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Catalyzing Halal Industry Development in a Non-Muslim Society: The Role of Indonesian Muslim Diaspora in South Korea

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Abstract

The rapid expansion of the global halal industry has created opportunities for halal ecosystem development in non-Muslim societies. In South Korea, however, halal industry growth faces challenges related to limited infrastructure, fragmented certification systems, and social stigma toward Islam and halal practices. This study examines the role of the Indonesian Muslim diaspora in catalyzing halal industry development in South Korea. Using a qualitative case study approach, data were collected through semi-structured interviews with eight key informants representing diaspora, institutional, academic, and policy stakeholders and analyzed using thematic analysis. The findings indicate that the Indonesian Muslim diaspora contributes in three strategic ways: addressing social stigma through cultural diplomacy and public engagement, facilitating adaptive halal governance through halal certification and fiqh al-aqalliyyāt-based approaches, and strengthening the halal ecosystem through mosques, halal businesses, educational activities, and community networks. The study introduces the concept of a progressive sharia diaspora, highlighting how diaspora actors leverage social, religious, and economic capital to foster inclusive halal governance and sustainable halal ecosystems in non-Muslim societies.

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Introduction

The halal industry has become a dynamic driver of global economic growth, with significant potential to influence both Muslim-majority and non-Muslim countries. Global Muslim consumer spending is projected to reach USD2.8 trillion by 2025, up from USD2.0 trillion in 2021, reflecting a steady compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 7.5% (YCP Solidiance, 2023). This expansion is not only the result of increased demand from Muslim consumers but also from non-Muslim consumers who associate halal with quality, hygiene, and ethical production (Khan et al., 2020). As halal standards gain broader recognition, they increasingly serve as a universal benchmark for safety, quality, and trust (Secinaro & Calandra, 2020; Hamid et al., 2022). The integration of halal principles into global trade and production chains has encouraged several non-Muslim majority countries to enter the halal economy. Nations such as Japan, Thailand, and South Korea have taken steps toward halal certification, Muslim-friendly tourism, and export-oriented halal food production (Nisa, 2023; Prayuda et al., 2023; Hariani et al., 2024). This growing acceptance signals that halal is not confined to religious obligations alone but is evolving into a cross-cultural commercial standard (Harati & Farzaneh, 2024). In this transformation, trust-building measures, certification credibility, and cultural diplomacy become crucial components (Soesilowati, 2018).

In South Korea, however, the path toward halal industry growth faces unique socio-cultural and institutional challenges. The country's small Muslim population, estimated at just 0.4% of the total, creates a limited domestic consumer base (Al-Ansi et al., 2022; Musafak, 2024). More critically, public misunderstanding of halal principles, fueled by insufficient awareness and persistent stereotypes, has hindered widespread adoption (Tahira, 2022). For instance, halal food and Islamic symbols are sometimes perceived as foreign or incompatible with mainstream Korean culture, a perception reinforced by media portrayals linking Islam to extremism (Kim, 2021; Tahira, 2022). These perceptions have material consequences. Large-scale halal infrastructure projects have faced strong resistance, leading to the cancellation of initiatives such as the Halal Food Complex in Iksan (2015) and the proposed Halal Zone in Gangwon Province (Adham et al., 2024; Mamduh et al., 2024). These setbacks reveal that beyond regulatory and logistical barriers, such as the absence of a standardized framework that complicates market access and consumer trust (Hamzah et al., 2024), the industry must also contend with deeply rooted socio-political sensitivities. For sustainable development, the halal sector needs to navigate these challenges while strengthening regulations, enhancing public awareness, and fostering greater acceptance (Busari & Sitiris, 2020; Wahidah. et al., 2024).

The absence of a national halal authority further complicates the situation. Without a centralized framework, halal certification in South Korea is managed by a small number of private or community-based organizations, each with its own standards and operational limitations (Islam et al., 2023). This fragmented landscape poses difficulties for both producers seeking certification and consumers seeking assurance of product integrity (Alfarajat, 2022; Kim, 2021). Moreover, the underdeveloped halal supply chain, marked by limited access to certified raw materials and processing facilities, reduces the competitiveness of Korean halal exports (Ali & Suleiman, 2018; Mabkhot, 2023). Against this backdrop, diaspora communities have emerged as pivotal actors in bridging gaps between local industries and global halal markets. The Indonesian Muslim diaspora in South Korea, comprising migrant workers, international students, entrepreneurs, and mixed-marriage families, plays a particularly strategic role (Rofiq et al., 2024; Choi, 2024). Through grassroots initiatives and institutional engagement, they promote halal literacy, establish religious and commercial infrastructure, and act as intermediaries in institutional collaboration and policy processes (Srimulyani, 2021; Yayusman et al., 2023).

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One of the distinctive features of the Indonesian Muslim diaspora's contribution is their application of *fiqh al-aqalliyyāt* (minority jurisprudence) in addressing local constraints. This jurisprudential framework allows context-specific adaptations of Islamic law without compromising its fundamental principles (Asror et al., 2023; Dawoed et al., 2024). In the Korean context, *fiqh al-aqalliyyāt* has been instrumental in enabling halal certification despite challenges such as ingredient traceability and the absence of slaughtering facilities. This approach aligns with the Islamic principle of *taysir* (ease), which facilitates religious observance in challenging environments (Ruzulan et al., 2023). Despite the growing literature on halal economics and Muslim minority practices, research focusing specifically on diaspora contributions in non-Muslim East Asian contexts remains scarce. Most existing studies center on Muslim-majority nations, where halal ecosystems benefit from state-backed regulations and supportive socio-cultural environments (Al-Ansi et al., 2022; Attwood et al., 2023). Few have explored how diaspora communities, operating with limited institutional support, manage to create and sustain halal infrastructure abroad (Ahmed & Khan, 2024; Pattnaik et al., 2024).

Existing studies on South Korea's halal industry have predominantly examined regulatory challenges, halal tourism development, certification systems, and consumer perceptions of halal products (Park & Jamaludin, 2018). Meanwhile, research on Indonesian Muslim communities in South Korea has mainly explored issues of religious identity, adaptation, halal literacy, multicultural integration, and minority experiences (Fahrullah & Musafak, 2025; Chanifah et al., 2025). Although these studies provide valuable insights, they generally examine halal industry development and diaspora experiences as separate phenomena, leaving limited understanding of how diaspora communities contribute to the institutional and economic development of halal sectors within non-Muslim majority environments. Furthermore, previous studies have generally portrayed diaspora communities as religious minorities, migrants, or cultural actors whose primary concerns involve identity preservation, adaptation, and social integration (Srimulyani, 2021). While a growing body of literature acknowledges the role of diaspora networks in cultural diplomacy and transnational engagement, little is known about how diaspora actors simultaneously function as cultural diplomats, members of halal certification institutions, religious authorities, entrepreneurs, and ecosystem builders. This limitation constrains scholarly understanding of how diaspora social capital can be mobilized to address social stigma, facilitate adaptive halal governance through minority jurisprudence (*fiqh al-aqalliyyāt*), and support the development of sustainable halal infrastructures in countries where institutional support remains limited (Wahidah. et al., 2024).

This gap is particularly significant in non-Muslim majority societies, where diaspora communities often occupy multiple and overlapping roles that extend beyond cultural preservation. They may serve as religious representatives, entrepreneurs, certification experts, community leaders, and intermediaries connecting local institutions with global halal networks (Riandi et al., 2025). These interconnected roles have the potential to influence not only community cohesion but also the broader development of halal industries. However, existing scholarship has yet to adequately explain how such multifaceted engagements contribute to halal ecosystem development in contexts where regulatory support, halal infrastructure, and public acceptance remain limited (Kim, 2021). A deeper understanding of these dynamics is therefore essential for explaining how halal ecosystems emerge, adapt, and expand within minority-Muslim environments such as South Korea. To address the identified research gap, this study examines the role of the Indonesian Muslim diaspora in halal industry development in South Korea by addressing the following research questions:

RQ1. How does the Indonesian Muslim diaspora navigate social stigma and perceptions of Islam and halal practices in South Korea?

