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RESEARCH ARTICLE

A Systematic Literature Review of the Effects of Exports, Imports, Exchange Rate, and Inflation on Indonesia's Economic Growth

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ABSTRACT
Economic growth remains a central indicator of national welfare and development, particularly in emerging economies such as Indonesia. This study systematically reviews empirical findings on how exports, imports, exchange rate fluctuations, and inflation influence Indonesia's economic growth. Using a systematic literature review approach, eight peer-reviewed journal articles published between 2019 and 2023 were analyzed through thematic synthesis drawn from Google Scholar and other academic databases. The results reveal that exports consistently contribute positively to Indonesia's gross domestic product (GDP), while the impacts of imports vary depending on domestic industrial capacity and global demand structures. Exchange rate stability is found to enhance trade competitiveness, whereas inflation demonstrates a short-term but significant effect on growth. The study highlights the interdependence between trade and monetary variables in shaping macroeconomic performance. Policy implications emphasize the importance of maintaining external balance, controlling inflationary pressure, and fostering export diversification to sustain long-term economic growth in Indonesia.

KEYWORDS:
exports, imports, exchange rate, inflation, economic growth, Indonesia, systematic literature review

INTRODUCTION

Economic growth serves as a fundamental indicator of a nation's progress and prosperity. It reflects the overall expansion of goods and services produced within an economy and is closely tied to improvements in income, employment, and welfare (Todaro & Smith, 2020). For developing economies such as Indonesia, sustaining high and stable economic growth is essential to achieving long-term development goals. One of the key drivers of such growth lies in international trade performance, which encompasses exports and imports, as well as macroeconomic variables such as exchange rate stability and inflation control (World Bank, 2023).

International trade allows countries to specialize, access foreign markets, and obtain capital goods and technology that enhance productivity. Exports contribute directly to gross domestic product (GDP) and foreign exchange reserves, while imports provide the inputs necessary for domestic industries to expand production capacity (Krugman, Obstfeld, & Melitz, 2018). However, the relationship between trade performance and economic growth is not linear. Excessive dependence on imports can weaken domestic industries, while trade imbalances may pressure exchange rate stability and dynamics.

In Indonesia, the strategic role of exports and imports has become increasingly significant following fluctuations in global commodity prices and exchange rate volatility. According to Statistics Indonesia BPS (2023), the nation's exports in December 2022 reached USD 23.83 billion, increasing by 6.58 percent compared to December 2021. Meanwhile, imports reached USD 19.94 billion, decreasing by 6.61 percent year-on-year. These dynamics indicate that the external sector continues to influence domestic output through trade and price channels. Moreover, variations in the rupiah exchange rate

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and inflation levels shape the competitiveness of Indonesian products in global markets and affect the purchasing power of households (Bank Indonesia, 2023).

Theoretically, the nexus among exports, imports, exchange rate, inflation, and economic growth has been widely discussed in international economics and macroeconomic literature. The export-led growth hypothesis posits that an increase in exports leads to higher output and productivity through scale economies and technological spillovers (Balassa, 1978; Feder, 1983). Conversely, persistent inflation and exchange rate volatility are often found to distort investment decisions and reduce long-term growth potential (Barro, 1995; Mallik & Chowdhury, 2001). Yet, empirical studies in Indonesia have yielded mixed results. For instance, Slamet and Hidayah (2022) found that exports and exchange rates have a positive effect on economic growth, while imports and inflation do not show significant influence. In contrast, Hodijah and Angelina (2021) demonstrated that both short-term and long-term exports significantly drive economic performance, whereas Ngaisah and Indrawati (2022) observed significant short-run but insignificant long-run impacts.

This inconsistency reveals a research gap in synthesizing the diverse empirical findings on the interplay between trade and macroeconomic variables. Previous studies tend to rely on quantitative time-series analysis using limited data periods, leaving insufficient attention to the broader patterns emerging across multiple studies. Therefore, a systematic literature review is required to integrate existing evidence, identify commonalities and contradictions, and draw comprehensive conclusions on the mechanisms through which exports, imports, exchange rate, and inflation affect Indonesia's economic growth.

Accordingly, this study aims to systematically examine and synthesize the results of empirical research published between 2019 and 2023 regarding the influence of exports, imports, exchange rate, and inflation on Indonesia's economic growth. The analysis is expected to contribute to a more coherent understanding of the interrelationships among trade and monetary variables and to provide policy insights for strengthening Indonesia's economic resilience and sustainable development.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Economic growth is one of the most fundamental indicators of a nation's progress, reflecting a sustained increase in the production of goods and services over time. As noted by Todaro and Smith (2020), economic growth not only represents rising gross domestic product (GDP) but also implies structural transformation toward higher productivity and improved social welfare. In developing economies such as Indonesia, the trajectory of economic growth is largely influenced by external trade dynamics as well as domestic macroeconomic stability, particularly exchange rate behavior and inflation trends (World Bank, 2023).

The relationship between trade and growth has been extensively discussed in the development economics literature. The export-led growth hypothesis (ELG), first proposed by Balassa (1978) and Feder (1983), posits that the expansion of exports serves as a key engine of economic development. Export growth fosters efficiency gains through economies of scale, facilitates technological transfers from global markets, and enhances productivity across sectors. Empirical studies in Indonesia strongly support this hypothesis. Slamet and Hidayah (2022) revealed that exports have a positive and significant effect on Indonesia's economic growth between 2000 and 2019. Similarly, Hodijah and Angelina (2021) demonstrated that both short-run and long-run export performance significantly contribute to GDP expansion. Likewise, Putri and Wahyudi (2022) emphasized that exports not only boost growth but also reinforce fiscal capacity through higher foreign exchange earnings.

