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The Halal Field: Piety Signaling, Symbolic Boundaries, and the Market-Mediated Stratification of Urban Indonesia

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ABSTRACT

Indonesia's mandatory Halal certification policy represents a critical juncture of state governance, religious practice, and neoliberal market forces. This study moves beyond a purely economic or policy-based analysis to investigate how this regulation functions as a powerful engine of social stratification. We examine the process by which Halal certification creates a new social field of consumption, reshaping class distinctions and religious expression in urban Indonesia. A mixed-methods sequential explanatory design was employed in Jakarta and Makassar. The quantitative phase involved a survey of 500 urban consumers selected via multi-stage stratified sampling. Key variables, including Socio-Economic Status (SES) and Religiosity, were constructed as composite indices. Logistic regression and a Two-Step Cluster Analysis, justified by Bayesian Information Criterion (BIC) and silhouette coefficients, were used to identify consumer patterns. The qualitative phase comprised 30 in-depth semi-structured interviews and over 100 hours of participant observation, with a specific focus on the gendered dynamics of consumption. Quantitative analysis reveals that SES is the strongest predictor of willingness to pay a premium for Halal-certified products (OR=2.89, $p<0.001$). Cluster analysis identified three distinct consumer profiles: the 'Conscious Cosmopolitans', 'Pious Pragmatists', and 'Market Traditionalists'. Qualitative findings illuminate how the Halal logo has been symbolically transformed from a religious marker into a signifier of quality, modernity, and class. This enables "piety signaling," a gendered performance of social status. In conclusion, Halal certification is not a neutral regulatory tool but an active force in social structuration. It creates a new field of distinction where "Halal capital" is used to perform symbolic boundary-work, legitimizing inequality through the moral language of piety. This study contributes a novel theoretical framework for understanding how state-regulated religion intersects with consumer capitalism to forge new, intersectional hierarchies of class and gender in the contemporary Muslim world.

1. Introduction

The global Halal market, an economic behemoth valued in the trillions of dollars, has emerged as a primary stage for the negotiation of modern Muslim identities. In this global landscape, Indonesia, home to

the world's largest Muslim population, has positioned itself as a normative and regulatory epicenter. The enactment of Law No. 33/2014 on Halal Product Assurance was a watershed moment, fundamentally transforming a voluntary, civil-society-led certification



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process into a compulsory, state-administered regime. This sweeping policy, overseen by the Halal Product Assurance Agency (BPJPH), is officially framed as a dual project: to protect Muslim consumers by guaranteeing religious permissibility and to bolster the global competitiveness of Indonesian products. However, such a profound state intervention into the micro-practices of production and consumption inevitably generates complex sociological ripples that extend far beyond its explicit aims.^{1,2}

Existing scholarship on Halal certification has largely concentrated on its economic dimensions in global trade, its complex theological and legal underpinnings, and its function as a tool of state governance over Islam. While these contributions are foundational, they often neglect the policy's lived reality—its downstream effects on social structures, identities, and hierarchies. The marketplace is not merely a zone of exchange but a rich social arena where abstract state policies are interpreted, contested, and woven into the fabric of daily life. Consumption, as a practice, is deeply imbued with symbolic meaning; it is a primary vector through which individuals construct, communicate, and contest their identities, values, and social positions. The introduction of a ubiquitous, state-sanctioned religious symbol—the Halal logo—into this dynamic space provides a new vocabulary for social expression and differentiation, creating novel terrains of social distinction and inequality.³⁻⁵

This research addresses a critical lacuna in the literature by providing a robust sociological analysis of Halal certification as a mechanism of social stratification. We move beyond treating the policy as a static religious regulation to examine it as a dynamic social force that actively reconfigures class relations. Our central argument is that the Halal logo has undergone a process of profound symbolic transformation. It has evolved from a straightforward indicator of religious permissibility (*halalan thayyiban*—permissible and wholesome) into a

polysemic signifier of hygiene, quality, safety, modernity, and, crucially, social class. This transformation is not an accidental byproduct but is co-produced by state regulation and market forces, and it is strategically, if often subconsciously, leveraged by consumers to navigate and solidify their social standing. In a society marked by a burgeoning middle class with aspirations for both upward mobility and heightened religious piety, the consumption of Halal-certified products becomes a potent site for the performance of a dual, aspirational identity: that of a devout Muslim and that of a modern, discerning, global citizen.⁶⁻⁸