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RQ2. How do Indonesian Muslim diaspora actors contribute to adaptive halal governance within the structural and socio-cultural context of South Korea?
RQ3. How does the Indonesian Muslim diaspora contribute to the development and strengthening of the halal ecosystem in South Korea?

Unlike previous studies that primarily examine Indonesian diaspora communities from migration, cultural adaptation, labor, or minority perspectives, this study conceptualizes the Indonesian Muslim diaspora as a strategic non-state actor operating at the intersection of diaspora diplomacy, halal governance, and halal ecosystem development. By linking diaspora engagement, adaptive halal governance through *fiqh al-aqalliyyāt*, and halal ecosystem formation, this study extends existing discussions beyond cultural representation toward broader institutional and economic contributions. In doing so, it provides a more comprehensive framework for understanding how diaspora communities facilitate halal industry development and strengthen halal ecosystems in non-Muslim majority contexts.

Literature Review

The Role of Diaspora Communities

Research on the role of diaspora communities in socio-economic development has increasingly attracted scholarly attention. Diaspora groups are no longer viewed merely as migrant populations but also as transnational actors capable of facilitating development, knowledge transfer, and institutional cooperation across national borders. Toivanen & Baser, (2022) argue that diaspora communities engage in cross-border activities that mobilize social capital, knowledge, and transnational networks to support development processes in both countries of origin and destination. Similarly, Pattnaik et al., (2024) found that diaspora communities play a strategic role in strengthening economic cooperation and institutional development by acting as intermediaries between diverse stakeholders.

Beyond their intermediary role, diaspora communities also exercise agency in shaping broader social, political, and economic processes. Ahmed & Khan, (2024), demonstrate that diaspora actors possess agency that enables them to influence social, political, and economic developments beyond their home countries. Their study highlights how diaspora communities mobilize resources, networks, and collective identity to shape public discourse and institutional change. These findings suggest that diaspora communities can function as catalysts for transformation in various sectors, including economic and social development. In this study, diaspora diplomacy is viewed as a specific form of soft diplomacy enacted by Indonesian diaspora communities. Through cultural engagement and halal-related activities, diaspora actors contribute to the development of the halal ecosystem. The strengthening of this ecosystem subsequently supports the expansion of the halal economy. Thus, diaspora diplomacy functions as a mechanism through which soft diplomacy generates tangible economic outcomes.

Halal Development in Muslim-Minority Societies

Within Muslim-minority societies, halal industry development presents distinct institutional and socio-cultural challenges. Studies indicate that halal development in non-Muslim countries is often constrained by limited infrastructure, regulatory challenges, and public misunderstanding of halal principles. Park & Jamaludin, (2018), propose a halal industry support system for South Korea, emphasizing the importance of collaboration among government institutions, certification bodies, and Muslim communities in developing a sustainable halal ecosystem. Likewise, Kim (2021) argues that the successful integration of

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halal industries in South Korea depends not only on economic opportunities but also on effective communication between Muslim communities and local stakeholders.

Addressing these challenges requires attention to the governance mechanisms through which halal principles are implemented in Muslim-minority contexts. Adham et al., (2024) found that halal development in Muslim-minority countries requires adaptive governance models capable of balancing religious requirements with local socio-cultural realities. Similarly, Al-Ansi et al., (2022), highlight that the growth of halal tourism and hospitality in non-Muslim countries depends heavily on community participation, public acceptance, and institutional support. These studies demonstrate that halal industry development extends beyond certification and involves broader social, cultural, and economic dimensions. In this regard, effective halal governance requires not only regulatory compliance but also institutional mechanisms that ensure the sustainability and credibility of halal practices. Anwar (2018) argues that halal certification should not be understood merely as an administrative requirement but as part of a sustainable Halal Assurance System involving continuous monitoring, institutional commitment, and consumer protection.

The need for adaptive halal governance also raises questions about how Islamic principles can be applied within the practical realities faced by Muslim minorities. Research on *fiqh al-aqalliyyāt* (minority jurisprudence) provides an important theoretical foundation for understanding halal governance in non-Muslim societies. Asror et al., (2023) explain that Yusuf al-Qaradawi's concept of *fiqh al-aqalliyyāt* allows Muslim minorities to apply contextual and flexible legal reasoning while maintaining adherence to core Islamic principles. Supporting this view, Dawoed et al., (2024) found that halal food evaluation in minority-Muslim contexts requires adaptive approaches based on *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah* to address practical challenges faced by Muslim communities without compromising religious obligations.

Although previous studies have examined diaspora contributions, halal industry development, and minority jurisprudence separately, limited attention has been given to how Muslim diaspora communities simultaneously function as social mediators, halal governance actors, and ecosystem builders in non-Muslim societies. In particular, research focusing on the Indonesian Muslim diaspora in South Korea remains scarce. Therefore, this study seeks to fill this gap by examining how the Indonesian Muslim diaspora contributes to creating pathways for reducing social stigma toward Islam and halal practices, developing adaptive halal governance, and building a sustainable halal ecosystem in South Korea. Furthermore, this study proposes the concept of a progressive sharia diaspora to explain how diaspora actors mobilize social, religious, and economic capital to catalyze halal industry development in a non-Muslim society.

Methodology

This study employs a qualitative case study approach to examine the role of the Indonesian Muslim diaspora in supporting halal industry development in South Korea. A qualitative case study is appropriate for investigating a bounded phenomenon within its real-life context, particularly when the phenomenon involves multiple actors, institutional settings, and interconnected social, cultural, and economic processes (Creswell, 2014). In this study, the case is bounded by the involvement of the Indonesian Muslim diaspora in halal industry development within South Korea as a non-Muslim-majority society. The case encompasses three interconnected dimensions: the diaspora's role in addressing social perceptions and stigma toward Islam and halal practices, its involvement in halal governance and adaptive Sharia practices, and its contribution to the development of the broader halal ecosystem. The study also examines interactions between diaspora actors and relevant Korean institutional, academic,

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industry, and diplomatic stakeholders. This case-study design allows these interconnected dimensions to be examined holistically through multiple sources of qualitative evidence.

Data were collected between June and October 2025 through semi-structured in-depth interviews with eight purposively selected key informants representing three stakeholder groups. The first group comprised Indonesian Muslim diaspora members actively involved in the halal ecosystem, including: (1) a halal auditor, (2) the chairperson of the Sharia Council of a halal certification body, (3) a halal restaurant entrepreneur, (4) the imam and head of the Indonesian mosque in Seoul, and (5) the leader of the Indonesian Muslim community. The second group consisted of local Korean actors relevant to halal industry development, namely: (6) an executive from a Korean halal certification institute and (7) a Southeast Asian tourism researcher specializing in halal tourism trends. The third group comprised a diplomatic representative from the Indonesian Embassy in Seoul, who provided insights into policy support, institutional engagement, and diaspora-related initiatives relevant to halal industry development.