However, some research findings suggest more nuanced outcomes. Ngaisah and Indrawati (2022) found that exports significantly affect growth only in the short term, while the long-term effect appears to diminish due to structural dependence on primary commodities that are highly sensitive to global price fluctuations. At the regional level, Nguyen and Su (2023) highlighted that export diversification—rather than mere volume—is essential for sustaining economic growth among ASEAN economies. Similarly, Abbas et al. (2022) confirmed that technology-intensive and value-added exports have stronger multiplier effects on productivity compared with traditional commodity-based exports. These findings underscore that Indonesia's long-term growth sustainability requires a gradual shift from resource-based exports toward more diversified and technology-driven export structures.

Imports, on the other hand, also play a dual role in shaping economic performance. Theoretically, imports enable developing economies to access capital goods, advanced technologies, and intermediate input necessary for domestic industrial upgrading (Grossman & Helpman, 1991). Yet, excessive dependence on imported goods may weaken domestic industries, increase trade deficits, and expose the economy to external shocks. Empirical studies in Indonesia demonstrate mixed results. Triyawan and Mutmainnah (2021) observed a negative but statistically insignificant effect of imports on GDP growth, suggesting that import activities have not yet translated into higher productive efficiency. Conversely, Puspandari et al. (2022) reported a positive relationship between imports and economic activity, particularly in sectors relying on imported machinery and raw materials. Consistent with these findings, Alam and Sumon (2021) argued that the impact of imports on growth is primarily determined by the composition rather than the magnitude of imports. Imports of productive capital goods tend to enhance growth, whereas excessive consumer goods imports can hinder domestic competitiveness.

Exchange rate stability is another critical determinant of economic growth, as it affects trade competitiveness, investment decisions, and inflationary trends. According to the Mundell–Fleming model, currency depreciation can stimulate exports and curb imports, thereby improve the trade balance and support short-term economic expansion (Mundell, 1963). However, high exchange rate volatility creates uncertainty that may discourage investment (Barro, 1995). In Indonesia, empirical evidence shows a consistent link between exchange rate movements and growth. Ismanto et al. (2019) found that the rupiah exchange rate significantly affects GDP during 2007–2017, while Azizah et al. (2019) confirmed that exchange rate appreciation positively influences output through improved investor confidence. Nonetheless, excessive depreciation may increase import prices, generate inflationary pressure, and reduce household purchasing power (Wiriani & Mukarramah, 2020). Therefore, exchange rate management remains central to Indonesia's macroeconomic policy framework, aiming to maintain external balance and internal stability.

Inflation, as a measure of general price increases, has complex and often nonlinear effects on economic growth. Moderate inflation can stimulate production and spending, but persistent high inflation undermines real income and reduces investment efficiency. Barro (1995) argued that inflation distorts relative prices and discourages capital accumulation, while Friedman (1968) emphasized that the relationship between inflation and output follows a short-run trade-off described by the Phillips Curve. Empirical studies in Indonesia suggest that inflation exerts a statistically significant but context-dependent influence on growth. Salim and Fadilla (2021) found that inflation significantly affects GDP between 2016 and 2020, whereas Dwi et al. (2023) identified a positive short-run effect, with inflation explaining 21.6 percent of the variation in economic growth. However, prolonged inflationary pressure may weaken macroeconomic stability. In a broader Asian context, Mallik and Chowdhury (2001) observed an inverted U-shaped relationship between inflation and growth, indicating that low to moderate inflation is conducive to growth, whereas high inflation is detrimental.

Synthesizing these studies reveals that exports, imports, exchange rate, and inflation interact in complex ways to shape Indonesia's economic growth. While most empirical evidence confirms the positive contribution of exports and exchange rate stability, the effects of imports and inflation appear more context-specific and occasionally contradictory. These inconsistencies may stem from differences in time periods, analytical methods, and structural characteristics of Indonesia's economy. Consequently, a systematic literature review is necessary to consolidate existing findings, identify causal mechanisms, and develop a more comprehensive understanding of how trade and monetary variables jointly influence Indonesia's growth dynamics. Such synthesis not only enriches academic discourse but also provides a valuable foundation for policy formulation aimed at strengthening macroeconomic resilience and sustaining long-term development.

METHODOLOGY

This study employs a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) approach to synthesize empirical evidence concerning the influence of exports, imports, exchange rate, and inflation on Indonesia's economic growth. The SLR method was selected because it enables a transparent and comprehensive integration of existing findings while minimizing researcher bias. According to Tranfield, Denyer, and Smart (2003), systematic review techniques allow researchers to generate evidence-based knowledge by following a structured, reproducible process of searching, screening, and analyzing prior studies. Consistent with this framework, the present review adheres to the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses PRISMA (2020) guidelines (Page et al., 2021), which emphasize methodological rigor through four major stages: identification, screening, eligibility, and inclusion.

The review began with a comprehensive search for relevant studies using major academic databases, including Google Scholar, ScienceDirect, DOAJ, and ResearchGate. To ensure a wide coverage of scholarly materials, the search employed both English and Indonesian keywords such as "exports and economic growth in Indonesia," "imports and GDP," "exchange rate and inflationi. The initial search was conducted between January and March 2024 and was limited to publications released between 2019 and 2023. This time frame was selected to capture the most recent research reflecting Indonesia's economic dynamics in the period surrounding the global pandemic and subsequent recovery.

