



The use of audiobooks as an alternative language learning in elementary school

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ABSTRACT

Learning a foreign language is highly recommended to start during childhood, requiring adjustments to learning media for easier understanding. Audiobooks can be an alternative to foreign language learning, especially for elementary school students. This research aims to observe the process of using audiobooks in foreign language learning and guide educators to utilize the potential of audiobooks as a varied instructional medium. This study employs a descriptive research method. The results indicate that students using audiobooks experience improved learning outcomes and increased engagement in the learning process. Audiobooks allow students to repeat material until they understand it. However, there are still four challenges in implementation: difficulty in comprehension and letter usage principles, inability to understand what is being read, lack of motivation to read, and not all students having easy access. Therefore, educators play a crucial role as facilitators to enhance students' competencies in learning a foreign language using audiobooks. In conclusion, the use of audiobooks in foreign language learning has positive impacts, but guidance from educators is essential in its implementation.

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ABSTRAK

Belajar bahasa asing sangat dianjurkan untuk dimulai saat individu masih berada dalam usia anak-anak, sehingga perlu penyesuaian terhadap media pembelajaran agar anak-anak lebih mudah memahami bahasa yang dipelajari. *Audiobook* dapat menjadi alternatif yang dapat digunakan dalam belajar bahasa asing terutama untuk siswa yang berada di bangku sekolah dasar. Tujuan dari penelitian adalah untuk melihat proses penggunaan *audiobook* dalam belajar bahasa asing dan juga mengarahkan guru untuk memanfaatkan potensi *audiobook* sebagai variasi media pembelajaran. Jenis penelitian ini menggunakan metode studi pustaka. Hasil dari studi pustaka diperoleh bahwa siswa yang menggunakan *audiobook* mengalami peningkatan hasil belajar dan peningkatan keaktifan dalam pembelajaran, karena dengan *audiobook* siswa dapat mengulang materi sampai berhasil memahaminya. Selain hal itu, dalam penerapannya masih terdapat empat hambatan yakni, (1) pemahaman yang sulit dan prinsip penggunaan huruf; (2) ketidakmampuan untuk memahami apa yang sedang dibaca; (3) kurangnya motivasi untuk membaca; dan (4) tidak semua peserta didik memiliki akses yang mudah. maka dari itu perlu adanya peran guru sebagai fasilitator supaya dapat meningkatkan kompetensi-kompetensi yang belum terpenuhi siswa dalam belajar bahasa asing menggunakan *audiobook* tersebut. Kesimpulannya penggunaan *audiobook* dalam mempelajari bahasa asing mempunyai dampak yang baik, namun dalam penerapannya perlu dibimbing oleh guru.

Kata Kunci: *audiobook*; bahasa asing; sekolah dasar

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INTRODUCTION

Living in the era of globalization encourages individuals to possess foreign language skills. Foreign languages serve as a crucial key to surviving in the globalized era; however, this does not mean that the mother tongue becomes a neglected language. Every individual needs to be equipped with foreign language proficiency so that they have at least the ability to speak two languages: the mother tongue and a foreign language. Learning a foreign language is not something difficult. It is highly recommended that foreign language learning begins during childhood. Children have the advantage of being able to absorb and understand what they learn easily and quickly (Maili, 2018). Children need to learn foreign languages, especially English, as preparation for their future. Learning foreign languages for children presents its own unique challenges.

Learning methods need to be adjusted so that children can understand the language being studied. Foreign language learning methods for children can be designed to be engaging and up-to-date, in line with technological developments. Various advanced technologies have emerged, offering features to serve as media in the learning process (Hadiapurwa *et al.*, 2021). One of the challenges in learning a foreign language is not knowing how to pronounce words. Therefore, audio media becomes a promising tool in foreign language learning. However, it turns out that audio media alone cannot fully optimize the ease of learning a foreign language. There needs to be visual support that presents the written form of the foreign language being studied. Hence, audiobooks become an alternative that can be used in foreign language learning, especially for students at the elementary school level.