The inclusion criteria were tailored to the characteristics and roles of each stakeholder group. Indonesian Muslim diaspora informants were required to have resided in South Korea for at least two years, to have active involvement in halal-related, religious, community, or economic activities, and to consent to an in-depth interview. Korean institutional and academic informants were selected based on their professional or scholarly involvement in halal-related activities, including halal certification, tourism, or research concerning Muslim communities and the halal industry. The diplomatic informant was selected based on direct involvement in diaspora-related, halal-related, or institutional cooperation between Indonesia and South Korea. All informants were required to possess relevant knowledge or experience related to the research objectives and to provide informed consent to participate. The purposive selection also ensured coverage of different institutional and geographical contexts relevant to the case, particularly Seoul, Ansan, and Busan.

Table 1. Profile of key informants

Code	Stakeholder Group	Role/ Position	Institutional Background	Geographic Context
AJ	Indonesian Government / Diplomatic Stakeholder	Official / Diplomatic Representative	Indonesian Embassy (KBRI) in Seoul	Seoul
AN	Indonesian Muslim Diaspora	Deputy *Rais Syuriah*	Special Branch of Nahdlatul Ulama (PCINU) Korea	Seoul
GBR	Indonesian Muslim Diaspora	Chairperson of the Indonesian Mosque Prosperity Council (DKM)	Indonesian Mosque / Muslim community in Seoul	Seoul
RHP	Indonesian Muslim Diaspora	Halal Auditor	Halal certification body	Busan
SAL	Indonesian Muslim Diaspora	Chairperson of Sharia Council	Halal certification body	Busan

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Code	Stakeholder Group	Role/ Position	Institutional Background	Geographic Context
MRS	Indonesian Muslim Diaspora	Community / Organizational Leader	Sharia Economic Society (MES) Korea	Ansan
KSI	Korean Stakeholders	Leader / Executive of a Halal Certification Institution	Korean halal certification institution	Busan
JS	Korean Stakeholders	Head of Research on Southeast Asian Tourism Studies	Tourism research / academic institution	Seoul

Source: Authors' own work

Informant codes are used to protect participants' identities. Informants were purposively selected based on their relevant knowledge, experience, and involvement in activities related to the research objectives. The interviews followed a semi-structured protocol developed around the three research questions. The protocol addressed three principal areas: (1) perceptions of and responses to social stigma toward Islam and halal practices in South Korea; (2) halal governance, certification practices, and adaptive approaches to Islamic jurisprudence in a non-Muslim-majority context; and (3) the roles of Indonesian Muslim diaspora actors in developing the halal ecosystem through religious, community, business, institutional, and policy-related activities. Open-ended questions were used to allow informants to describe their experiences and perspectives, while follow-up and probing questions were employed to clarify specific experiences and obtain more detailed explanations.

Each interview lasted approximately 30 minutes. Interviews with Indonesian Muslim diaspora members and the diplomatic representative from the Indonesian Embassy in Seoul were conducted in Indonesian, while interviews with the Korean halal certification institute executive and the Southeast Asian tourism researcher were conducted in English. Due to the geographical distance between the researcher and informants located in different cities, the interviews were conducted remotely through WhatsApp voice calls. With participants' consent, the interviews were audio-recorded using a mobile phone and subsequently transcribed verbatim. For interviews conducted in Indonesian, the transcripts were translated into English for analysis and reporting, while the original-language transcripts were retained to preserve contextual meaning. The interviews conducted in English were transcribed directly in English.

The final sample size was determined by the relevance and depth of the information obtained and the achievement of thematic saturation rather than by statistical representativeness. Data collection continued until no substantially new themes, categories, or insights emerged that were relevant to the research questions. To strengthen contextual understanding and enable methodological triangulation, complementary data were obtained through participant observation during community religious events, halal business activities, industry conferences, and organizational meetings. Document analysis was also conducted on relevant halal-related policies, community reports, and certification guidelines. These additional sources were purposively selected to provide institutional and contextual information and to cross-check evidence obtained from the interviews.

All qualitative data were analyzed using inductive thematic analysis following the procedures outlined by Braun & Clarke, (2008). The analysis proceeded through several stages. First, the researchers repeatedly reviewed the interview transcripts, field notes, and

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documentary materials to become familiar with the data. Second, meaningful statements and data segments relevant to the research questions were identified and assigned initial codes. Third, conceptually related codes were grouped into sub-themes and subsequently reviewed and organized into broader themes. Fourth, the emerging themes were compared across stakeholder groups and data sources to identify convergent and divergent perspectives. Finally, the themes were refined, defined, interpreted, and synthesized in relation to the research questions and relevant literature. The coding and thematic organization were conducted manually to maintain close engagement with the qualitative data. Methodological triangulation was achieved by comparing interview findings with participant observations and documentary evidence. Credibility was further enhanced through member checking with participants and researcher reflexivity, particularly given the researcher's dual role as an insider and investigator.

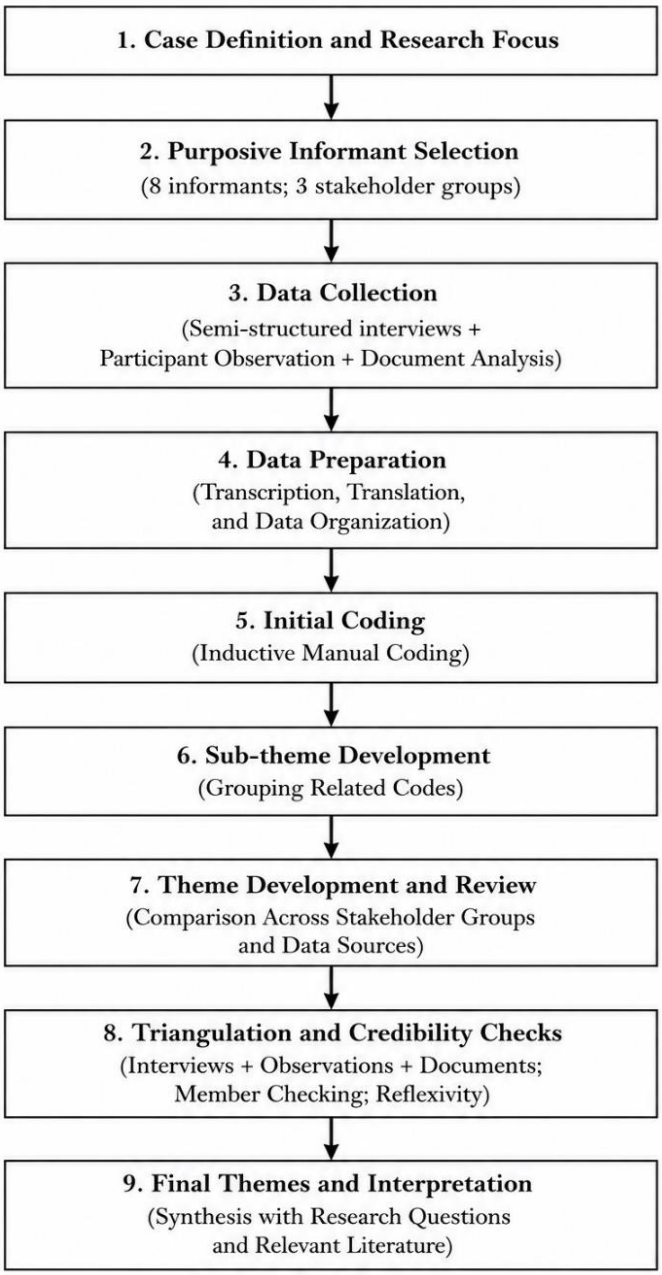

Figure 1. Methodological Flow

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The overall research process is illustrated in Figure 1. The process began with the definition and bounding of the case, followed by purposive informant selection and data collection. Interview, observation, and documentary data were then transcribed, organized, and subjected to inductive coding. Related codes were grouped into sub-themes and broader themes, which were subsequently compared across stakeholder groups and data sources. Triangulation and credibility checks were conducted before the final themes were refined, interpreted, and synthesized in relation to the research questions and relevant literature.