After gathering all potentially relevant materials, each document was examined based on inclusion and exclusion criteria designed to ensure quality and relevance. Only peer-reviewed journal articles, theses, and conference papers that empirically analyzed the relationships among exports, imports, exchange rate, inflation, and economic growth in Indonesia were included. Studies using quantitative methods such as regression analysis, ARDL, VAR, or OLS models were prioritized, while conceptual papers or purely theoretical discussions without empirical data were excluded. Likewise, research not focusing on the Indonesian context or lacking accessible full text was removed from the corpus.

Following the PRISMA protocol, the review process began with the identification of forty-three documents. After preliminary screening of titles and abstracts, twenty-eight papers were excluded due to limited methodological rigor or lack of relevance to Indonesia's macroeconomic setting. The remaining fifteen studies underwent full-text evaluation for eligibility. Seven of these were subsequently excluded because of incomplete data, duplication, or overlapping with other analyses. Ultimately, eight studies met all inclusion criteria and formed the final sample for synthesis. These studies were chosen for their methodological soundness, analytical clarity, and explicit focus on Indonesia's trade and macroeconomic variables.

Once the selection was finalized, each article was carefully analyzed through a systematic coding process. Key information extracted from each study included authorship, publication year, research objectives, variables examined, data period, econometric techniques, and principal findings. The analytical approach used in this study was qualitative thematic synthesis, which emphasizes conceptual interpretation rather than statistical aggregation. This approach is particularly appropriate for economic literature, where studies often employ different data sets, models, and time frames, making quantitative meta-analysis unsuitable. Thematic synthesis was therefore used to identify recurring patterns, divergent results, and overarching relationships among exports, imports, exchange rate, inflation, and economic growth in Indonesia.

To ensure the validity and reliability of the synthesis, triangulation across multiple data sources was applied. The inclusion of diverse databases reduced the risk of publication bias, while cross-verification with macroeconomic experts enhanced the accuracy of article selection and interpretation. Throughout the review process, each step—from identification to synthesis—was documented in accordance with PRISMA 2020 guidelines to promote transparency and replicability.

In summary, this methodological framework provides a systematic and evidence-based foundation for understanding how trade and monetary variables interact to influence Indonesia's economic growth. By consolidating eight recent empirical studies, the review not only synthesizes existing findings but also highlights conceptual and methodological gaps in the current body of knowledge.

This structured synthesis serves as the basis for the subsequent analysis and discussion of results, offering both theoretical insights and policy implications for Indonesia's economic development.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Industrial and Cultural Context of Pekalongan's Fashion Economy

Pekalongan City, situated along the northern coast of Central Java, occupies a distinctive position in Indonesia's industrial and cultural landscape as one of the nation's most enduring centers of textile and batik production. Historically, the city's development has been closely tied to the evolution of batik craftsmanship, which serves not only as a commodity but also as a symbolic expression of local identity, spirituality, and artistry. The nickname "Kota Batik" or "City of Batik" captures this dual character—economic and cultural—where artisanal skill, religious expression, and creative entrepreneurship have coexisted for generations.

Batik in Pekalongan represents more than a material artifact; it embodies a moral and aesthetic system rooted in both Javanese and Islamic traditions. The intricate motifs and natural dyeing techniques reflect a synthesis between local cosmology and Islamic values of modesty, purity, and ethical labor. As noted by Yusof et al. (2021), the integration of Islamic aesthetics into textile design provides a bridge between religious expression and creative production, allowing artisans to transform spirituality into economic value. This interweaving of faith, craftsmanship, and commerce has long distinguished Pekalongan from other industrial centers in Indonesia, where production often prioritizes efficiency over cultural expression.

Over the past two decades, Pekalongan's industrial base has undergone gradual diversification. While traditional household batik production remains central, new creative subsectors have emerged, including ready-to-wear apparel, accessories, and textile-based crafts. These developments have expanded the city's creative economy beyond the confines of conventional batik, incorporating digital design, branding, and small-scale fashion entrepreneurship. The shift reflects the broader national trend of reorienting traditional industries toward creative and value-added sectors, in line with Indonesia's *National Creative Economy Framework* and *Sharia Economy Masterplan* (MEKSI 2019–2024), both of which emphasize sustainability and cultural authenticity as sources of competitiveness.

The city's industrial identity thus rests on a dynamic interplay between tradition and innovation. On the one hand, Pekalongan maintains a strong artisanal foundation through inherited craft knowledge and intergenerational transmission of skills within family-based enterprises. On the other hand, the younger generation of entrepreneurs increasingly adopts modern production techniques, online marketing, and modest fashion design that aligns with Islamic consumer trends. This dual structure situates Pekalongan as both a guardian of heritage and a laboratory of contemporary adaptation.

From a spatial-economic perspective, Pekalongan's role in Indonesia's coastal industrial corridor reinforces its integration into national and international value chains. The concentration of small and medium-sized manufacturing enterprises along the *Pantura* (northern Java coastal route) facilitates regional trade linkages and labor mobility. However, despite its geographic advantages, the city faces growing competition from larger industrial clusters in Semarang and Solo, where infrastructure, logistics, and investment incentives are more developed. Consequently, Pekalongan's creative and cultural identity has become its most significant comparative advantage in the post-industrial transition.

Culturally, the city's social fabric continues to be shaped by its hybrid character as both an Islamic and entrepreneurial society. Religious education institutions, artisan associations, and women's cooperatives collectively form a moral economy in which production is guided not only by market demand but also by ethical norms such as fairness (*'adl*), sustainability (*istidamah*), and mutual assistance (*ta'awun*). This moral-economic orientation provides fertile ground for the emergence of the halal fashion movement, which emphasizes transparency, modesty, and responsibility throughout the value chain.

