 junior high school principals throughout West Java.

The role of the principal in seeking and improving school quality will determine school quality in the future. All school elements should work together to improve school quality. Principal has a strategic position and important role in triggering all elements of school organizations. This school, led by an innovative and hard-working principal, will improve its quality and be able to compete. Therefore, principals must make innovative changes in all fields of education in order to produce quality graduates and compete with other advanced schools.

This simple research seeks to reveal the principal's strategies and tricks in moving teachers and employees to work hard to advance and improving the school. Besides that, it is also a way to improve the quality of graduates and attract public interest in the current context. Therefore, hopefully this can be continued by other studies.
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