Result and Discussion

Diaspora Contributions to Reducing Stigma toward Islam and Halal

Social stigma against Islam in South Korea is a complex phenomenon influenced by the local population's limited understanding and global narratives that associate Islam with extremism and radicalism (Koo, 2018; Seo, 2023). As a non-Muslim majority country, negative stereotypes are perpetuated through biased international media coverage, provoking concerns about Islamic symbols and practices, including the halal industry (Fathil & Deliana, 2023; Ik et al., 2024). Although the South Korean government recognizes the halal sector's potential to attract tourists and boost exports, societal resistance remains a significant barrier (Jeong, 2017; Koo, 2018). For instance, the cancellation of the Halal Food Complex project in Iksan in 2015 due to pressure from nationalist and conservative religious groups illustrates public rejection of halal infrastructure perceived as threatening local social order (Park & Jamaludin, 2018).

Similar resistance occurred in Gangwon Province in 2017, where plans to develop a Halal Zone and host the World Islamic Economic Forum (WIEF) 2018 failed due to opposition from anti-Muslim alliances and conservative Christian groups who viewed these initiatives as threats to Korean cultural identity (Kim, 2021). Opposition to Islam also manifested in the refusal of mosque construction in Daegu by local residents, demonstrating how religious issues are instrumentalized to reinforce exclusionary politics, with local governments using security measures to uphold majority norms (Ryu, 2025). Such rejection reflects a growing anti-multiculturalism trend in South Korea, where native interests are prioritized over coexistence principles (Yuk, 2023).

The rejection of Islamic symbols extends beyond infrastructure to halal products in the domestic market. Despite government cooperation with Muslim countries to promote halal exports, local producers often face social pressure and negative reactions from non-Muslim consumers who perceive halal labels as conflicting with Korean cultural identity (Kim, 2021; Hamid et al., 2022; Islam et al., 2023). Field observations reveal that some imported halal snack products are covered with stickers to avoid consumer rejection (Kim, 2021). This resistance indicates that opposition to halal is not merely religious but also affects marketing and distribution strategies (Khan et al., 2020).

South Korean society's skepticism toward the halal industry also stems from a lack of understanding of the halal concept. Many perceive halal solely as a religious rule for Muslims, failing to recognize that halal also signifies hygiene, quality, and food safety standards (Yasar, 2021; Attwood et al., 2023). External factors, such as rising global Islamophobia, exacerbate these perceptions. For example, the arrival of Yemeni refugees in 2018 shifted the discourse on Islam from humanitarian issues to social threats, reinforced by biased media coverage and pressure from conservative Christian groups (Seo, 2023; Fathil & Deliana, 2023).

In response to these challenges, the Indonesian Muslim diaspora plays a strategic role in building a peaceful and constructive image of Islam in South Korea. Through cultural and educational approaches, they bridge understanding gaps and demonstrate that Muslim presence does not contradict Korean societal values, and can even contribute positively to the economy

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and tourism sectors (Srimulyani, 2021; Lee, 2024). With increasing awareness of inclusivity, South Korea has the opportunity to strengthen the halal industry, supported by diversity-friendly policies and systematic public campaigns to dismantle social stigma against Islam (Yi & Yang, 2024).

Understanding South Korean perceptions of Islam and the ways in which the Indonesian Muslim diaspora confronts social stigma in public and economic spheres requires insights from multiple stakeholders. Therefore, the researcher conducted in-depth interviews with five key informants: AJ (43), an official at the Indonesian Embassy (KBRI) in Seoul; AN (40), Deputy Rais Syuriah of the Special Branch of Nahdlatul Ulama (PCINU) Korea; GBR (41), Chairperson of the Indonesian Mosque Prosperity Council (DKM) in Seoul; KSI (75), leader of a halal certification institution in South Korea; and JS (37), Head of Research on Southeast Asian Tourism Studies. These informants provided comprehensive perspectives from diplomatic, religious, halal industry, and academic viewpoints.

Interview results with AJ highlighted that social resistance against the Muslim community in South Korea mainly stems from media-shaped perceptions rather than direct interactions (Fathil & Deliana, 2023). AJ explained that the sensitivity towards Islam-related issues is high because many Koreans form their views based on international media reports, not personal experience (Tama & Sulistyaningrum, 2023; Elamin, 2024). Negative representations of Islam in the media, global geopolitical conflicts, and cultural value differences reinforce this stigma (Khan et al., 2024). Regarding the diaspora's strategy in responding to this condition, AJ described an adaptive and non-confrontational approach:

> "Indonesians' polite, friendly nature and adaptability are their main strengths. They build good interactions without forcefully expressing Islamic identity symbolically, for example, by dressing modestly when visiting mosques or communicating in a friendly manner."

This approach aligns with patterns observed among Indonesian diaspora communities in other countries. The Indonesian diaspora often employs adaptive and non-confrontational strategies to navigate cultural differences and mitigate challenges in various host countries. For instance, in Thailand, Indonesians demonstrate adaptability by respecting local customs and norms, which fosters positive interactions without significant stress during the adaptation process. Similarly, in the Netherlands, the Indonesian Muslim diaspora actively engages in interfaith dialogues and collaborates with local organizations to counter Islamophobia, thereby promoting a peaceful representation of Islam while maintaining their cultural identity (Rofiq et al., 2024). In Turkiye, the diaspora emphasizes understanding and mutual respect in intercultural communication, enhancing their role as cultural bridges between Indonesia and the host country (Winata et al., 2023). These strategies collectively highlight politeness, friendliness, and adaptability as core strengths of the Indonesian diaspora in diverse social contexts (Winata et al., 2023; Rofiq et al., 2024). AJ also provided an example of Indonesian diaspora's approach in managing halal restaurants:

> "Halal restaurants owned by the Indonesian diaspora generally avoid overt religious symbols. They emphasize inclusive and casual cultural approaches, making them more acceptable to the local community."

The Indonesian diaspora's management of halal restaurants illustrates a deliberate strategy to build inter-community relations and reduce social stigma toward Islam. By ensuring cultural relevance in urban food settings, they adapt culinary practices to suit multicultural

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contexts, which helps foster understanding and acceptance among diverse groups (Araújo et al., 2022). These efforts also function as a form of gastrodiplomacy, promoting cultural exchange and mutual respect (Yayusman et al., 2023). Through avoiding overt religious symbols and embracing inclusive cultural approaches, diaspora-owned halal restaurants attract a wider audience and enhance the acceptance of halal products within local communities (Yayusman et al., 2023; Izudin et al., 2024). AN emphasized the role of moderate Islamic organizations in mitigating stigma. AN explained PCINU's cooperation with South Korean security authorities:

> "PCINU was involved by local police in mapping potential radicalism, especially during 2015–2018, coinciding with the rise of polarization between moderate and extremist Islamic groups in Indonesia. This involvement reflects official recognition of PCINU's moderate Islamic approach."

AN stressed that Nahdlatul Ulama's religious principles underpin social diplomacy in South Korea.

> "We emphasize the values of '*Ummatan Wasathan*' and '*rahmatan lil 'alamin*' as the foundation to convey that Indonesian Islam is peaceful, moderate, and can synergize with local values."