The convergence of cultural capital, artisanal skill, and moral entrepreneurship positions Pekalongan as a strategic node within Indonesia's creative economy, particularly in advancing halal fashion as an integrated model of spiritual and material production. As a result, the city's industrial and cultural context illustrates how local traditions can evolve into a foundation for global engagement, provided that institutional frameworks and market mechanisms are aligned with the principles of cultural authenticity and sustainable development.

Economic Performance and Structural Challenges

The economic performance of Pekalongan's fashion and textile sector reflects both the enduring vitality of its creative economy and the structural vulnerabilities that limit its full potential in the halal fashion value chain. According to data from Statistics Indonesia BPS (2023), the city's manufacturing sector experienced a notable contraction in recent years, with the number of registered enterprises declining by approximately 13.79 percent between 2019 and 2021. This contraction corresponded with broader national trends of industrial slowdown following the COVID-19 pandemic, particularly within labor-intensive subsectors such as textiles and apparel.

Despite these challenges, the industrial sector continues to play a pivotal role in the city's overall economy. In 2021, Pekalongan's total export value reached approximately IDR 423.68 billion, of which the industrial sector contributed IDR 172.06 billion. However, both export volumes and production realizations declined compared to the previous year, indicating the combined effects of disrupted supply chains, reduced global demand, and limited digital adaptation among local enterprises. The city's economic resilience, therefore, depends heavily on its ability to diversify production, strengthen industrial linkages, and improve access to domestic and international markets.

The textile and apparel subsectors remain the dominant contributors to Pekalongan's industrial output, accounting for nearly sixty percent of manufacturing establishments (BPS, 2023). These industries are not only central to employment generation but also to the preservation of artisanal knowledge and local craftsmanship. Yet, the reliance on traditional production systems, low technological upgrading, and limited access to innovation networks have constrained productivity growth. Similar challenges have been observed in other Indonesian creative clusters, where micro and small enterprises face difficulties in scaling due to limited financing, weak supply-chain coordination, and insufficient institutional support (Nasution & Wibowo, 2022; Santoso et al., 2021)

The structural composition of Pekalongan's industry is dominated by micro-scale and household enterprises, many of which operate informally without formal business registration or tax compliance. This informality contributes to the flexibility and resilience of local production systems but simultaneously impedes access to formal credit, export licenses, and certification schemes. For halal fashion development, this duality presents a serious constraint: while micro-entrepreneurs provide cultural authenticity and social inclusion, their informality makes it difficult to meet the documentation and traceability requirements necessary for halal certification.

Moreover, infrastructural and technological deficits continue to pose significant barriers. Many small workshops still rely on manual dyeing and finishing techniques that, although culturally valuable, limit scalability and environmental compliance. The absence of modern waste-management systems in several production clusters also raises sustainability concerns that intersect with halal integrity, since cleanliness (ṭahārah) and ethical sourcing are integral components of halal assurance systems (Ali et al., 2022). Without targeted interventions—such as cleaner-production training, digital skill enhancement, and technology grants—these deficits risk marginalizing traditional producers from emerging halal value chains.

Another structural challenge lies in market access and digital transformation. Only a limited number of enterprises have successfully utilized e-commerce platforms or digital marketing channels to reach wider consumer bases. Research by DinarStandard (2023) and the Islamic Development Bank (2022) emphasizes that global halal fashion markets are increasingly shaped by digital visibility, transparency, and traceability. Pekalongan's creative actors, therefore, require digital literacy programs and logistics infrastructure that enable them to compete in regional and international markets where halal compliance and brand storytelling are key competitive differentiators.

Financial constraints also persist, particularly regarding access to Islamic finance instruments that could support halal certification, working capital, and export expansion. Although national programs such as Pembiayaan Ultra Mikro Syariah and Lembaga Keuangan Mikro Syariah have been introduced, their penetration at the municipal level remains limited. This financial gap disproportionately affects women entrepreneurs and family-based enterprises that dominate the batik and modest fashion sectors.

In summary, Pekalongan's economic performance demonstrates both resilience and fragility. The fashion and textile sectors continue to sustain employment and cultural production but remain hindered by structural barriers, including informality, low technology adoption, limited financing, and inadequate institutional coordination. Overcoming these challenges requires a transition from traditional industrial models toward an integrated creative economy framework that combines cultural authenticity with technological modernization and Sharia-compliant governance. The next sections will explore how these structural dynamics shape the city's readiness to engage in the halal fashion value chain and what institutional strategies are required to strengthen its competitiveness in the post-pandemic era.

Socio-Economic Structure and Community-Based Entrepreneurship

The socio-economic landscape of Pekalongan's fashion industry is defined by a dense web of micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs), family-based workshops, cooperatives, and local distributors that collectively sustain the city's creative economy. These actors embody what scholars have termed a "community-based industrial ecosystem" Küttim et al. (2021), where production, learning, and cultural transmission are embedded within social relations rather than formal corporate structures. This structure has allowed Pekalongan's batik and fashion economy to remain socially inclusive and locally grounded, even as it adapts to changing market conditions.

Household-centered production has historically functioned as both an economic and cultural institution. Each stage of batik making—designing, waxing, dyeing, and finishing—is distributed among families and neighborhoods through informal subcontracting networks. Such arrangements not only enable flexibility and resilience but also reinforce social cohesion through shared labor and mutual trust. Like findings by Yusof et al. (2021) and Ismail and Ali (2021), the embeddedness of production in communal life promotes inclusive participation, particularly among women and older artisans who might otherwise be excluded from formal employment structures. This model exemplifies the Islamic principle of *ta'awun* (mutual assistance), where economic collaboration contributes to social welfare and moral accountability.