An audiobook is a book that is read aloud in audio form so that the reader can listen to it (Nafisah & Budiarto, 2022). According to Baskin and Harris, the concept of the audiobook originated from the idea that "first literature was heard, not read" (Mamat *et al.*, 2021). The initial presence of audiobooks was intended to facilitate learning for individuals who are blind. Those with visual impairments can be assisted through audio in the form of voice recordings that read the contents of a book. Over time, audiobooks have evolved and attracted a growing number of users. Audiobook users experience learning through narrated voice recordings. The voice recordings in audiobooks are identical to the written content of the book. Audiobooks have become a beneficial option for students learning foreign languages. This is because, by using audiobooks, students can learn both visually and auditorily at the same time.

Learners will be interested in using audiobooks to study foreign languages because they will be able to recognize the correct spelling and pronunciation of the words being learned. Learners will find it easier to understand and remember foreign vocabulary when they study by seeing the written form in a book and hearing the pronunciation through voice recordings. The use of audiobooks in foreign language learning (EFL) can enhance learning effectiveness, particularly in reading speed and reading motivation, as well as improve learning outcomes (Sari *et al.*, 2023; Tismagamet, 2020). Although audiobooks have demonstrated potential in the field of foreign language learning, further research is needed regarding their use among learners. One challenge in utilizing audiobooks for foreign language learning is that teachers must ensure the audiobooks used are appropriate and adaptable to the learners' needs (Annisa *et al.*, 2023). Additionally, there are challenges in ensuring that the use of audiobooks aligns with and functions effectively as a medium for acquiring foreign language proficiency.

The need to research and understand audiobooks as a medium in the context of foreign language teaching, particularly in elementary schools, makes this study necessary. As a new approach to enhancing the educational experience for learners, the use of audiobooks is becoming increasingly popular due to technological advancements and easier access to digital materials. Nevertheless, comprehensive research on the benefits and approaches to using audiobooks in foreign language instruction remains limited, especially for elementary school students. This research is needed to close the knowledge gap, with the primary aim of investigating how elementary learners use audiobooks to improve their foreign

language proficiency. This is important because, by providing learners with an alternative and potentially more engaging learning environment, audiobooks can increase enthusiasm and learner engagement—particularly in elementary schools—during the learning process. This study also aims to evaluate its effectiveness as an alternative teaching strategy, which may offer new perspectives for teachers on how to incorporate audiobook technology into their instructional practices.

LITERATURE REVIEW

History of Audiobook Development

The evolution of audiobook production is a fascinating subject that has undergone major changes throughout history. Audiobooks have gained significant popularity as a way to consume literature, especially among individuals with visual impairments or those who prefer listening over reading. Audiobooks originated in the early 19th century following the invention of the phonograph by Thomas Edison in 1877 (Osborne, 2016). Early technology laid the foundation for audiobook development, eventually leading to the production of the first talking books in the 1930s (Van-Maas, 2018).

In the 1950s, the American Foundation for the Blind (AFB) initiated audiobook production in the form of vinyl records. These records were then distributed to libraries and schools serving the blind (Bell, 2023). Early audiobooks were primarily educational resources, and the first fiction audiobook, "Anne of Green Gables," was published in 1961 (Walsh & Antoniak, 2021). In the 1980s, cassette tapes were introduced and quickly became the dominant audiobook medium until digital technology emerged (Colbjørnsen, 2015). The 1990s marked a pivotal moment in the audiobook industry with the introduction of digital audio technology, enabling the production of compact discs (CDs) and digital files (Pedrero-Esteban & Barrios-Rubio, 2024). In the 21st century, audiobooks have evolved further with the rise of streaming services and downloadable audiobooks (Singh & Alexander, 2022). Audiobook development has incorporated deep learning technology to accurately anticipate emotional intensity and sound impact in narration, as well as to generate voices that match story characters (Kumar et al., 2023). Audiobooks can also assist in revising older texts, serving as tools for understanding literary works. Governments, businesses, authors, and book publishers need to provide audiobook content from both textbooks and fiction books (Zell, 2019).

Audiobook Concept

An audiobook can be easily described as a form of recorded media that reads aloud the contents of a book, such as scientific textbooks, fiction books, encyclopedias, biographies, or other types of books. Based on this, audiobooks are ultimately categorized as a type of book based on audio media or audio technology (sound), relying solely on hearing without any visual graphics being displayed. Audiobooks are one form of alternative educational media designed to assist non-verbal individuals or those who do not enjoy reading. In addition, they serve as valuable resources for individuals with visual impairments (Rizal et al., 2022). The process of creating an audiobook involves conducting a needs analysis, developing the audiobook, recording and editing the audio, reviewing any necessary adjustments, testing the final product, and finally utilizing the audiobook (Moore & Cahill, 2016). Audiobooks can also facilitate understanding of book content without the need to read, and they can assist in mastering foreign or regional languages. The emergence of modern information and communication technology has made audiobooks more convenient and accessible, especially through streaming services and downloadable formats (Singh & Alexander, 2022).