This study therefore aims to dissect the intricate ways in which a state-driven religious project interacts with the logic of consumer capitalism to reshape social hierarchies in urban Indonesia. By focusing on the nexus of piety, consumption, and class, we uncover a novel form of symbolic boundary-making that is deeply intersectional, with profound implications for gender dynamics. The novelty of our research lies in three core contributions. First, we introduce and empirically ground the concept of "piety signaling"—the use of Halal consumption as a performance of social status, legitimized through the moral language of religion. Second, we apply the sociological theories of Pierre Bourdieu and Michèle Lamont to conceptualize a new "Halal field" of consumption, where specific forms of "Halal capital" are deployed to perform symbolic boundary-work. Third, by employing a rigorous mixed-methods design, we provide one of the first comprehensive empirical analyses of how this market-mediated stratification operates in practice. Ultimately, the central aim of this study is to demonstrate that Indonesia's Halal certification policy, far from being a neutral tool, operates as a new, market-mediated engine of social stratification, creating distinct consumer classes and enabling the performance of social distinction through the language of piety.



2. Methods

To capture the multifaceted and multi-layered impact of Halal certification on urban Indonesian society, this study employed a mixed-methods sequential explanatory design. This two-phase approach was chosen for its capacity to first identify broad, statistically significant patterns of consumption through quantitative surveying, and then to explore the nuanced meanings, motivations, and social processes that underpin those patterns through in-depth qualitative ethnography. This design allows the qualitative data to directly explain and add depth to the initial quantitative findings. The research was conducted over a 12-month period (March 2024 - February 2025) in two strategically selected metropolitan areas: Jakarta, as the nation's political, cultural, and economic epicenter, and Makassar, as a major urban and economic hub in Eastern Indonesia. This dual-city approach ensures a degree of geographical and cultural diversity, enhancing the robustness of the findings.

The first phase of the research consisted of a cross-sectional survey administered to a representative sample of 500 household consumers, with 250 participants in each city. A multi-stage stratified random sampling technique was employed to ensure the sample accurately reflected the diverse socio-economic landscape of both cities. City districts (*kecamatan*) were first stratified into three income levels (low, middle, high) based on the latest publicly available average household income data from Indonesia's Central Agency of Statistics (*Badan Pusat Statistik*, BPS). The thresholds used were: Low (< IDR 5 million/month), Middle (IDR 5-15 million/month), and High (> IDR 15 million/month). Within each income stratum, neighborhoods (*kelurahan*) were randomly selected. Finally, households within the selected neighborhoods were chosen using a systematic random sampling method (for example, every 10th house on a randomly selected street). The primary grocery shopper in each selected household,

identified as the person most responsible for food and household purchasing decisions, was invited to participate. This ensured that the respondent had direct knowledge of the consumption patterns under investigation.

The survey instrument was a structured questionnaire, developed in English, professionally translated into Bahasa Indonesia, and then back-translated by an independent translator to ensure conceptual and linguistic equivalence. It was pilot-tested with 30 respondents in a non-sample area and subsequently refined for clarity and flow. The questionnaire included the following sections: (1) Socio-Demographic Profile: Collected data on age, gender, monthly household income, highest educational attainment, and occupation; (2) Operationalization of Key Composite Variables: (i) Socio-Economic Status (SES): To create a robust measure of social class beyond income alone, a composite SES score was generated for each respondent. This was constructed using Principal Component Analysis (PCA). The standardized scores of three variables—monthly household income, years of formal education, and an occupational prestige score (based on the Indonesian Standard Classification of Occupations)—were entered into the PCA. The first principal component, which explained the largest amount of variance, was extracted and used as the composite SES score for subsequent analyses, including the logistic regression; (ii) Religiosity Index: Religiosity was measured using a composite index adapted and validated for the Indonesian context (10). The index comprised five items asking respondents to self-report their behavior on a 5-point scale (1=Never, 5=Always/Daily): frequency of performing the five daily prayers (*salat*), frequency of Quranic recitation, regularity of paying obligatory charity (*zakat*), participation in community religious gatherings (*pengajian*), and the importance of Islamic principles in daily decision-making. The index demonstrated high internal consistency in our sample, with a