However, this system also perpetuates structural limitations. Informal household enterprises often lack business registration, access to banking services, and formal bookkeeping practices. Consequently, they remain invisible within official industrial databases and ineligible for government support programs or halal certification schemes. The dual identity of these enterprises—as custodians of cultural heritage and as informal economic actors—illustrates what Mulyaningsih and Darwanto (2022) describe as the "informality paradox," where cultural resilience coexists with institutional marginality.

Women constitute a substantial portion of the workforce in Pekalongan's fashion sector, especially in home-based batik production, embroidery, and small-scale garment making. Their participation extends beyond labor contribution to managerial and creative roles, such as design innovation, marketing, and cooperative leadership. Studies on gendered entrepreneurship in Indonesia Rohimah & Fauzia (2022) emphasize that women-led enterprises in cultural industries often integrate economic motives with social and religious aspirations, aligning business activities with Islamic values of modesty, fairness, and family welfare.

Despite their centrality, women entrepreneurs face persistent barriers in access to capital, training, and digital literacy. Most financing institutions still require collateral or credit histories that small-scale women producers lack. Moreover, socio-cultural norms occasionally constrain women's mobility and participation in formal trade networks. Addressing these limitations requires policies that recognize gendered forms of entrepreneurship and provide tailored capacity-building programs through local cooperatives, Islamic microfinance, and community training centers.

Cooperatives have historically played a crucial role in organizing small producers and enhancing collective bargaining power. In Pekalongan, several batik cooperatives function as intermediaries between artisans, suppliers, and retail markets, facilitating access to raw materials, training, and sometimes credit. These institutions embody the principles of social entrepreneurship, blending community welfare with economic sustainability. As noted by Majid and Mahmud (2023), cooperatives rooted in Islamic economic principles can strengthen social capital and improve market access by promoting shared ownership (*musharakah*) and equitable profit distribution (*mudharabah*).

Nevertheless, the effectiveness of cooperatives varies widely depending on management quality and institutional support. Some function merely as administrative entities to meet government requirements, while others operate as genuine platforms for innovation and empowerment. Strengthening cooperative governance, transparency, and integration with digital platforms could therefore transform them into more dynamic vehicles for halal value chain participation.

Pekalongan's creative economy thrives on strong social capital rooted in trust, kinship, and religious networks. Artisan families often collaborate through informal associations (*paguyuban*) that regulate quality standards, resolve disputes, and collectively organize exhibitions. This reliance on social trust over formal contracts reflects the broader notion of the *moral economy* (Scott, 1976), where community well-being takes precedence over profit maximization. Within this context, moral and religious values shape entrepreneurial ethics, ensuring that economic behavior aligns with communal and spiritual obligations. Such moral underpinnings are particularly conducive to the development of halal fashion, where compliance involves not only procedural certification but also ethical conduct across the production chain.

While community-based entrepreneurship has ensured social resilience, it also faces mounting pressure to adapt to contemporary market structures. Younger entrepreneurs increasingly seek to professionalize production through branding, online marketing, and cross-sectoral collaboration. Yet, bridging the gap between informal creativity and formal industry remains a challenge. There is limited institutional infrastructure to facilitate this transition, such as business incubation centers, halal product testing facilities, or integrated marketing hubs. Without these enabling mechanisms, Pekalongan risks remaining culturally vibrant but economically peripheral within the national halal fashion ecosystem.

In summary, the socio-economic structure of Pekalongan's fashion industry reveals a paradoxical configuration: it is simultaneously inclusive and informal, culturally rich yet institutionally constrained. Its strength lies in its social embeddedness and moral economy, while its weakness stems from the absence of structural mechanisms for scale, certification, and modernization. Future development strategies should therefore focus on transforming community-based entrepreneurship into an integrated component of the halal value chain through cooperative strengthening, gender-sensitive financing, and institutional collaboration between local government, Islamic financial institutions, and creative associations.

The institutional and policy environment plays a decisive role in shaping the trajectory of Pekalongan's transition toward a halal-oriented fashion industry. While the city possesses a strong cultural and creative foundation, its capacity to integrate into the national halal ecosystem remains limited by fragmented governance structures, low policy coordination, and a lack of technical infrastructure for certification and compliance. Understanding this institutional landscape requires examining both the national regulatory frameworks that promote the halal economy and the local governance mechanisms responsible for implementing these frameworks at the city level.

Indonesia's commitment to becoming a global hub for the halal economy is articulated through the Masterplan Ekonomi Syariah Indonesia (MEKSI) 2019–2024, which outlines four strategic pillars: strengthening the halal value chain, deepening Islamic finance, developing micro and small enterprises, and expanding the digital economy. Within this framework, the halal fashion sector is recognized as a priority area alongside halal food, tourism, and pharmaceuticals. The government's efforts are further reinforced by the establishment of the Halal Product Assurance Agency (BPJPH) under Law No. 33/2014, which mandates that all goods and services entering, circulating, and traded in Indonesia must obtain halal certification.

Complementing these regulations, the Ministry of Industry has developed Kawasan Industri Halal (KIH) or Halal Industrial Parks to promote geographically concentrated ecosystems for halal production, logistics, and certification services. However, despite these national initiatives, their translation at the municipal level, including in Pekalongan, remains uneven. Local enterprises often lack clear guidance, institutional linkage, and financial incentives to pursue certification or integrate halal standards across their value chains (Hafiz & Ismail, 2022). This gap illustrates a disjunction between national policy ambition and local implementation capacity.

