

The Influence of Religiosity on Muslim Tourist's Intention Toward Muslim-Friendly Accommodation

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Abstract: This study aims to examine the religiosity impact on the selection of Muslim-friendly accommodations by Muslim tourists in Malaysia. Based on the review of the past literature, it was found that Muslims' behavioral intention to purchase is strongly influenced by their religious values. Prior research had thoroughly examined the association between religiosity and consumer behavior, but such investigations were relatively limited, particularly within the context of tourism and accommodation choices. The research will utilize a quantitative approach, gathering data through questionnaires using purposive sampling with a sample size of 300 Muslim travelers in Malaysia. The survey will be distributed both in physical and online formats to reach a diverse group of Muslim tourists, including international and domestic travelers. Data analysis will be performed using the SPSS tool. The study predicts a positive influence of religiosity, and TPB antecedents on Muslim tourists' intention towards Muslim-friendly accommodation in Malaysia, with religiosity playing a stronger moderating role than the direct role. The research aimed to understand the accommodation needs of Muslim travelers and offer tourism marketers a perspective to develop sustainable and customized accommodation options that align with Islamic teachings.

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1. Introduction

Islamic tourism is the industry that evolved rapidly in the global hospitality sector due to the increase of Muslims around the world (Baykal, 2021). As a result, many countries, both in predominantly Muslim and non-Muslim regions, have embraced Muslim-friendly accommodation to meet the diverse needs of Muslim travelers. According to the Global Muslim Travel Index-GMTI 2022, there are now 138 nations that have implemented halal tourism to accommodate the expanding halal travel sector. This number includes 28 countries with a Muslim minority. In 2023, the number of Muslim tourists' arrival is predicted to reach 140 million, rising to 160 million the following year (Crescent Rating, 2023).

As a country rich with Islamic heritage, a wide variety of halal food options, and a generally welcoming atmosphere for Muslims, Malaysia has strategically developed Muslim-friendly tourism (Irshad et al., 2022). Malaysia remains a top destination for Muslim travelers, maintaining its position in the Global Muslim Travel Index for three consecutive years (Crescent Rating, 2023). In order to ensure accommodation in Malaysia in line with Shariah, the Department of Standards Malaysia, in partnership with the Islamic Tourism Centre (ITC), introduced a standard known as Muslim Friendly Hospitality Services-Requirements MS 2610:2015 (Abd Razak et al., 2019). The standard includes specific requirements for accommodation, such as providing clean and well-maintained rooms with prayer facilities, appropriate washrooms, and halal food options (Department of Standard Malaysia, 2015). It also covers tour packages, including transportation, product selection, itinerary, and food and beverage arrangements that align with Islamic values (Department of Standard Malaysia, 2015). For tourist guides, the standard emphasizes credentials, code of conduct, appearance, and providing Muslim-friendly services (Department of Standard Malaysia, 2015). Compliance with this standard ensures Shariah compliance and customer satisfaction. Muslim-friendly accommodation attributes such as prayer facilities, halal food availability, and the absence of alcohol in minibars, are likely to attract more Muslim tourists (Bangsawan et al., 2019; Arasli et al., 2021).

Considering the growing trend, the development of Muslim-friendly accommodation has been initiated to cater to the needs of religiosity of Muslim travelers in accordance with Islamic principles. Religiosity plays a significant role in Muslims' decision-making process. Muslims are required to follow halal and haram guidelines in all aspects of their daily lives, including when they travel (Hanafiah & Hamdan, 2020). Accommodation is an essential aspect of catering to the needs of religious Muslim tourists whereby hotels can serve as a convenient space for them to fulfill their religious obligations, including performing the five

daily prayers and finding halal food options (Abd Razak et al., 2019). They expect amenities such as prayer mats, ablution facilities, water-equipped toilets, modestly dressed staff, halal food without pork or alcohol, appropriate Islamic ambiance, and segregated facilities (Bastamam, 2019).