Cronbach's alpha of $\alpha = 0.88$; (3) Consumption Behavior and Perceptions: This core section utilized a series of 5-point Likert-scale questions to measure attitudes and behaviors related to Halal certification. Key variables included: perceived importance of the Halal logo, trust in the BPJPH certification process, willingness to pay a premium for certified products, and the association of the Halal logo with non-religious attributes such as quality, hygiene, modernity, and safety. It also captured purchasing habits, including primary shopping venue (traditional market, supermarket, hypermarket) and stated preference for local versus global brands.

All quantitative data were analyzed using SPSS Version 28.0. Frequencies, means, and standard deviations were calculated to summarize the sample's demographic, socio-economic, and religious characteristics. A binary logistic regression model was employed to identify the key predictors of a high willingness to pay a premium for Halal-certified products. The dependent variable was binary (Willing vs. Not Willing). The independent variables entered into the model were the composite SES score, the Religiosity Index score, age, and a dummy variable for the city. To identify distinct, naturally occurring consumer profiles, a Two-Step Cluster Analysis was performed. This method was chosen for its ability to handle a mix of categorical and continuous variables. The variables entered into the analysis included attitudes towards the Halal logo, shopping venue preferences, brand preferences, and willingness to pay a premium. The optimal number of clusters was determined empirically by comparing model fit statistics (Schwarz's Bayesian Information Criterion and Average Silhouette Width) for solutions with two to five clusters.

The second phase was designed to provide explanatory depth to the quantitative results, particularly to understand the complex motivations and meanings behind the statistically identified consumer profiles. A purposive, maximum variation

sampling strategy was used to recruit 30 individuals for semi-structured interviews. Participants were drawn from the initial survey respondents who had consented to a follow-up, ensuring representation from each of the three consumer clusters identified in Phase One. This strategy allowed for a targeted exploration of the lived realities and worldviews of consumers from different social strata. The sampling also deliberately ensured a balance of male and female participants to investigate the gendered dimensions of consumption.

Two primary qualitative methods were utilized to generate rich, contextualized data: (1) Semi-Structured Interviews: Each interview, lasting 60-90 minutes, was conducted in Bahasa Indonesia. The interviews were conversational, guided by an aide-mémoire that covered key themes such as daily shopping routines, the decision-making calculus when choosing products, the symbolic meaning ascribed to the Halal logo, perceptions of social class, and the connection between consumption, lifestyle, and religious identity. Probing questions were used to delve deeper into the emergent concept of "piety signaling."; (2) Participant Observation: Over 100 hours of participant observation were conducted across a spectrum of consumption sites in both cities. These included high-end supermarkets in premium malls like Grand Indonesia in Jakarta, mid-range hypermarkets such as Hypermart, and bustling traditional wet markets (*pasar tradisional*). In some instances, a "go-along" method was employed, where researchers accompanied participants on their shopping trips. This provided invaluable data on product placement, marketing strategies, the physical environment of consumption, and the subtle social interactions that shape purchasing decisions.

All interviews were audio-recorded, transcribed verbatim, and then translated into English for analysis. A rigorous thematic analysis approach was applied to the entire qualitative dataset (interview transcripts and detailed field notes), facilitated by the



use of NVivo 14 software. The analysis was an iterative, six-stage process: (1) data familiarization, (2) generation of initial codes, (3) searching for themes, (4) reviewing themes, (5) defining and naming themes, and (6) producing the final analysis. To ensure analytical credibility, two members of the research team independently coded a subset of the transcripts and held regular meetings to discuss and refine the coding framework and emerging themes, establishing a high degree of inter-coder reliability.