At the city level, governance of the creative and fashion industries is distributed across multiple agencies, including the Dinas Perindustrian dan Tenaga Kerja, Dinas Koperasi dan UMKM, and Dinas Pariwisata dan Kebudayaan. Each institution operates with overlapping but uncoordinated mandates. While there are periodic training programs and exhibitions for batik and modest fashion entrepreneurs, few are explicitly designed to address halal compliance. Most initiatives remain focused on creative design, marketing, and export promotion rather than production process assurance or certification literacy.

Moreover, coordination between local government agencies and national institutions such as BPJPH and the Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI) is limited. Interviews with local officials reveal that while awareness of halal certification requirements is growing, technical capacity and institutional infrastructure for verification and inspection remain weak. Entrepreneurs frequently report confusion about certification procedures, costs, and the distinction between voluntary and mandatory compliance. This fragmentation echoes the findings of Noor and Mahyuddin (2021), who observed that the decentralized nature of Indonesia's halal governance often leads to uneven institutional readiness across regions.

Several structural and procedural barriers hinder the adoption of halal certification among Pekalongan's small and medium enterprises. First, the cost and duration of certification are perceived as prohibitive, particularly for micro-enterprises with limited capital and documentation capacity. Second, the certification process requires standardized record-keeping, supply-chain transparency, and traceability systems—elements that are often absent in informal production settings. Third, the absence of local halal training and consultancy services limits producers' understanding of compliance beyond labeling, reducing certification to a mere administrative requirement rather than a value-adding process.

Additionally, the conceptual understanding of "halal fashion" in Pekalongan remains predominantly associated with modest design aesthetics rather than comprehensive Sharia-compliant production practices. As a result, local entrepreneurs tend to equate "halal" with style conformity—covering the body appropriately—rather than with ethical sourcing, fair labor practices, or environmental sustainability. This limited interpretation reflects what Tieman (2022) identifies as "symbolic halalism," in which visual or stylistic elements overshadow the broader ethical and operational dimensions of halal assurance.

Despite these challenges, Pekalongan possesses significant institutional potential to integrate halal principles into its existing creative economy framework. The city's status as a UNESCO Creative City of Crafts and Folk Arts offers both international recognition and institutional legitimacy for policy innovation. This status can be strategically leveraged to promote halal certification as part of a broader agenda of ethical production, sustainability, and cultural preservation. Integrating halal standards into local development plans—such as the Rencana Pembangunan Industri Kota (RPIK) and Rencana Induk Ekonomi Kreatif Daerah—would create policy coherence and provide a roadmap for developing a localized halal ecosystem.

At the same time, partnerships with Islamic financial institutions, universities, and private certification bodies could foster an enabling environment for MSMEs to transition into halal-compliant production. For instance, microfinancing schemes based on qard al-hasan or murabahah principles could be tailored to support certification costs, while academic collaborations with institutions like Universitas Pekalongan and Universitas Islam Negeri Walisongo could provide technical assistance, research, and human resource training. These partnerships would align with the inclusive and participatory governance model envisioned in the MEKSI framework, ensuring that halal development is not imposed top-down but co-created with local stakeholders.

Building a sustainable institutional foundation for halal fashion in Pekalongan requires a multi-level governance approach that links policy, finance, and cultural heritage. Three key pathways can be identified. Regulatory Integration: Harmonizing local regulations with national halal standards through regional bylaws (Perda) that mandate support programs for MSMEs seeking certification. Institutional Synergy: Establishing a local Halal Center or Creative Halal Hub that consolidates services for training, consultation, product testing, and marketing. Capacity and Awareness Building: Conducting joint initiatives between government agencies, universities, and religious councils to enhance entrepreneurs' understanding of halal beyond the aesthetic dimension toward ethical and process-based compliance.

Through these pathways, Pekalongan can evolve from a creative city grounded in cultural production to a fully integrated participant in the national and global halal economy. Institutional coherence, collaborative governance, and inclusive financing are thus indispensable in transforming Pekalongan's cultural capital into a competitive advantage within the halal fashion value chain.

Cultural Capital and Opportunities for Halal Ecosystem Integration

Pekalongan's strength in developing a sustainable halal fashion industry lies in its rich cultural capital and artisanal heritage, which together provide both material and symbolic foundations for ethical and Sharia-compliant production. The city's long-standing reputation as Indonesia's "City of Batik" encapsulates a reservoir of social knowledge, creative identity, and religious values that can be strategically mobilized to strengthen its position within the halal value chain. The interplay between cultural tradition, spiritual values, and entrepreneurial innovation thus represents a unique opportunity for integrating Pekalongan's creative economy into the broader halal ecosystem.

Cultural capital, in this context, extends beyond aesthetic skill to encompass the ethical norms, communal trust, and intergenerational craftsmanship that define the city's creative identity. Bourdieu's (1986) conception of cultural capital as an embodied form of social and symbolic power is particularly relevant, as it highlights how artisanal knowledge and religious morality constitute intangible assets in global markets increasingly driven by authenticity and ethical consumption. In Pekalongan, batik artisans transmit techniques, motifs, and moral values through family-based apprenticeships, producing what Suharti and Hapsari (2021) describe as a "living heritage economy."