Muslims' motivation and purchasing behavior are driven by their religious values, particularly their intention or "niyyah" (Memon, 2019; Amalia et al., 2020; Maulana & Subhani, 2021). The Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) is an application framework used to understand consumer behavior and purchase intention, consisting of three antecedents: attitude, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control (Adel, 2021). A study by Azizan, Ahmad and Affendi (2022) found that TPB variables positively influence the purchase intention of halal products in the Muslim market in Malaysia. Building on this research, this study aims to explore the impact of religiosity on intention using the TPB in selecting Muslim-friendly accommodation.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Muslim Friendly Accommodation in Malaysia

Initially, the Muslim-friendly accommodation concept in Malaysia came from the idea of the Shariah Compliant Hotel (SCH) concept, which failed to gain the support from the hotel providers in Malaysia (Hashim & Fauzi, 2022). According to Abdul Razak et al. (2019), it is due to the different interpretations of "halal" according to different "mazhab" (school of thought in Islam). Moreover, the Shariah Compliance terms seem too stringent with the tourism setting in Malaysia which catering both Muslim and non-Muslim tourists (Hashim & Fauzi, 2022). Muslim-friendly accommodation is an effort to provide products and services according to Islamic teachings, making the tourism experience enjoyable for observant Muslims (Hussain et al., 2021). Based on the study, by Muslim and Harun (2022), the term "Muslim-friendly" attracts a worldwide audience including Japan, China and Korea to promote their Muslim tourism segments. As a result, Muslim travelers are free to explore the world without avoiding their religious commitments. The term "Muslim-friendly" has a broader context been proposed in Malaysia to encompass the specific needs of Muslim tourists during travel, and these same products and services are often offered to non-Muslim travelers as well (Hanafiah & Hasan, 2022). Muslim and Harun (2022) believe that the word Muslim-friendly better fits with this new emerging tourism and hospitality sector.

Malaysia offers a lot of Muslim Friendly accommodations including in west and east Malaysia. There are about 300 hotels that offer this service in Malaysia (Halal Malaysia,

2023). Malaysia has been the preferred place for vacation among Muslim tourists where, the country was honored with the title of “Top Muslim-Friendly Destination of the Year (OIC)” at the Halal in Travel Awards held in Singapore (ITC, 2022). It has created opportunities within the hotel industry, particularly with the concept of Halal-friendly hotels. These hotels cater to the needs of Muslim and non-Muslim tourists who are attracted to the unique offerings of Halal-friendly accommodations worldwide (Hanafiah & Hasan, 2022). Muslim travelers prioritize adhering to Islamic teachings, which influence their decisions regarding leisure and travel plans. Research conducted by Jalasi and Ambad, (2020) confirmed a strong relationship between Muslims' behavioral intention to purchase and their religious values.

Department of Standard Malaysia also established its standard for Muslim-friendly accommodation which is Malaysian Standard (MS) 2610: 2015 Muslim-Friendly Hospitality Services-Requirements. The standard includes specific requirements for accommodation, such as providing clean and well-maintained rooms with prayer facilities, appropriate washrooms, and halal food options (Department of Standard Malaysia, 2015). It also covers tour packages, including transportation, product selection, itinerary, and food and beverage arrangements that align with Islamic values. For tourist guides, the standard emphasizes credentials, code of conduct, appearance, and providing Muslim-friendly services. (Department of Standard Malaysia, 2015). Compliance with this standard ensures Shariah compliance and customer satisfaction. Muslim-friendly accommodation attributes such as prayer facilities, halal food availability, and the absence of alcohol in minibars, are likely to attract more Muslim tourists (Bangsawan et al., 2019; Arasli et al., 2021). Crescent Rating (2018) identifies six main needs of Muslim travelers based on their faith. These include the provision of halal food, prayer facilities, services catering to Ramadan requirements, water-friendly washrooms, avoidance of nonhalal activities like serving alcohol and gambling, and the availability of recreational activities with privacy such as separate swimming pools and gyms. Since Muslims are required to perform daily prayers, it is important to provide facilities such as “qibla” (prayer direction), sajjada (prayer mats), musolla (prayer rooms), or mosques for Muslim tourists (Bangsawan et al., 2019). Additionally, the availability of halal food in accommodation establishments is crucial in the tourism industry (Battour & Ismail, 2016). Halal food refers to food that is prepared and served following Islamic principles. This attribute plays a vital role in attracting Muslim visitors to choose a particular hotel (Mannaa, 2020).