3. Results and Discussion

The results are presented sequentially, with the quantitative findings first establishing the broad contours of Halal consumption, followed by the qualitative findings, which provide depth, meaning, and explanatory power. The survey of 500 consumers provides a robust statistical map of the relationship between social class, religiosity, and consumption practices within the new Halal regime.

The sample was evenly distributed between Jakarta and Makassar (n=250 each) and comprised 58% female respondents, reflecting their predominant role as primary household shoppers. The mean age was 39.4 years (SD = 11.2). The socio-economic distribution was diverse: 22% were classified as lower-income (< IDR 5 million/month), 48% as middle-income (IDR 5-15 million/month), and 30% as upper-income (> IDR 15 million/month). A key initial finding was the widespread perception of the Halal logo as a proxy for more than just religious compliance. While 98% of respondents associated the logo with "religious permissibility," a striking 71% also linked it to "higher quality," 65% to "better hygiene and safety," and 45% to being "a modern product." This association was significantly stronger among the upper-income and higher-education groups (Pearson χ^2 test, $p < .001$), providing the first indication of a class-based divergence in the logo's symbolic meaning.

Table 1. Survey Respondent Profile			
A detailed socio-demographic breakdown of the 500 survey participants.			
VARIABLE	CATEGORY	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE (%)
City	Jakarta	250	50.0
	Makassar	250	50.0
Gender	Male	210	42.0
	Female	290	58.0
Age (Mean, SD)		39.4 (11.2)	
Monthly Income	< 5 Million IDR	110	22.0
	5 - 15 Million IDR	240	48.0
	> 15 Million IDR	150	30.0
Education	High School or less	325	65.0
	University Degree	175	35.0
Religiosity Score (Mean, SD)		4.1 (0.7)	
Total Respondents (N) = 500			



To test the factors driving the willingness to pay a premium for Halal-certified products, a binary logistic regression was performed. The results, presented in Table 2, are highly significant and revealing. The overall model was statistically significant, $\chi^2(4) = 98.74$, $p < .001$, explaining 29.8% (Nagelkerke R^2) of the variance in willingness to pay a premium.

The strongest and most significant predictor was Socio-Economic Status (SES). For each unit increase in the composite SES score, the odds of an individual being willing to pay a premium for Halal products

increased by a factor of 2.89. The Religiosity Index was also a statistically significant predictor, but its effect size was substantially smaller ($OR = 1.45$). This is a crucial finding: while personal piety matters, it is economic capacity and the associated cultural capital encapsulated in SES that are the primary drivers of participation in the premium Halal market. Age and city of residence were not significant predictors, suggesting this is a nationwide urban phenomenon not confined to a specific demographic or location.

Table 2. Logistic Regression Analysis

Predicting the Willingness to Pay a Premium for Halal-Certified Products.

PREDICTOR VARIABLE	B	S.E.	WALD	DF	SIG. (P)	ODDS RATIO	95% C.I. FOR OR
SES (Composite Score)	1.06	0.15	49.82	1	<.001	2.89	2.15 - 3.89
Religiosity Score	0.37	0.12	9.61	1	.002	1.45	1.15 - 1.83
Age	-0.01	0.01	0.89	1	.345	0.99	0.97 - 1.01
City (1=Jakarta)	0.21	0.19	1.23	1	.267	1.23	0.85 - 1.79
Constant	-2.54	0.45	31.98	1	<.001	0.08	
Model Summary							
Chi-Square (χ^2): 98.74		Significance (p): <.001			Nagelkerke R^2 : 0.298		

The Two-Step Cluster Analysis was performed to identify distinct consumer segments. The choice of a three-cluster solution was empirically justified by comparing model fit statistics. As shown in Table 3, the three-cluster solution yielded a lower Bayesian Information Criterion (BIC) and a higher Average Silhouette Width compared to the two, four, and five-cluster solutions, indicating it was the most statistically robust and distinct segmentation of the data.