These embedded cultural forms provide an intrinsic alignment with halal values. The artisanal process emphasizes cleanliness, patience, and sincerity (*ikhlas*), principles that resonate with Islamic ethics of production. The cultural depth of batik-making—its meditative rhythms, use of natural dyes, and integration of spiritual symbolism—can therefore be reframed as a form of *halal art economy*, where creativity and devotion are intertwined. This moral dimension provides Pekalongan with a distinctive comparative advantage over industrial fashion clusters that focus solely on efficiency and scale.

Pekalongan's designation as a UNESCO Creative City of Crafts and Folk Arts in 2014 serves as both a recognition and a platform for institutional transformation. This international status situates the city within a global network of creative hubs committed to sustainable and inclusive development through culture-based industries. As UNESCO (2020) emphasizes, such designations are not merely symbolic; they offer opportunities for capacity building, cultural diplomacy, and cross-sectoral innovation.

For Pekalongan, the Creative City framework provides an enabling structure to reposition batik and fashion industries within the halal and sustainable development agendas. By linking local creative heritage to global ethical markets, the city can attract investment, foster innovation, and expand its export base. The UNESCO recognition also supports brand legitimacy, enhancing consumer trust among global Muslim fashion buyers who increasingly value traceable, ethical, and culturally grounded production (DinarStandard, 2023).

The integration of Pekalongan's cultural capital into the halal fashion ecosystem requires deliberate alignment between traditional creative practices and the procedural standards of halal assurance. This involves translating local wisdom into measurable forms of compliance without eroding its cultural authenticity. For instance, the principle of *clean production* in batik can be harmonized with halal's emphasis on purity (*ṭahārah*) by introducing eco-friendly dyes and wastewater management systems that maintain environmental sanctity.

Local artisans and cooperatives could also collaborate with certification agencies to document production processes in ways that preserve cultural specificity while meeting halal audit requirements. This cultural-technical synergy has been successfully demonstrated in other heritage-based halal clusters, such as the Muslim textile industries in Malaysia's Terengganu and Turkey's Bursa, where traditional weaving practices were adapted to align with halal standards while retaining cultural symbolism (Ismail & Ali, 2021; Yusof et al., 2021).

The growing global demand for halal fashion presents opportunities for Pekalongan to reposition itself as a brand that embodies both tradition and ethical modernity. Global Muslim consumers increasingly associate halal fashion with broader notions of sustainability, fairness, and spiritual consciousness (Bashir & Rashid, 2023). By framing batik not merely as a cultural artifact but as a manifestation of ethical creativity, Pekalongan can cultivate a niche market that appeals to ethically aware consumers across Southeast Asia, the Middle East, and Europe.

Creative branding initiatives could emphasize the narrative of *batik halal*—not only compliant with Sharia regulations but also reflective of *akhlaq* (moral character) and environmental stewardship. Integrating storytelling into marketing, particularly through digital platforms and heritage tourism, can further enhance Pekalongan's visibility. The combination of halal certification and cultural storytelling would transform Pekalongan's fashion products into carriers of both faith and identity.

To translate cultural capital into economic competitiveness, collaborative mechanisms between artisans, local government, and national institutions must be institutionalized. The establishment of a *Halal Creative Hub Pekalongan* could serve as a multi-functional platform for product testing, certification training, and design innovation. Such a hub could operate under a public–private partnership model, supported by local universities, cooperatives, and Islamic financial institutions.

Universities can play a catalytic role by linking academic research with community innovation. For example, interdisciplinary programs combining Islamic economics, cultural studies, and textile engineering could support the documentation, digitization, and modernization of traditional processes. This approach aligns with the *quadruple-helix model* of innovation Carayannis & Campbell (2012), which integrates academia, government, business, and civil society to co-create sustainable and inclusive development strategies.

Cultural sustainability must remain central to Pekalongan's integration into the halal value chain. As much as economic upgrading is necessary, preserving the city's moral and aesthetic integrity is equally vital. The challenge lies in ensuring that modernization and certification processes do not commodify culture or reduce it to a bureaucratic checklist. Instead, they should reaffirm the spiritual and social values that have long underpinned Pekalongan's creative economy.

Embedding halal principles within cultural production systems thus represents more than an economic adaptation; it signifies a moral renewal of industrial practice. As such, the city's pursuit of halal fashion development can serve as a model for "spiritually embedded modernization," where tradition and innovation coexist within a shared ethical horizon.

The Paradox of Cultural Richness and Institutional Weakness

The case of Pekalongan illustrates a critical paradox that characterizes many culturally endowed yet institutionally fragile creative economies in Indonesia: while cultural capital and artisanal vitality are abundant, institutional and structural mechanisms necessary to transform this capital into competitive advantage remain underdeveloped. This paradox is central to understanding the limited progression of Pekalongan's fashion industry from traditional batik craftsmanship toward a fully integrated halal fashion ecosystem.

Pekalongan's artisans possess deep reservoirs of skill, creativity, and moral commitment, cultivated over generations through family-based transmission and communal production. This cultural abundance provides resilience against external shocks and serves as a moral compass that guides production toward authenticity and ethical value. Yet, as Bourdieu (1986) reminds, cultural capital becomes economically transformative only when institutionalized through systems of recognition, certification, and exchange. In the absence of such institutional mediation, cultural wealth remains symbolically rich but materially constrained.

Despite its UNESCO designation and long-standing reputation, Pekalongan's creative industries still operate primarily within informal and fragmented systems. There is limited integration between traditional artisans, educational institutions, and formal industrial clusters. Consequently, while cultural identity remains strong, productivity, scalability, and market penetration remain low. As highlighted by Santoso et al. (2021), this "institutional disarticulation" limits local industries' ability to leverage heritage into sustained economic growth.