2.2 Religiosity

Religiosity is a term used to describe the level of religiousness and devotion exhibited by an individual. It deals with the extent to which individuals adhere to the beliefs, practices, and values of a particular religion (Brink et al., 2023). An example of religiosity in Islam is eating halal and tayyib food which is revealed in the Quran: “O you who have believed, eat from the good things which we have provided for you and be grateful to Allah if it is [indeed] Him that you worship” (The Quran 2: 172).

Religiosity influences customers’ social behavior, including purchase intention among consumers (Bukhari et al., 2020) and their perception of value and trust in a product (Nurrachmi et al., 2020). Previous research has identified that religiosity can serve as an influencing factor in decision-making related to tourism destinations (Mohamed, 2018). In this study, the inclusion of religiosity as a variable in the modified Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) is expected to enhance the prediction of intention among Muslim tourists in their choices toward Muslim-friendly accommodation. Therefore, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H1: Religiosity plays a significant role in the intention of Muslim tourists in choosing accommodation.

There are different definitions of religiosity in previous research, which have resulted in different methods of measuring it. It can be defined as a multidimensional construct that encompasses various dimensions, including beliefs, practices, attitudes, and behaviors. Measuring religiosity can be challenging, as it involves assessing a range of factors that are not always visible or tangible. Some studies have concentrated on subjective religiosity, which examines an individual’s beliefs and how religion fits into their lives. For instance, the research from Usman et al., (2022) where examines how Islamic belief can influence decision-making to purchase halal food. Other research focuses on measuring religiosity by examining the behavior of individuals, such as performing prayer in daily routine (Abror et al., 2022). Jason & Carrol (2023) argue that measuring religiosity based solely on religious practice is insufficient to fully capture the complexity and diversity of religious beliefs and practices. Yoon et al. (2020) also criticize many previous studies that have commonly treated various indicators of religiosity as separate aspects that contribute to an overall measure of religiosity.

2.3 Tools To Measure Religiosity

The choice of which tools to use to measure religiosity should be based on the research objectives (Salam et al., 2018). Religiosity can be measured using various methods and scales, depending on the specific aspects of religiosity being assessed.

An example of a tool to measure religiosity as a multidimensional aspect is the Duke University Religion Index (DUREL) (Koenig et al., 1997). DUREL is a brief instrument to assess major dimensions of religiosity. However, it is designated to evaluate Western religions (Christianity and Judaism) and may be less accurate when evaluating Eastern faiths. Krauss et al. (2005) also proposed methods to measure specifically Islamic religiosity. The scale is named as Muslim Religiosity-Personality Inventory (MRPI). The MRPI assesses two dimensions of Islamic religiosity which are Islamic worldview and Islamic personality, which includes aspects of worshiping and relationships with others and creation (Hasan et al., 2020). Makmun et al. (2023), argue that although the MRPI scale is comprehensive, the scale's large number of items may limit its practical use. Due to the previous issue on MRPI, Mahudin et al. (2016) introduced a new measuring scale of religiosity named IIUM Religiosity Scale (IIUMReIS), which addresses some criticisms of previous scales (Makmun et al., 2023). The scale focuses on three aspects: behaviors or actions (Islam), beliefs or understanding of God (Iman), and the level of devotion and manifestation of virtues towards Allah (Ihsan) which consists of 10 items. However, there are critics from Makmun et al. (2023) that the study using this method only focuses on students and Islamic institution personnel. They suggest that further testing is recommended to generalize the results beyond Islamic institutions and academic-related professions.

The current study will adopt Worthington's (2003) method, The Religious Commitment Inventory (RCI-10) to measure the religiosity of Muslim tourists in Malaysia. Inspired by Allport's concept of intrinsic and extrinsic, Worthington (2003) come up with a new solution to measure religiosity where he divided religiosity into two dimensions: intra-personal and inter-personal (Usman et al., 2022). RCI-10 has demonstrated good reliability and validity in previous research, indicating that it is a robust tool for assessing religiosity (Martin, 2021). It has been used in various studies across different populations and religious traditions, including Muslim populations (Mat et al., 2023). It also captures multiple dimensions of religiosity, including belief, practice, and personal importance of religion (Goel and Misra, 2020). This comprehensive approach allows for a more nuanced understanding of religiosity among Muslim tourists. The selection of the RCI-10 as the measurement method for

religiosity is based on its established credibility, comprehensive coverage of religiosity dimensions, and its suitability for studying Muslim populations.