According to AN's account, Indonesian Muslim organizations in South Korea, particularly PCINU, adopt a strategic religious diplomacy that aligns moderate Islamic values with local security and social harmony goals. Collaboration with law enforcement to counter radicalism enhances public safety while projecting Islam as tolerant and compassionate, grounded in *rahmatan lil alamin* and *ummatan wasathan* (Nubowo, 2023; Ik et al., 2024). This approach fosters trust, supports minority integration, and counters Islamophobia by positioning Indonesian Islam as a bridge between cultural identities (Solehah et al., 2017; Srimulyani, 2021). Meanwhile, from a complementary yet distinct perspective within the broader effort to build inter-community relations, GBR highlighted the mosque's role in bridging Muslim and local communities, which remains limited:

"If rated on a scale from one to ten, it would be below five. One reason is the lack of open and equal dialogue spaces between Muslims and local residents."

GBR categorized Koreans interested in Islam into two groups: those attracted by marriage and those sincerely seeking spiritual understanding. To meet the need for credible Islamic education, Masjid Al-Falah established the Center of Islamic Studies (CIS), accessible on the local platform naver.com:

> "We want to provide accurate and easily accessible references so Koreans can learn about Islam from authentic sources, not just foreign media."

Regarding mosque involvement in countering stigma or security issues related to Islam, GBR noted no formal government collaboration but ongoing informal communication:

> "We regularly meet local police every two months, not due to problems, but to maintain transparency and demonstrate openness. This is important so the mosque is not suspected of wrongdoing."

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This strategy is seen as critical in countering global stereotypes linking mosques to radicalism (Abdillah et al., 2024). GBR also shared a personal story of a Korean convert experiencing identity conflict:

> "After converting, he grew a beard and wore a traditional robe. His mother was shocked and rejected this. But when he attended his sister's wedding dressed normally, his family softened. This shows that resistance to Islam is often symbolic and can be alleviated with contextual approaches."

GBR's account underscores the mosque's multifaceted role as both a religious and socio-cultural institution in navigating minority–majority dynamics in South Korea. By addressing misconceptions through credible educational resources, maintaining transparent relations with local authorities, and adopting culturally sensitive approaches to personal expression, the mosque positions itself as a proactive agent of social cohesion (Jeong, 2017; Lee, 2024). This engagement not only challenges stereotypes associating Islam with radicalism but also creates pathways for mutual understanding, particularly by framing Islamic identity in ways that resonate with local cultural norms and values (Moon, 2022; Yar, 2023).

Building on this institutional perspective, KSI offered a more personal and societal viewpoint on shifting attitudes toward the Indonesian Muslim diaspora in South Korea. While GBR focused on the mosque's structural role, KSI highlighted evolving public perceptions, noting that societal openness has grown significantly compared to a decade ago:

> "Compared to five or ten years ago, Koreans are much more open, especially towards Indonesian Muslims."

He cited Megawati Hangestri, a hijab-wearing Indonesian volleyball athlete for Red Sparks club, as an example:

> "Megawati is very popular and well-liked. This shows that wearing a hijab or Muslim identity is not a barrier as long as the person achieves success and behaves well."

KSI emphasized Indonesian cultural traits in shaping positive perceptions:

> "Indonesians usually present themselves simply, politely, and softly in conveying their religion, which helps their acceptance here."

Taken together, these observations suggest that the growing acceptance of Indonesian Muslims in South Korea is not merely the result of increased exposure but also of the diaspora's ability to integrate religious identity with universally respected values such as humility, respect, and social contribution (Ik et al., 2024). By embodying these traits in both public and private spheres, the Indonesian Muslim community fosters an image of Islam that is approachable, inclusive, and compatible with South Korean social norms (Kotarumalos, 2022; Lee, 2024).

In conclusion, the findings suggest that the Indonesian Muslim diaspora adopts strategies aimed at addressing prejudices and misunderstandings surrounding Islam and the halal industry in South Korea (Srimulyani, 2021; Nidatya et al., 2023) . Their approach is dialogic, educational, and based on positive representation in the public sphere, gradually unraveling latent stigma in a constructive and sustainable manner (Ik et al., 2024).

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Adaptive Halal Governance in a Muslim-Minority Context

The findings reveal that the Indonesian Muslim diaspora plays a strategic role as the Sharia Council in developing the halal certification system in South Korea, a country with a very small Muslim minority population. This role aligns with the theory of *fiqh al-aqalliyyāt* (minority jurisprudence), which emphasizes the necessity of flexibility in Islamic legal rulings within minority Muslim communities, as well as the principles of *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah* that prioritize public interest (*maslahah*) in law implementation (Hilme & Raffi, 2024). This principle is supported by the Quranic verse:

> "Allah intends for you ease and does not intend for you hardship." (QS. Al-Baqarah: 185).

This verse highlights ease as a fundamental basis in implementing Islamic law, especially in minority contexts facing systemic constraints. This finding also reinforces prior studies such as those by Dawoed et al., (2024) and Bella (2024), which state that adapting fatwas in minority contexts is an actualization of sharia values in a contextual and solution-oriented manner. Interviews with diaspora figures such as RHP (halal auditor), SAL (head of Sharia Council), and KSI (leader of halal certification institution) show that the strategies applied include technical, juridical, educational, and diplomatic approaches. First, on the operational technical side, RHP emphasized the critical role of auditors in the halal certification process, from reviewing the Halal Product Guarantee System (HPGS) documentation to conducting on-site inspections, to ensure no contamination from non-halal substances occurs. This supports Febriyanni (2023) findings that production integrity is a fundamental pillar of halal systems. This principle of caution in maintaining halal food is in line with the Prophet Muhammad's hadith, part of the *Arba'in Nawawiyyah*:

> "Indeed, halal is clear and haram is clear, and between them are doubtful matters which many people do not know. Whoever avoids doubtful matters saves his religion and honor. And whoever falls into doubtful matters falls into haram." (HR. Bukhari and Muslim).

Second, from a juridical perspective, the Sharia Council holds the authority to issue halal fatwas based on auditors' assessments. This is consistent with Yusuf al-Qaradawi's concept of *fiqh al-aqalliyyāt*, which allows for flexible Islamic legal reasoning (*ijtihad*) in minority settings. This solution aligns with the universal goals of *fiqh al-aqalliyyāt*, offering legal guidance that meets both spiritual needs and practical relevance in multicultural societies (Asror et al., 2023). SAL explained that the fatwa process involves examining technical documents such as Certificate of Analysis (CoA), Formula Composition Data (FCD), and Material Safety Data Sheets (MSDS). This strategy embodies the application of *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah* principles, particularly the protection of life (*hifz al-nafs*), property (*hifz al-mal*), and religion (*hifz al-din*), as affirmed by Bella (2024). This approach is grounded in the Qur'anic injunction:

> "And do not throw [yourselves] with your [own] hands into destruction." (QS. Al-Baqarah: 195).

This verse is a crucial foundation emphasizing caution in consumption and certification processes to prevent harm physically, spiritually, and socially. Third, in educational and diplomatic dimensions, the Sharia Council also performs strategic communication with Korean

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industry players. SAL applies a persuasive approach in educating them about the benefits of halal certification as a guarantee of food safety and global hygienic standards. This reflects the Quranic guidance:

> "Invite to the way of your Lord with wisdom and good advice, and argue with them in a way that is best." (QS. An-Nahl: 125).

This verse serves as a vital guideline for wise, educational da'wah and building collaborative relationships across faiths. This also supports Kim (2021) findings that successful halal integration in local industries depends on communicative, inclusive, and collaborative methods.

Fourth, the Sharia Council implements three approaches in issuing halal fatwas. The first involves recognizing halal certificates issued by credible international halal certification bodies. The second approach focuses on auditing repacking facilities for imported meat products to ensure compliance with halal requirements throughout the supply chain. The third approach entails reviewing uncertified non-meat ingredients through technical evaluations and expert assessments before determining their halal status. These approaches reflect the principle of *fiqh al-taysir* (ease in Islamic law), as discussed by Haq (2022), which is particularly relevant in Muslim-minority contexts. By balancing legal flexibility with the principle of *ihtiyath* (prudence), the Sharia Council is able to address practical halal supply challenges while maintaining compliance with Islamic principles.