Advancements in audiobook production have incorporated sophisticated technologies, including vocal-instrumental separation to enhance data extraction, temporal connectionist classification to improve text-audio alignment, and voice activity detection to refine synchronization by integrating acoustic and textual information (Huang *et al.*, 2023; Singh & Alexander, 2022). The development of audiobooks has adopted deep learning technologies to accurately anticipate the level of surprise and sound impact within narratives. Additionally, it supports the creation of voices that match the characters in the story (Nakata *et al.*, 2022).

Conceptually, an audiobook is a spoken book. Audiobooks are one type of learning media frequently used in teaching and learning activities. Generally, audiobooks are chosen as instructional media in language and literature subjects. The implementation of audiobooks in classrooms has been widely practiced. Especially in language and literature subjects, audiobooks play an active role in helping students learn more easily. The use of audiobooks can serve as an alternative learning medium, particularly for elementary school students learning languages. Therefore, audiobooks are well-suited as an alternative for learning foreign languages among elementary school students.

Functions and Purposes of Audiobooks in Learning

Audiobooks serve various functions in the fields of education and literacy, offering specialized methods for engaging with textual material. They provide significant advantages for certain types of learners, such as individuals with learning disabilities, second-language learners, and readers who face difficulties. Audiobooks possess diverse capabilities, making them valuable assets in educational environments by enhancing accessibility and literary comprehension for all learners (Sari *et al.*, 2023). Moreover, educators have the opportunity to bring the situations and conditions of the material being studied into the classroom, making the learning experience more meaningful (Handayani *et al.*, 2021). The use of audiobook applications in educational settings specifically targets the improvement of listening skills and attitudes toward listening. A study was conducted to investigate the impact of audiobook applications on students' listening comprehension and engagement in the listening experience (Aydin & Tunagür 2021).

Audiobooks have gained recognition for their ability to benefit all types of readers, rather than serving only individuals with learning needs. They have demonstrated effectiveness in facilitating access to literature and fostering a love of books among diverse student populations, indicating that audiobooks can be valuable assets in educational environments for all learners, regardless of reading proficiency or preferences. Audiobooks are exceptional educational resources due to their inclusive nature, meaning they can benefit learners while also enhancing literacy skills and encouraging reading interest.

METHODS

This study employed a qualitative methodology that produced data in the form of written text. The data collection process included searching for relevant publications using the keywords “audiobook,” “bahasa asing,” and “sekolah dasar.” These documents were then examined using qualitative methods, emphasizing the processes of classification and categorization to identify patterns and key findings. The research steps involved methodical data collection based on predetermined criteria, followed by a thorough examination of the obtained data. This study is primarily bibliographic in nature and does not involve the use of specific samples.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Impact of Audiobook Use in Language Learning

Using audiobooks as a learning medium represents a form of innovation in educational technology. Audiobooks are spoken books that contain instructional material. In language learning, audiobooks aim to enhance students' language skills so they can communicate effectively both orally and in writing (Indriastuti, 2015). Audiobooks include text, images, and even sound, making them suitable for students with various learning styles. Today, audiobooks are easy to use because they are available in digital formats, and some are even accessible through streaming platforms. Students can easily access audiobooks anytime and anywhere to learn foreign language, making the use of audio media in foreign language instruction one of the viable alternatives that teachers can adopt (Fitria, 2023).

Students who use audiobooks experience improved learning outcomes and increased engagement in the learning process, as audiobooks allow them to repeat the material until they fully understand it. Moreover, using audiobooks in online learning can help overcome issues such as limitations in kuota and signal (Ningsih, 2022). Students who learn with audiobooks can enhance their communication skills and foreign language literacy (Santoso *et al.*, 2023). Audiobooks can significantly improve students' listening and auditory comprehension skills because they are media that heavily rely on sound or audio (Sari *et al.*, 2023). The use of audiobooks can stimulate students' multisensory engagement, as they simultaneously read and listen to the content or material presented in the audiobook.