2.4 The Theory of Planned Behaviour

The Theory of Planned Behaviour provides an explanation of how behavioral intentions are formed, which, in turn, influence actual behavior (Ajzen, 1991). In other words, the theory describes the process through which individuals develop intentions to engage in specific behaviors, and these intentions then serve as predictors of their subsequent actions (Adel et al., 2021). It operates under the assumption that individuals make decisions based on their attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control, which is believed to guide rational behavior (Ajzen, 1991).

The Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) is widely applied to predict intention in various fields and has been commonly employed in research studies. According to Ajzen (1985), intention refers to a person's willingness to engage in a particular behavior and is considered a precursor to actual behavior. Ajzen (1991) further elaborated on intention, emphasizing its role in identifying motivational factors that can influence behavior. In the context of Islamic teachings, intention holds great significance, as highlighted in the hadith "Actions are through intentions" (Sahih al-Bukhari, Hadith No. 1).

2.4.1 Attitude

Attitude refers to an individual's response, either positive or negative, to various influences that they encounter, which in turn can impact their future actions (Ajzen, 2012). Attitudes have the potential to be influenced and altered by various factors, including social influences and other external or internal factors (Julina et al., 2020). The study conducted by Iranmanesh et al. (2020) found that in the context of Malaysian Muslim consumers, only attitude influences their willingness to pay for Halal food. On the other hand, subjective norms and perceived behavioral control were not found to have an impact. Besides, Amalia et al. (2020) found a contrary finding where attitude, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control can influence the purchase intention of Halal food among Muslim Millennials in Indonesia. Religious values play a significant role in shaping the attitudes and behaviors of Muslim travelers (Ulfiy et al., 2021) and the purchase intention of Muslim millennials toward halal products (Maulana & Subhani, 2021). Based on the findings from previous studies regarding the impact of attitudes on intention, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H2: The intention of Muslim tourists to choose accommodation is significantly influenced by their attitude.

2.4.2 Subjective Norms

Subjective norms involve the perceived social pressure and expectations from others that influence an individual's decision to engage in a specific behavior (Amalia et al., 2020). In simpler terms, it is the influence of social pressure on an individual's beliefs and actions. When individuals make decisions about their behavior, they are often influenced by the actions of others. According to Julina et al. (2020), subjective norms are found as the most significant impact on the intention to visit a halal tourist area. However, the study does not find any significant relationship between the intention to visit a halal area in terms of the subjective norm to the religiosity variable as a moderator. Ramadhani et al. (2019), provide evidence that subjective norms play a significant role in influencing tourists' decision to visit Lombok Island. Besides, the study from Akhter and Hasan (2022) indicates that factors such as friends, family, and societal influence do not substantially impact their decision to participate in halal tourism activities in Bangladesh. Based on the information provided, the researcher proposes the following hypotheses:

H3: The intention of Muslim tourists to choose accommodation is significantly influenced by subjective norms.

2.4.3 Perceived Behavioral Control

Perceived behavioral control refers to the perceived level of difficulty an individual associates with performing a particular behavior (Ajzen, 2012). Previous TPB studies by Akhter and Hasan (2022) have examined different aspects of perceived behavioral control, such as capacity and autonomy, to understand their impact on the intention of Muslim tourists on Halal Tourism. Several studies have shown a positive relationship between perceived behavioral control and intention, including in the context of halal purchase intention (Memon, 2019) purchase intention of Halal food (Amalia et al., 2020), and the intention of the Muslim youth generation to visit halal tourist attractions (Sudarsono et al., 2021). However, Memon et al. (2019) found that there is no significant relationship between perceived behavioral control and intention with religiosity as moderator. Considering the provided information, the researcher formulates the following hypotheses:

H4: The intention of Muslim tourists to choose accommodation is significantly influenced by perceived behavioral control.