These findings are consistent with Park & Jamaludin (2018), who argue that halal industry development in South Korea requires institutional support mechanisms that accommodate the unique challenges faced by Muslim minorities in a non-Muslim environment. Their study highlights the importance of certification systems, stakeholder collaboration, and supportive governance structures in fostering halal industry growth. The present study extends this perspective by demonstrating that, beyond formal institutions, the Indonesian Muslim diaspora actively contributes to halal governance through Sharia councils, community organizations, and transnational halal networks.

Consequently, halal industry development in South Korea emerges not only as a regulatory process but also as a socially embedded ecosystem shaped by diaspora participation and intercultural engagement. These adaptive governance practices are also consistent with the Islamic legal principle of removing hardship (*raf' al-haraj*), as reflected in the Quranic injunction:

> "God has not placed upon you in the religion any difficulty" (QS. Al-Hajj: 78).

This perspective reinforces the application of *fiqh al-taysir* in addressing halal governance challenges within Muslim-minority contexts. Fifth, the strategic position of the diaspora as halal auditors and Sharia Council members adds significant value to the local halal certification system. KSI emphasized that the diaspora's academic background, international experience, and global networks constitute important advantages in strengthening the credibility of South Korea's halal certification framework. This finding corroborates Srimulyani (2021) argument that diaspora participation in halal institutions enhances both legitimacy and competitiveness within the local halal industry. Moreover, the involvement of diaspora members in halal auditing and Sharia governance reflects the Islamic principle of professionalism and excellence (*ihsan*). As stated in a Prophetic tradition,

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> "Indeed, Allah loves that when anyone among you does a job, he does it with perfection." (HR. Al-Baihaqi).

This principle helps explain how diaspora expertise contributes to maintaining the quality, reliability, and international recognition of South Korea's halal certification system. Taken together, these findings suggest that the Indonesian Muslim diaspora functions not only as legal and technical actors but also as adaptive agents who facilitate halal industry development in a non-Muslim-majority context. Their strategies demonstrate flexibility in addressing local challenges without compromising core Sharia principles (Rafiqah, 2024). In this regard, the diaspora serves as a bridge between Islamic values and the realities of a multicultural society, promoting inclusive halal governance through collaboration, education, and community engagement. Such efforts reflect the broader Islamic principle of *rahmatan lil 'alamin* (mercy to all creation), as expressed in the Quran:

> "And We have not sent you but as a mercy to the worlds" (QS. Al-Anbiya: 107).

The findings therefore illustrate how diaspora communities can contribute to constructive, solution-oriented, and socially inclusive forms of halal ecosystem development in a globalized world.

Contribution of the Diaspora in Building the Halal Ecosystem

The halal ecosystem in South Korea remains in its early stages of development. Within this context, the Indonesian Muslim diaspora plays a vital role as a catalyst for growth, both through community-based initiatives and contributions to the economic sector. One of the most tangible contributions is the establishment of approximately 58 mosques across various regions in South Korea by the end of 2024. These mosques function not only as places of worship but also as centers for halal education and literacy through religious studies and discussions on halal practices (Paradays, 2022; Nidatya et al., 2023). Notably, many Indonesian mosques serve as key sites for cultural and religious exchange, where local Koreans have embraced Islam, highlighting the strategic role of mosques in fostering interfaith understanding.

Additional perspectives were gathered from JS (37), Head of Southeast Asian Tourism Studies at a prominent South Korean university, regarding the development of the halal industry and Muslim-friendly tourism, as well as the role of the Indonesian diaspora in strengthening the local halal ecosystem. JS acknowledged the progressive steps taken by the South Korean government to develop the halal sector, especially in tourism. However, she pointed out that public acceptance remains a significant challenge due to Muslims being a minority group. She emphasized the need for more intensive education to promote halal practices within the local culture:

> “The South Korean government has undertaken various efforts to develop the halal sector, particularly in tourism. Nevertheless, public acceptance is limited, as many people still do not fully understand or embrace the halal concept because Muslims are a minority. Hence, more intensive education is necessary for halal practices to be accepted culturally.”

JS also highlighted the gap between government policy and public perception, which affects the success of halal and Muslim-friendly tourism strategies:

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> "Although Seoul city introduced halal menus and food standards since President Park Geun Hye's era, public perception remains a challenge. Halal is still seen as foreign, and the inconsistent availability of halal services exacerbates Muslim tourists' dissatisfaction."

She further explained that these challenges extend beyond perception, influencing broader social interactions and multicultural integration:

> "Muslim-friendly tourism is not just about food or prayer facilities; it opens spaces for cultural exchange and new social dynamics. Overcoming negative perceptions will lead to a healthier and more inclusive halal ecosystem."

Regarding the Indonesian Muslim diaspora's role, JS commended their active contributions in building the halal ecosystem structurally and socially:

> "The Indonesian Muslim diaspora is very active, they have built nearly 60 mosques and halal restaurants. Their community is among the most solid and organized, sharing information and supporting halal needs. This greatly assists Muslim tourists and strengthens the halal ecosystem in Korea."

She observed that the diaspora frequently serves as a strategic partner for the government in halal tourism policy, despite challenges in harmonizing halal standards across countries:

"The Korean government has started dialogues with Muslim communities, including Indonesians. However, the differences in halal standards between Indonesia and Middle Eastern countries often confuse Korean authorities. Here, the diaspora's role as a bridge is critical to facilitate harmonization."

This statement underscores the multidimensional role of the Indonesian Muslim diaspora—as actors, connectors, and educators, contributing to inclusive social and economic transformations within the global halal industry framework (Marlinda et al., 2024). Extending this discussion into the economic domain, MRS, Vice Chairman of the Sharia Economic Society (MES) Korea, emphasized the importance of fostering both public and institutional trust in the Indonesian Muslim diaspora's role within the halal industry. He noted that the challenges faced by the diaspora are not solely technical but also ideological:

> "There are still societal concerns about sharia concepts being extremist. However, we promote principles of openness and professionalism."

MES consistently portrays a moderate and inclusive Islamic image in collaborations with industry and local authorities. Recognition of MES Korea as halal auditor providers and Sharia Council members results from this approach:

> "Trust arises not only because of certification but also because we build a modern, cooperative Islamic narrative."

Nevertheless, he acknowledged that acceptance of the Indonesian Muslim diaspora in this sector may also be shaped by external factors such as market demand, bilateral trade

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policies, and broader socio-political contexts (Attwood et al., 2023). In a separate interview, KSI (75), head of the BIC Halal Korea certification body (BICHK), shared insights on the prospects of the halal ecosystem and the certification institution's role in supporting it. KSI noted that despite positive developments such as an increasing number of halal restaurants and prayer facilities, the ecosystem is still far from ideal:

> "While halal restaurants and prayer spaces have increased, many are self-claimed halal without official certification. In Seoul, for example, only two mosques are active, which does not reflect a healthy, integrated ecosystem."

He pointed out the lack of government regulation mandating halal certification, which leads many restaurant owners to neglect formal certification despite targeting Muslim customers. BICHK attempts to bridge this gap through comprehensive approaches:

> "At BICHK, we not only provide certification services but also education, halal training, and supply of experts such as auditors and consultants. This is part of our one-stop service offering."