Audiobooks encourage students to enhance their learning motivation. Students can study by listening to material from audiobooks while engaging in other activities. As a result, they perceive audiobooks as flexible learning media that can be used anytime and anywhere. Audiobooks stimulate students to learn by producing engaging sounds from narrators, music, and sound effects. The variety of sounds presented helps train and influence students' listening and auditory comprehension skills (Hendrayani *et al.*, 2023). Learning becomes more enjoyable, especially for elementary school students who still require diverse learning methods and adjustments to their individual learning styles, particularly auditory styles. Audiobooks can improve reading and listening skills. The use of audiobooks in the learning process demonstrates their effectiveness in enhancing listening abilities, especially among elementary school students (Un'Nisa *et al.*, 2017). Utilizing audio media can improve students' reading proficiency and facilitate more efficient topic comprehension (Widianti *et al.*, 2016).

When discussing the effects of audiobook use on language acquisition among anak-anak sekolah dasar, audiobooks are recognized as a significant advancement in educational technology. Audiobooks, a multimedia format that combines text, graphics, and sound, are designed to enhance students' proficiency in both spoken and written language. They facilitate adaptability to different learning styles and offer easy access through digital platforms, promoting flexible and effective mastery of foreign language. Students who use audiobooks demonstrate improved learning outcomes and greater engagement in the learning process. Audiobooks allow for repetition of material to deepen understanding, especially in online learning environments, thereby overcoming technical barriers such as data limitations and internet connectivity issues. Improvements in students' communication skills and foreign language proficiency have been noted, aligning with previous research findings that also highlight success in enhancing language skills. Audiobooks serve as educational instruments that foster multimodal engagement, boost learning motivation, and cultivate enjoyable learning experiences (Aurelliana & Nugraha, 2022). Various studies have demonstrated the efficacy of audiobooks in improving students' listening and comprehension abilities, while also enriching learning through captivating sound and interactive educational experiences.

Audiobooks consistently enhance students' reading, listening, and comprehension skills. Research has demonstrated the efficacy of using audiobooks as a means to improve language proficiency among children across various grade levels, from taman kanak-kanak to sekolah menengah. Audiobooks have

proven to be valuable resources for promoting diversified, adaptable, and efficient language learning. The significance of these findings highlights the need to integrate relevant and up-to-date educational technologies to enrich students' learning experiences, particularly at the sekolah dasar level.

Barriers to Using Audiobooks in Language Learning

According to [Rikmasari dan Fitriana \(2023\)](#) as well as [Anwas \(2014\)](#), there are various challenges that need to be considered when using audiobooks for language learning in sekolah dasar. The following are some potential barriers that may arise:

1. Listening Proficiency

Listening proficiency is crucial for learning through audiobooks, as students need to comprehend the auditory content provided. Students with limited auditory acuity or poor listening skills may face challenges when using audiobooks for learning purposes.

2. Reading Proficiency

Reading proficiency is essential for integrating audiobooks into language learning at the sekolah dasar level, as students must be able to independently read material that is not narrated. Students with limited or insufficient reading abilities may encounter difficulties when reading the provided texts.

3. Technology Utilization

The use of audiobooks in bahasa acquisition at the sekolah dasar level requires reliable access to technology, such as computers, smartphones, or audio devices. Students who lack access to or proficiency in technology may face challenges when using audiobooks for learning.

4. Comprehension Challenges

Students who struggle to understand the content presented in audiobooks may encounter obstacles in the learning process. The use of audiobooks for learning is not a substitute for direct instruction from teachers.

5. Interaction Challenges

The use of audiobooks for bahasa acquisition in sekolah dasar requires active engagement between students and teachers, involving conversations, questions, and responses. Students who lack the ability to interact with teachers or peers may face difficulties when using audiobooks for learning.

The trend of audiobook usage is currently experiencing a significant rise. However, it must be acknowledged that there are obstacles in its implementation. Analyzing the findings from the report by the National Research Council in the article titled "Pencegahan Kegagalan Membaca Anak," as cited by [Fachrurrozi et al., \(2021\)](#), it can be concluded that the challenges in implementing audiobooks include the following:

1. Difficulty in Understanding and Principles of Letter Usage

Audiobooks, as a form of audio-reading, may not effectively assist children in understanding the principles of spelling and the relationship between written letters and spoken language.