Adel et al. (2021), found a positive correlation between attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavior with behavioral intentions in the context of halal consumption. In addition, Julina et al. (2021), discovered that only subjective norms and attitudes have a significant impact on the intention to visit Halal Tourism in Indonesia. The same goes for Muhsin et al. (2023) found no evidence that perceived behavior can influence the intention to purchase halal food. Due to that, Akhter & Hasan (2022) examined the role of perceived behavioral control on intention to visit Halal Tourism and they found a weak relationship between them. Wibawa et al. (2022) then apply only the variable of attitude and subjective with the addition of religiosity as a variable to find out the intention to visit a religious destination. However, Sudarsono et al. (2021) found out the intention of the Muslim youth generation to visit halal tourist attractions has a positive correlation with all the TPB variables with the addition of knowledge, and religiosity as moderating variables. In terms of this study, it will examine the intention of Muslim tourists toward Muslim-friendly accommodation, and they make decisions based on their religiosity, attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control.

2.5 The Moderating Role of Religiosity

Previous studies have recognized the significance of religiosity as a moderating role. For instance, religiosity has been found to moderate the relationship between value and satisfaction, particularly in the context of Islamic attributes, both physical and non-physical. (Eid & El-Gohary, 2015). It has also been identified as a factor contributing to the purchase of Halal cosmetics (Sriminarti & Nora, 2018), purchase intention (Memon et al. 2020), tourist satisfaction (Abror et al. 2019), and customer responses (Akhtar et al., 2020). In the context of Islamic tourism, Abror et al. (2021) found that religiosity significantly moderates the connection between perceived value and tourist trust. It also moderates the relationship between service quality and customer satisfaction (Abror, 2020) and the loyalty of tourists (Budi Riyanto and Bangsawan (2022)). This study will examine the moderating effect of religiosity between antecedents of TPB (attitude, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control) and the intention of selecting accommodation. To examine the moderating effect of religiosity on the tourist decision-making process the following hypotheses are proposed:

H5: Religiosity has a significant moderating effect between attitude and intention to choose accommodation.

H6: Religiosity has a significant moderating effect between subjective norms and intention to choose accommodation.

H7: Religiosity has a significant moderating effect between perceived behavioral control and intention to choose accommodation.

Therefore, we proposed the following conceptual framework for this study.

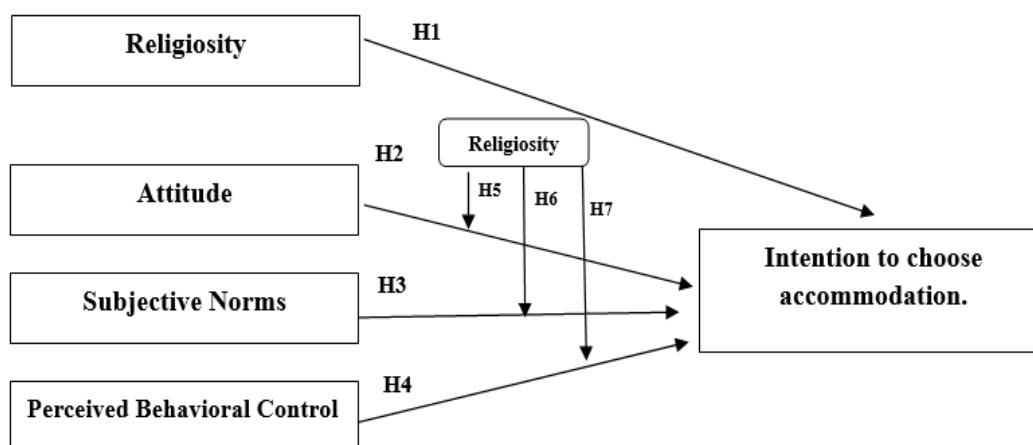


Figure 1. Conceptual framework

The conceptual framework for this study is constructed based on the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) as a foundation to assess the intention of Muslim tourists in their selection of Muslim-friendly accommodations. The proposed model aims to explain the relationship between four independent variables: religiosity, attitude, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control, and their impact on the dependent variable, intention in the context of accommodation selection. It will explain how tourists will decide to stay in Muslim-friendly accommodation based on their religiosity. Additionally, the study will examine the moderating effect of religiosity on the relationship between the TPB antecedents (attitude, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control) and the intention of Muslim-friendly accommodation selection.