To tackle the fragmented halal ecosystem, KSI shared BICHK's long-term plan to collaborate with government and industry players to build integrated halal ecosystem packages comprising prayer rooms, halal restaurants, and Muslim-friendly tourism spots at strategic locations in South Korea. This strategy aims to catalyze domestic halal market expansion and strengthen Korea's position as a Muslim-friendly destination (Park & Jamaludin, 2018):

> "We hope the government will become more involved. Having a complete halal ecosystem package, like airports with halal restaurants and proper prayer rooms, will leave a good impression on tourists and boost market confidence."

Field observations support KSI's view, especially regarding the Indonesian diaspora's contribution to strengthening the halal ecosystem through gastronomy. Indonesian restaurants founded by diaspora and intercultural families have flourished in cities like Itaewon, Ansan, Busan, and Daegu, providing halal access while serving as cultural ambassadors and Muslim-friendly symbols for locals and tourists (Faradina & Ningsih, 2023). Beyond culinary sectors, some diaspora members have established halal minimarkets and mosque cooperatives, supplying necessities according to Sharia principles. These initiatives support Korean government programs by the Ministry of Culture, Sports, and Tourism (MCST) and Korea Tourism Organization (KTO) to develop Muslim-friendly tourism.

The diaspora's contribution also extends to religious services, such as organizing Hajj and Umrah pilgrimages since the early 2000s until the COVID-19 pandemic. Although management has shifted to the Korea Muslim Federation (KMF), many Indonesian diaspora remain involved as spiritual guides (*muthawwif*), showing spirituality as the foundation of their role in halal ecosystem building (Sarif & Ismail, 2011). In the industrial domain, the Indonesian diaspora encourages local entrepreneurs to understand the importance of halal certification and global standards. Their education, training, and collaborations form community networks supporting the spread of halal and *thayyib* values across generations. This strategy promotes an ecosystem that not only caters to Muslim consumers but also integrates halal values into local supply chains and distribution.

Diaspora organizations such as the Sharia Economic Society (MES) Korea and PCI-NU Korea play strategic roles in bridging communication among Muslim communities, entrepreneurs, government agencies, and international partners like BPJPH. Through training

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forums, SME mentoring, auditor recruitment, and cultural *da'wah*, they create multi-stakeholder synergies in developing Korea's halal ecosystem (Rahman, 2024). By integrating spiritual, cultural, and professional approaches, the Indonesian Muslim diaspora has become a key actor in building an adaptive, inclusive, and sustainable halal ecosystem in South Korea—acting not only as consumers but also as drivers, solution providers, and strategic partners in expanding the global halal industry.

To synthesize the findings from all three research questions, Table 2 summarizes the main themes, sub-themes (codes), and representative evidence derived from the thematic analysis process. This tabular representation complements the preceding thematic discussion by consolidating qualitative insights into a concise analytical framework, illustrating the direct link between participants' lived experiences and the study's objectives. Taken together, these findings demonstrate that the Indonesian Muslim diaspora functions not merely as a migrant community but as an active agent of development that mobilizes social capital, religious resources, and transnational networks to facilitate institutional and socio-economic development across national boundaries. This role aligns with Brinkerhoff (2009) conception of diaspora engagement while extending it to the context of halal governance and halal ecosystem development in a non-Muslim society.

Table 2. Summary of themes, codes, and representative evidence

Theme (RQ)	Code (Sub-theme)	Representative Evidence (Interview Expert)	Impact
RQ1: Reducing Social Stigma toward Islam and Halal	Cultural diplomacy & adaptive communication	"Indonesians' polite, friendly nature and adaptability are their main strengths. They build good interactions without forcefully expressing Islamic identity symbolically." (AJ, 43)	Builds positive public perception of Islam and reduces prejudice through non-confrontational engagement.
	Inclusive halal business model	"Halal restaurants owned by the Indonesian diaspora generally avoid overt religious symbols. They emphasize inclusive and casual cultural approaches…" (AJ, 43)	Encourages broader acceptance of halal businesses among non-Muslim consumers.
	Moderate Islamic organizational role	"We emphasize the values of 'Ummatan Wasathan' and 'rahmatan lil 'alamin' to convey that Indonesian Islam is peaceful, moderate, and can synergize with local values." (AN, 40)	Strengthens trust and cooperation with local communities and authorities.
	Mosque-based interfaith engagement	"We regularly meet local police every two months… to maintain transparency and demonstrate openness." (GBR, 41)	Increases interfaith dialogue, transparency, and prevents security-related misconceptions.

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	Positive role models & public acceptance	"Megawati is very popular and well-liked. This shows that wearing a hijab or Muslim identity is not a barrier as long as the person achieves success and behaves well." (KSI, 75)	Promotes acceptance of visible Islamic identity through achievement-based recognition.
	Academic perspective on public perception	"Many people still do not fully understand or embrace the halal concept because Muslims are a minority." (JS, 36)	Highlights need for public education to increase halal awareness and reduce cultural barriers.
RQ2: Sharia Council Strategies in Halal Law and Fatwa Enforcement	Technical auditing & production integrity	"Auditors review the Halal Product Guarantee System documents and conduct on-site inspections to ensure no contamination from non-halal substances." (RHP)	Ensures product compliance with halal standards, enhancing consumer trust.
	Contextual fatwa issuance (*fiqh al-aqalliyyāt*)	"The fatwa process involves examining technical documents such as CoA, FCD, and MSDS before issuance." (SAL)	Provides legally sound, context-specific halal rulings adapted to minority settings
	Educational and diplomatic outreach	"We explain halal certification as a guarantee of food safety and global hygiene standards." (SAL)	Builds cross-cultural understanding and increases willingness to adopt halal standards
	Flexible models of halal certification	"We recognize credible foreign halal certificates, audit repacking facilities, and review uncertified ingredients with technical evaluation." (KSI, 75)	Enables context-sensitive halal certification while maintaining Sharia compliance under local structural constraints
RQ3: Contribution to Building the Halal Ecosystem	Mosque development & halal literacy	"The Indonesian diaspora has built nearly 60 mosques, which also serve as centers for halal education and literacy." (JS, 37)	Strengthens community cohesion and spreads halal knowledge at grassroots level.
	Halal gastronomy and cultural exchange	"Indonesian restaurants in Itaewon, Ansan, Busan, and Daegu not only provide halal food but also act as cultural ambassadors." (KSI, 75)	Enhances cultural diplomacy and boosts halal tourism attractiveness.

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	Halal certification and SME mentoring	"We provide training forums, SME mentoring, and auditor recruitment to develop Korea's halal ecosystem." (MRS, 40)	Increases halal-compliant business capacity and professionalizes local industry players.
	Strategic partnership in halal tourism	"The diaspora is a key partner for the government in halal tourism policy, bridging differences in halal standards." (JS, 37)	Facilitates policy harmonization and improves Muslim-friendly tourism services.

Source: Authors' own work

The synthesis presented in Table 2 reveals that the three dimensions identified across the research questions are not isolated forms of diaspora engagement. Rather, they represent interconnected functions through which Indonesian Muslim diaspora actors operate as social mediators, adaptive halal governance actors, and halal ecosystem builders. These interconnected roles suggest a broader form of diaspora engagement that this study conceptualizes as a progressive sharia diaspora. The concept describes diaspora actors who mobilize social, religious, economic, and transnational capital to reconcile Islamic principles with the socio-cultural and institutional realities of a non-Muslim-majority society. As illustrated in Figure 2, these three functions collectively provide pathways through which diaspora engagement can support inclusive and sustainable halal industry development.