2. Inability to Comprehend What Is Being Read

Although audiobooks can enhance listening skills, they may not directly address difficulties in understanding written texts

3. Lack of Motivation to Read

If users develop a dependency on audiobooks, it may hinder the development of intrinsic motivation to read independently.

4. Not All Students Have Easy Access

In certain regions, obtaining audiobooks is quite difficult due to several factors such as inadequate technological infrastructure, limited availability of supporting devices, and restricted educational resources.

To address these challenges, the use of audiobooks in bahasa learning at the sekolah dasar level requires the implementation of several solutions. Audiobooks should be used alongside direct instruction from teachers, fostering interaction between students and educators. Students must possess proficient skills in listening, reading, and utilizing technology. Prioritizing the improvement of students' listening skills requires the implementation of targeted training programs specifically designed to cultivate advanced listening abilities. Headphones are a useful technology that can help children hear audio with optimal quality.

In addition, children need specialized instruction to enhance their reading abilities. Utilizing technologies such as e-books can improve students' ability to read texts easily and effectively. To ensure adequate access to technology, it is essential for students to have technological gadgets such as computers, smartphones, or audio devices. In this scenario, support from both government and private sectors can ensure that every student has sufficient access.

To enhance information comprehension, students must be instructed in the development of advanced understanding skills. Utilizing technological tools, such as instructional videos, can improve students' grasp of topics more easily and effectively. Ultimately, it is essential to increase the level of engagement between students and teachers. Training in the development of effective communication skills is crucial. The use of technology, such as communication tools, can effectively facilitate interaction between students and the teacher. By implementing these measures, it is hoped that the challenges in utilizing audiobooks for bahasa acquisition at the sekolah dasar level can be addressed more efficiently.

The Role of Teachers in Using Audiobooks as an Alternative for Language Learning

Teachers hold a central role in the teaching and learning process. They play a vital part in educational development (Ningsih, 2022). Therefore, teachers must possess the ability to encourage students to enhance their learning motivation in order to achieve successful learning outcomes. This ability should be supported by the use of appropriate strategies, models, methods, and instructional media. Learning media is one of the key elements that teachers need to consider before applying it in the learning process. Teachers must first possess, understand, and master the knowledge related to the use of instructional media. They need to be skilled in designing and utilizing creative, effective, and efficient learning media to improve student achievement.

Currently, teachers must be able to accommodate the full range of students' learning styles. They need to facilitate learning with multimodal materials, especially at the sekolah dasar level. Considering that students at the sekolah dasar age still require enjoyable learning experiences, teachers must innovate in using instructional media that stimulates students' interest in learning, particularly in language subjects. Using audiobook media is one of the instructional strategies that teachers can choose to meet this need.

The teacher's role is highly influential in the process of foreign language learning, which relies on reading and listening skills. Teachers are responsible for selecting and evaluating the use of audiobooks as appropriate media for foreign language instruction. Language learning is considered complex when not supported by learning media. Teachers facilitate foreign language learning by using audiobooks. They must ensure that the audiobooks used are appropriate and capable of enhancing the competencies that students need to achieve in foreign language learning. Teachers may design audiobooks from scratch or

simply utilize existing ones. They can select audiobooks that are relevant and engaging to help students better understand abstract material that would otherwise be presented only in text form (Ching & Tahar, 2021). According to teachers, using audiobooks allows abstract material to be explained more thoroughly. Audiobooks serve as an alternative medium used by teachers to deliver language content.

Teachers play a crucial role in utilizing audiobooks as substitutes for bahasa acquisition among anak sekolah dasar. Audiobooks provide a versatile alternative for enhancing literacy skills by complementing traditional reading techniques. They are especially beneficial for auditory learners and individuals who learn best through multimodal experiences (Marchetti & Valente, 2018). Audiobooks offer significant advantages for students with visual impairments, reading difficulties, or other disabilities, thereby improving accessibility and inclusivity in guruan. They ensure equitable access to literature and information, fostering an inclusive environment that enables all students to actively engage with academic subjects.