3. Methodology

The current research will adapt the quantitative data analysis. The primary rationale for choosing a quantitative research approach in the current study is its alignment with addressing the research problem. The researchers employing convenience and snowball sampling from the purposive population which is 300 Muslim travelers in Malaysia. The data will be collected through questionnaires that will be distributed to Muslim tourists consisting of local Muslim tourists as well as international Muslim tourists. Additionally, a QR code will be provided to the respondents for access to the online survey. The researcher will collect the data by visiting tourist attraction destinations, and airports in Malaysia.

It will use closed-ended responses consisting of three main sections. The first section focused on demographic characteristics of Muslim tourists while the second section is the Religious Commitment Inventory (RCI-10) to measure the religiosity of respondents. The last section of the questionnaire collected information likelihood of choosing Muslim-friendly accommodation due to the perceived outcomes of accommodation (attitude), the influence of different groups or individuals on the respondent's selection accommodation (subjective norm), and the factors that could facilitate or hinder travel to accommodation (perceived behavioral control). The responses from the respondents will be key-in to the statistical software (SPSS). Multivariate analysis will be used to determine the relationship between religiosity and the decision-making of Muslim tourists.

4. Findings and Discussions

The present study seeks to expand on the research conducted by Adel et al. (2021) by examining the correlation between attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavior with behavioral intentions, particularly in the context of Muslim tourists' choices of Muslim-friendly accommodations in Malaysia. Adel et al. (2021) have found significant influence of attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavior with behavioral intentions of Halal consumption. The researchers found that all TPB antecedents (attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control) have a positive impact on the intention of Muslim tourists to choose Muslim-friendly accommodations.

Furthermore, it is expected that the variables of religiosity and TPB antecedent (attitude, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control) have a significant positive influence on intention toward Muslim-friendly accommodation in Malaysia. The result is predicted to show a positive direct and indirect effect of Muslim tourist religiosity on their intention towards Muslim-friendly accommodation.

The direct influence is expected to be positive, suggesting that a higher level of religiosity among Muslim tourists will directly contribute to a stronger intention to choose Muslim-friendly accommodations. Simultaneously, the study posits an indirect effect, indicating that religiosity may also influence intention through its impact on the TPB antecedents (attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control). The researcher found that religiosity plays a stronger moderating role than a direct role in the intention of Muslim tourists. This implies that while religiosity directly contributes to the intention, its primary influence may be in moderating or influencing other variables within the TPB framework. The study implies

that religiosity has a contagious effect on other variables, as stated by Eid and ElGohary (2015) and Abror et al. (2019).

It would be beneficial for further investigation to examine the relationship between religiosity and cultural, social, and economic influences on accommodation selection. This broader investigation aims to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the decision-making process of Muslim tourists when choosing accommodations. To sum up, the researchers expect their findings to support the notion that TPB antecedents and religiosity significantly and positively influence the intention of Muslim tourists toward Muslim-friendly accommodations in Malaysia. The proposed study emphasizes the need to explore not only direct relationships but also the moderating role of religiosity and its potential effects on other decision-making factors.

5. Conclusions

The decision-making process for accommodation purchases is a complex field due to different preferences, needs, and expectations, especially for Muslims. The emergence of Islamic tourism offers Muslim-friendly accommodation, giving a convenient space for Muslim tourists to fulfill their religious obligations while traveling. Therefore, this study aims to examine the intention of Muslim tourists in selecting Muslim-friendly accommodation, particularly in Malaysia based on the modified Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB). Exploring religiosity in this context can lead to a better understanding of the interplay between religious values and the evaluation of accommodation. On the other hand, it would provide useful perspectives regarding the competitiveness and potential of Islamic tourism in the future.

Author Contributions: For research articles with several authors, a short paragraph specifying their individual contributions must be provided. The following statements should be used “Conceptualization, X.X. and Y.Y.; methodology, X.X.; software, X.X.; validation, X.X., Y.Y. and Z.Z.; formal analysis, X.X.; investigation, X.X.; resources, X.X.; data curation, X.X.; writing—original draft preparation, X.X.; writing—review and editing, X.X.; *etc*

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