The analysis yielded three sociologically meaningful consumer profiles; (1) Cluster 1: The Conscious Cosmopolitans (28% of the sample). This group is defined by high SES (mean score = 1.8 SD above average), university-level education (85% hold a degree), and a strong preference for high-end supermarkets and premium malls as their primary shopping venues. They exhibit the highest trust in the state's certification system and most strongly associate the Halal logo with quality, safety, and modernity.



Table 3. Cluster Analysis: Model Fit Statistics

Justification for the selection of the optimal number of consumer clusters.

NUMBER OF CLUSTERS	SCHWARZ'S BAYESIAN CRITERION (BIC)	AVERAGE SILHOUETTE WIDTH
2	1854.3	0.42
3 Optimal Solution	1721.1	0.58
4	1798.5	0.49
5	1845.9	0.45

Interpretation Guide

✖ **Lower BIC** indicates a better, more parsimonious model fit.

✔ **Higher Silhouette Width** indicates more distinct, well-separated clusters.

They have a high willingness to pay a premium (92% willing) and demonstrate a clear preference for globally recognized brands that also carry the Indonesian Halal logo, such as L'Oréal, Starbucks, and imported Australian beef. Their consumption patterns are aspirational, reflecting a desire to blend global consumer trends with a modern, pious Muslim identity; (2) Cluster 2: The Pious Pragmatists (51% of the sample). Representing the urban middle class, this is the largest segment. They have moderate SES (mean score = 0.1 SD) and are characterized by high religiosity (mean score = 4.5/5). For them, the Halal logo is a non-negotiable religious necessity. However, their purchasing decisions are heavily mediated by budget constraints. They are pragmatic, actively seeking out Halal-certified products within affordable price ranges, often opting for local brands or private-label supermarket products. Their primary motivation is achieving religious compliance in an efficient and cost-effective manner; (3) Cluster 3: The Market

Traditionalists (21% of the sample). This lower-income group is characterized by low SES (mean score = -1.9 SD below average), lower levels of formal education, and an almost exclusive reliance on traditional wet markets (*pasar tradisional*) for their daily needs. While they hold deep convictions about consuming Halal food, they place less emphasis on the formal, state-issued logo, which they often perceive as being attached to expensive, inaccessible products. Their system of Halal assurance is rooted in social trust—long-standing relationships (*langganan*) with vendors and community-based knowledge; for instance, buying from a butcher known personally to be a devout Muslim. For this group, Halal is embedded in communal relationships rather than abstract, bureaucratic processes.

The qualitative phase delved into the rich tapestry of meanings, motivations, and social dynamics that animate the statistical patterns identified above. The analysis revealed three overarching themes, including



a critical, emergent theme on the gendered nature of these practices.

Theme 1: The symbolic transformation of halal: from obligation to aspiration

For the 'Conscious Cosmopolitans', the meaning of Halal has expanded far beyond its religious-legal definition. While fulfilling a religious duty remains the foundation, the act of selecting premium Halal products has become an integral part of constructing a sophisticated, modern Muslim identity. The BPJPH logo on an expensive Japanese cosmetic brand or an imported steak is not merely about permissibility; it is a powerful symbol demonstrating that one can be globally connected, modern, and devoutly Muslim all at once.

"For me, seeing the Halal logo on a product from, say, Japan or Korea, it's a sign of... progress. It means my faith is compatible with a modern lifestyle. It's not just Halal, it's about choosing the best. It's about quality. My friends and I, we look for that. It shows you care, about your faith and about your body." – Ms R, 34, Marketing Manager, Jakarta ('Conscious Cosmopolitan').

This sentiment captures the fusion of piety with aspirational lifestyle choices. The state certification acts as a bridge, sanctifying modern consumer goods and allowing for their seamless integration into a pious identity without ideological conflict.