Effectiveness of Audiobooks as an Alternative for Language Learning

Audiobooks offer numerous benefits in language learning. Various studies have proven that audiobooks successfully enhance students' language learning abilities. Audiobooks are a highly popular alternative because they support both direct and indirect reading comprehension (Akib, 2022). Based on student responses in a study involving audiobook use, audiobooks have generally helped students understand the material and increased their engagement in reading practice. Furthermore, according to students, audiobooks have a positive impact on their ability to visualize the material, which is then retained in their memory (Tusmagambet, 2020).

Audiobooks can serve as engaging tools for integrated language learning (Alcantud-Díaz & Gregori-Signes, 2014). When learning a language using audiobooks, students are required to pay close attention to avoid misunderstandings. Using audiobooks can help students understand the form of words they see in relation to their sounds or pronunciation. Therefore, students' listening fluency will improve when they read while listening to various audiobooks (Chang, 2011). The flexible nature of audiobooks allows students to use them repeatedly anytime and anywhere, making them suitable for independent learning. By using audiobooks, students can comprehend the material in books as if someone were reading it aloud with clear and accurate pronunciation (Imawan & Ashadi, 2019).

The use of audiobooks in the classroom is just as effective as independent use. Audiobooks strongly support language materials delivered in class. Students who use audiobooks believe that they can improve reading and listening skills, assist with pronunciation, and motivate them to read and listen to more books (Kartal & Simsek, 2017). Although audiobooks may feel unfamiliar when first introduced to students, repeated use makes language learning easier. Using audiobooks in the classroom is one way to respond to the demands of modern learning in this era of globalization. Audiobooks offer many positive aspects that support their effectiveness as an alternative for language learning. These advantages include the fact that the core content of audiobooks is similar to textbooks, making listening to audiobooks equivalent to understanding textbook material; audiobooks are practical to use; they are varied and aligned with contemporary trends; they can be easily distributed; they align with Indonesian culture, which tends to favor speaking and listening over reading; they facilitate learning for students with disabilities, especially those who are visually impaired; audiobook production is relatively simple; they help preserve ancient books; they encourage deeper appreciation of literary works; and most importantly, they make learning foreign language easier (Anwas, 2014).

Based on the discussion derived from a series of literature reviews related to the use of audiobooks in language learning, it can be concluded that audiobooks serve as an alternative medium that can be used for language learning, especially for students at the sekolah dasar level. In practice, audiobooks have

been found to encourage students to increase their interest and motivation in learning languages. By using audiobooks in language learning, students are able to enhance their literacy skills. They can read and listen to the learning material simultaneously through audiobooks. Audiobooks are an effective medium for language learning. However, this approach inevitably raises both support and criticism. Some opposing views argue that audiobooks cannot replace textbooks because reading and listening are fundamentally different skills. Reading ability cannot be substituted by listening ability. Nevertheless, audiobooks are not intended to replace the function of textbooks that promote reading skills; rather, they are designed to support learning in a way that is easier, more enjoyable, and engaging. Audiobooks are one of the learning media options that teachers can choose to help students better understand the material being studied.

CONCLUSION

The findings of this study indicate that the use of audiobooks among students can enhance learning outcomes and increase engagement in the learning process. Audiobooks provide students with the opportunity to repeat content until they achieve true understanding, thereby improving comprehension during the learning process. Nevertheless, there are still many challenges to be addressed in practice. Initially, some students face difficulties in understanding the basic concepts of letter usage and sentence organization. In addition, challenges in comprehending the material being read may hinder the acquisition of deep understanding. Furthermore, students may lack the motivation needed to engage in reading, and not all students have easy access to audiobooks. Therefore, teachers play a crucial role in supporting the use of audiobooks. Teachers can assist students in overcoming these challenges and in developing the skills that have not yet been achieved in the process of foreign language learning by utilizing audiobooks. Moreover, it is recommended that teachers actively incorporate audiobooks into the curriculum and design innovative and engaging teaching methods by leveraging this technology. As such, audiobooks can serve as a powerful instrument for enhancing students' overall proficiency in foreign languages.

AUTHOR'S NOTE

The author affirms that this article does not contain any elements of plagiarism. The author has included the identities of various data sources and previous research references used in the writing of this article. The author believes that this article is an original work and, therefore, will not harm any party or result in publication conflicts.

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