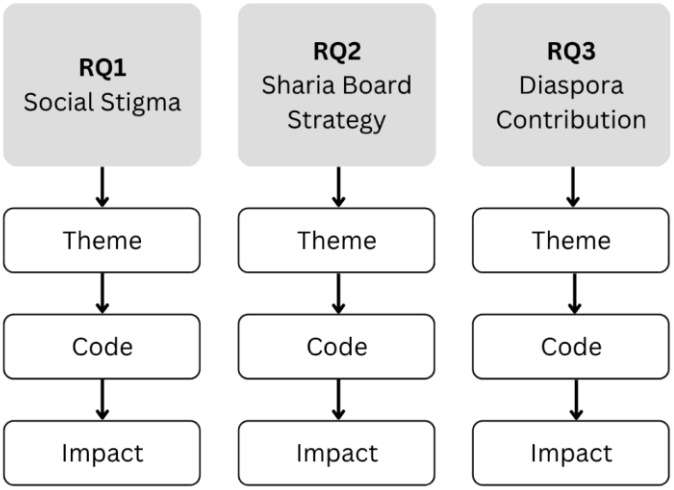

Figure 2. Conceptual Framework of Themes, Codes and Impacts per Research Question

Figure 2 summarizes the thematic structure of the findings by illustrating how the three research questions are connected to their respective themes, codes, and identified impacts. Collectively, these findings highlight three interconnected roles of the Indonesian Muslim diaspora: addressing social stigma through cultural diplomacy, facilitating adaptive halal governance, and strengthening the halal ecosystem through community-based and institutional initiatives. Although presented as distinct analytical dimensions, these roles collectively provide the empirical foundation for the concept of a progressive sharia diaspora. This concept positions diaspora communities not merely as religious minorities but as strategic non-state

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actors capable of mobilizing social, religious, economic, and transnational resources to support halal industry development in non-Muslim-majority societies.

Conclusion

This study concludes that the Indonesian Muslim diaspora plays a crucial and multifaceted role in supporting the development of the halal industry in South Korea. Beyond their status as a religious minority, diaspora actors function as socio-cultural and economic intermediaries by bridging the needs of Muslim communities with the structural limitations of South Korea's halal infrastructure. The findings indicate that the diaspora adopts inclusive and contextually adaptive strategies to address social stigma surrounding Islam and halal practices, facilitate intercultural engagement, and present Islam in a peaceful and adaptive manner within Korean society.

The diaspora's active participation in halal certification institutions further demonstrates its capacity to contextualize Islamic legal thought within a non-Muslim-majority environment. By drawing on *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah* and *fiqh al-aqalliyyāt*, diaspora actors contribute to halal rulings and certification practices that seek to remain consistent with Islamic principles while responding to structural constraints, including limited halal supply chains and underdeveloped halal infrastructure. In parallel, their involvement in establishing mosques, educational initiatives, halal businesses, and cooperative institutions reflects a collaborative and grassroots model for strengthening the halal ecosystem in a Muslim-minority context.

Theoretically, this study contributes to diaspora studies, halal economy literature, and Islamic jurisprudence in minority contexts by proposing the concept of a progressive sharia diaspora. This concept refers to diaspora actors who move beyond religious identity preservation by negotiating Islamic principles with the socio-cultural, economic, and institutional conditions of the host society. In this sense, diaspora communities function not merely as religious minorities or consumers but also as social mediators, knowledge brokers, halal governance actors, ethical entrepreneurs, and transnational facilitators of halal economic development. The findings also extend the relevance of *fiqh al-aqalliyyāt* and *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah* as adaptive frameworks for addressing halal-related challenges while maintaining core Islamic principles.

Practical Implication

The findings provide several practical implications for stakeholders involved in halal industry development in South Korea. For the Korean government and the Korea Tourism Organization (KTO), diaspora representatives and Muslim community organizations should be more systematically involved in the development of halal tourism policies, Muslim-friendly facilities, halal food programs, and public halal-literacy initiatives. Such participation can help ensure that policies better reflect the practical needs of Muslim residents and visitors.

For Korean halal certification bodies, collaboration with Indonesian diaspora scholars and practitioners should be strengthened through joint auditor training, Shariah advisory mechanisms, ingredient-verification procedures, and halal-risk assessment. BPJPH and relevant Indonesian institutions can also strengthen institutional cooperation with Korean certification bodies through mutual recognition, technical capacity building, auditor exchanges, and guidance for halal certification in Muslim-minority markets. The Indonesian Embassy can further support this process through halal business diplomacy, business matching, promotion of Indonesian halal standards and products, and cross-border certification cooperation.

Diaspora organizations should also expand their role beyond community services toward more systematic halal-literacy programs, SME mentoring, halal business networking, auditor development, and *Shariah* expertise. For Korean SMEs in the food, tourism, hospitality,

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and restaurant sectors, collaboration with diaspora experts can assist in identifying halal-critical ingredients, tracing suppliers, establishing segregation procedures, improving employee halal literacy, and preparing for certification. Collectively, these measures can transform diaspora engagement from informal community support into a more institutionalized mechanism for halal industry development and economic diplomacy.

Study Limitation and Future Research Recommendation

This study has several limitations. First, the findings primarily reflect the perspectives of Indonesian Muslim diaspora members and institutional stakeholders involved in halal-related activities. Consequently, the study cannot directly establish how Korean society as a whole perceives or responds to diaspora-led initiatives. The limited representation of ordinary Korean non-Muslim consumers and local residents constrains the extent to which changes in social attitudes, intercultural understanding, and perceptions of Islam and halal practices can be empirically confirmed.

Second, this study is based on a qualitative case-study design involving a relatively small number of purposively selected informants. While this approach enables an in-depth understanding of the roles and experiences of key actors, the findings are context-specific and should not be generalized to all Muslim diaspora communities or non-Muslim-majority countries. Third, the study focuses specifically on the Indonesian Muslim diaspora in South Korea; therefore, variations across other diaspora groups, institutional settings, and national halal governance systems remain unexplored.

Future research should incorporate the perspectives of Korean non-Muslim consumers, local residents, restaurant and food-industry actors, and local policymakers to assess how diaspora initiatives are received and whether they generate measurable changes in social attitudes, business practices, and halal-market development. Comparative studies involving Muslim diaspora communities in other non-Muslim-majority countries, such as Japan, Taiwan, or European contexts, could also examine whether the concept of progressive sharia diaspora is transferable across different socio-cultural and regulatory environments. Future studies may further employ mixed-method or longitudinal designs to examine the longer-term social and economic impacts of diaspora participation in halal governance and ecosystem development.

Author's Contributions (CRediT Taxonomy)

Moh. Musafak: Conceptualization, Methodology, Investigation, Formal analysis, Writing – original draft, Project administration.
Ahmad Ajib Ridlwan: Conceptualization, Supervision, Formal analysis, Writing – review & editing.
Moch. Khoirul Anwar: Formal analysis, Validation, Writing – original draft, Writing – review & editing.
Moch Farih Fahmi: Data curation, Methodology, Validation, Writing – review & editing.
Soo-il Kim: Resources, Validation, Writing – review & editing.

All authors have read and approved the final version of the manuscript.

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of Indonesian Muslim community organizations, mosques, halal business actors, and halal ecosystem stakeholders in South Korea for their valuable support throughout the research process.

Declarations

Ethical considerations

Participation in this study was voluntary, and informed consent was obtained from all participants prior to the interviews. Participants were informed about the purpose of the study, the voluntary nature of their participation, and their right to withdraw from the study. To ensure confidentiality, participants' identities were anonymized using informant codes, and personally identifiable information was excluded from the reporting of the findings.

Use of artificial intelligence (AI)

The authors declare that no generative artificial intelligence (AI) tools were used in the preparation, analysis, or writing of this manuscript.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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