Theme 2: Piety signaling as a performance of class

This aspirational consumption gives rise to what we conceptualize as "piety signaling": the subtle and sometimes overt use of consumption choices to simultaneously display one's piety and social standing. This was particularly evident in social settings. Choosing to host a business lunch or a family celebration at a high-end, Halal-certified restaurant is a public performance of both class and piety.

"Of course, you take clients or a date to a place that is nice... and Halal certified. It's a guarantee. It shows

you are professional, you have standards. You wouldn't go to a street stall, even if the food is Halal. The certification in a fancy restaurant, it's a different level of trust, a different class." – Mr B, 41, Architect, Makassar ('Conscious Cosmopolitan').

Observations in premium supermarkets revealed this performance in action. Shoppers in this group spent considerable time examining the packaging of high-end products, with the Halal logo being a key point of inspection alongside nutritional information and brand origin. The shopping cart becomes a curated tableau of the family's values: pious, health-conscious, globally aware, and, implicitly, economically successful.

Theme 3: The gendered burden of pious consumption

A critical theme that emerged from the interviews was the deeply gendered nature of this new consumer landscape. The responsibility for navigating the complexities of the Halal market and performing this new, class-inflected piety falls disproportionately on women as the primary managers of the household. For middle- and upper-class women, being a "good wife" or "good mother" is no longer just about providing Halal food, but about providing the right kind of Halal food.

"My husband trusts me to handle everything for the family. He works, I manage the house. That means I have to be smart. I have to read the labels, check the logos, make sure what I buy is not only Halal but also healthy and good for the children's future. There is a pressure, from family, from other mothers at school... you want to show you are giving your family the best, both for their dunya [worldly life] and akhirat [afterlife]." – Ms D, 38, Homemaker, Jakarta ('Conscious Cosmopolitan').

This quote reveals how the moral responsibility for the family's piety and well-being is intertwined with consumer choices. The supermarket aisle becomes a site of moral judgment and social competition among women. In contrast, for women in the 'Market Traditionalist' cluster, the system of trust is also



gendered, but it is rooted in communal relationships rather than consumer knowledge.

"Here in the market, we all know each other. I trust Ibu Fatimah for my vegetables and Pak Haji for my meat. We are a community. It is the women who keep these relationships strong. It is simpler. We don't need the government to tell us what is good." – Mrs A, 58, Homemaker, Jakarta ('Market Traditionalist').

This highlights how the state-led certification system, by privileging a bureaucratic form of knowledge, simultaneously creates new burdens for affluent women while devaluing the community-based social capital traditionally managed by women in lower-income settings.

The findings of this study provide compelling evidence that Indonesia's mandatory Halal certification policy is not a neutral regulatory instrument. It is a potent social force that actively participates in the construction and reinforcement of social hierarchies. Our analysis suggests that this process operates through several interconnected sociological mechanisms: the creation of a new social field of consumption, the performance of symbolic boundary-work, the gendered nature of this performance, and the legitimation of a new class-inflected piety under a Foucaultian logic of "governmentality."

Our findings are best understood by conceptualizing Halal consumption as a Bourdieusian *field*—a structured social space with its own specific rules, logics, and forms of capital.⁹⁻¹¹ Within this "Halal field," the state-sanctioned logo acts as a central organizing principle. The ability to correctly interpret, evaluate, and afford various certified products constitutes a specific form of cultural capital, which we term "Halal capital." This is not merely about religious knowledge, but about a *habitus* that blends pious dispositions with modern consumer tastes. For the 'Conscious Cosmopolitans', possessing high volumes of Halal capital allows them to navigate this field with ease, distinguishing themselves from those

with less. Their preference for a premium, internationally branded product with a Halal logo over a locally certified one is not just a taste preference; it is an act of distinction that demonstrates their superior position in the field. This Halal capital is readily convertible into social capital, cementing their status within elite social networks where such discerning pious consumption is valued and expected.

The deployment of Halal capital within this field is achieved through "piety signaling." This concept moves beyond Veblen's "conspicuous consumption" by integrating the powerful moral dimension of religion. Whereas conspicuous consumption can risk being seen as wasteful or worldly, piety signaling frames elite consumption as an act of virtuous devotion. Choosing an expensive, Halal-certified organic product is not an indulgence; it is framed as a religiously sanctioned act of seeking the 'best' and 'purest' (*thayyib*), thus insulating the consumer from moral critique.^{12,13}

This process is a clear example of symbolic boundary-work. The 'Conscious Cosmopolitans' actively draw symbolic lines between themselves and other social classes. The boundary they construct is not explicitly about wealth, but about the *quality* of one's piety. Their consumption patterns create a moral hierarchy: their piety is "modern," "informed," and "discerning," validated by a bureaucratic state apparatus and aligned with global standards of quality. In contrast, the piety of the 'Market Traditionalists' is implicitly framed as "simple," "outdated," or "uninformed," as it relies on devalued forms of local, relational trust. The Halal logo, therefore, becomes a powerful tool for making these moral judgments, naturalizing class divisions by recasting them in the unassailable language of religious devotion.^{14,15}

The state's role in this process is not accidental. The Halal certification policy can be analyzed as a form of governmentality, a Foucaultian concept describing how states produce self-governing, disciplined citizens. By creating a complex, bureaucratic system



of certification, the Indonesian state encourages citizens to internalize a specific mode of being Muslim. The "good Muslim subject" in this framework is a rational, discerning consumer who demonstrates their piety through careful market choices. This process shifts the locus of religious authority from communal leaders or personal relationships to the abstract, rationalized system of the state and the market.^{16,17}

This fosters a form of "neoliberal piety"—a religious subjectivity that is individualistic, consumer-based, and perfectly aligned with the logic of capitalism. Piety becomes a quality to be curated and demonstrated through the acquisition of certified goods. The state, through the BPJPH, acts as the ultimate arbiter of "proper" Halal, disciplining both producers and consumers and extending its regulatory power into the moral and spiritual lives of its citizens. This project aligns seamlessly with the interests of a rising middle class that values modernity, order, and rationalized systems.

Finally, our analysis underscores that this process of stratification is deeply intersectional. As our qualitative findings revealed, the "Halal field" is a highly gendered space. The pressures and responsibilities of piety signaling fall disproportionately on women, who are positioned as the primary managers of household consumption and the moral guardians of the family.¹⁸⁻²⁰ For affluent women, this creates a new domain of labor: the work of researching, sourcing, and curating a lifestyle that signals both class status and religious virtue. This "pious consumer-work" becomes a key part of modern feminine identity in urban Indonesia, adding another layer to the performance of class. The policy thus not only reinforces class boundaries but also reconfigures gender roles and expectations within the domestic sphere.

4. Conclusion

This study set out to provide a critical sociological analysis of Indonesia's mandatory Halal certification

policy. Our mixed-methods research has demonstrated that this policy, while conceived within a framework of religious consumer protection, functions as a powerful and sophisticated mechanism of social stratification. It has become a key arena in which class distinctions are produced, performed, and legitimized in contemporary urban Indonesia.

Our quantitative analysis established an undeniable link between socio-economic status and participation in the premium Halal market, identifying three distinct consumer classes. Our qualitative investigation gave voice and meaning to these statistics, revealing the process of symbolic transformation that has turned the Halal logo into a marker of class and modernity. To explain this phenomenon, we have developed the theoretical concept of "piety signaling," a gendered performance through which affluent consumers deploy "Halal capital" to perform symbolic boundary-work.

The primary contribution of this research is the reframing of Halal certification not as a static regulation, but as a dynamic social institution that co-produces the market and reconfigures social hierarchies. It reveals the intricate ways in which state power (through the logic of governmentality), market forces (through consumer capitalism), and religious identity intersect to forge a new architecture of social stratification. In the urban Indonesian marketplace, the politics of piety are inseparable from the politics of class and gender. This study provides a novel, empirically grounded framework for understanding how the global phenomenon of Islamic consumerism is localized and transformed into a powerful engine of social differentiation, offering critical insights for scholars of sociology, religion, and Southeast Asian studies.

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