Institutional weakness manifests in several interconnected forms: regulatory fragmentation, weak coordination among agencies, and limited access to enabling infrastructure. The overlapping responsibilities of local departments—industry, tourism, cooperatives, and trade—often result in redundancy rather than synergy. Programs aimed at promoting batik, creative entrepreneurship, and MSME empowerment seldom intersect with halal certification or sustainability initiatives. This fragmented policy landscape leads to inefficiency and disconnection between cultural policy and industrial strategy (Noor & Mahyuddin, 2021).

Moreover, Pekalongan lacks dedicated institutions capable of providing sustained training, certification guidance, or research support for halal fashion development. While national frameworks such as MEKSI 2019–2024 provide a macro vision, implementation at the city level depends on local leadership, bureaucratic clarity, and budget allocation—all of which remain limited. The absence of an integrated halal governance ecosystem results in policy fatigue among entrepreneurs who must navigate multiple institutions for minimal support.

Socioeconomic Asymmetries and Structural Exclusion

The paradox of richness and weakness is further compounded by socioeconomic asymmetries. While batik cooperatives and heritage workshops continue to thrive at the cultural level, many remain excluded from formal financial systems and export mechanisms. Limited access to Islamic finance and digital technology restricts their participation in broader halal value chains. As DinarStandard (2023) observes, the global halal economy increasingly favors producers capable of demonstrating verifiable traceability, ethical compliance, and sustainability. Pekalongan's micro-enterprises, despite their authenticity, struggle to meet these procedural expectations due to insufficient institutional facilitation.

This condition reveals what Swyngedouw (2005) terms "governance without government"—a system in which cultural activity is abundant but institutional responsibility is diffused. Without an enabling state or intermediary body, cultural richness risks becoming self-contained, celebrated in rhetoric but underutilized in practice. Thus, Pekalongan's challenge lies not in the absence of creativity or moral capacity, but in the weakness of institutional scaffolding that could channel these virtues into economic and ethical competitiveness.

Overcoming this paradox requires institutional convergence—aligning cultural vitality with bureaucratic functionality, moral values with regulatory frameworks, and creative expression with technological innovation. As regional experiences from Malaysia's Penang and Turkey's Konya show, the integration of local creative heritage into national halal industry clusters succeeds only when state institutions act as facilitators, not merely regulators (Ismail & Ali, 2021). For Pekalongan, this means building an enabling ecosystem that honors cultural authenticity while embedding it within structured governance, formal finance, and digital innovation.

The development of a sustainable halal fashion ecosystem in Pekalongan requires a multidimensional approach that integrates culture, economy, environment, and governance. Sustainability here is understood not only as ecological endurance but as the continuous reproduction of social, cultural, and spiritual life through ethical economic systems. Within this framework, halal fashion becomes both a mode of production and a moral project—an articulation of economic practice that aligns with Islamic values and local heritage.

Reframing Sustainability through Cultural and Spiritual Lenses

In conventional industrial terms, sustainability emphasizes resource efficiency and environmental responsibility. However, within Pekalongan's context, sustainability must also reflect cultural continuity and moral integrity. The concept of *halalan tayyiban*—lawful and good—provides a theological and ethical foundation that integrates spiritual purity, social justice, and ecological stewardship (Tieman, 2022). This aligns with broader discourses on the "Islamic moral economy," which posit that economic development must serve communal welfare and environmental harmony rather than mere profit maximization (Asutay, 2019).

Thus, a sustainable halal fashion ecosystem in Pekalongan should prioritize circular production systems that reduce waste, promote natural dyeing processes, and utilize renewable materials. These practices resonate with both traditional batik ethics and modern sustainability principles. Moreover, embedding spiritual values within production reinforces consumer trust and differentiates Pekalongan's products in the competitive global market for ethical fashion.

Sustainability depends on the capacity to create participatory governance structures that empower local communities while maintaining regulatory integrity. The *quadruple helix* model—combining government, academia, industry, and civil society—provides a suitable framework for co-creating policies that reflect both technical expertise and community aspirations (Carayannis & Campbell, 2012). Through participatory planning, local stakeholders can co-design development programs, ensuring that halal fashion evolves as a shared social endeavor rather than a top-down bureaucratic imposition.

Pekalongan's integration into the global halal fashion market should emphasize both authenticity and sustainability. Ethical branding strategies can highlight Pekalongan as a "heritage halal city," combining cultural distinctiveness with Sharia compliance and ecological responsibility. Linking halal certification with fair-trade principles and sustainable sourcing can further enhance export potential, especially in markets seeking ethical and transparent supply chains. Collaborations with international networks, such as the *Islamic Chamber of Commerce and Industry* and *UNESCO Creative Cities Network*, would also reinforce Pekalongan's global visibility while enabling knowledge exchange with other creative hubs across Asia and the Middle Eas

CONCLUSION

This study has examined the configuration, challenges, and transformative potential of the halal fashion industry in Pekalongan, a city whose identity is deeply intertwined with Islamic values and batik craftsmanship. The analysis reveals that while Pekalongan possesses a profound reservoir of cultural capital and artisanal heritage, these assets have not yet been translated into institutional strength or global competitiveness. The coexistence of creative vitality and structural fragility underscores a paradox that continues to shape the city's developmental trajectory within the national halal economy.

Empirical findings indicate that Pekalongan's creative economy is dominated by micro and small enterprises, family-based workshops, and cooperatives that embody community-based entrepreneurship rooted in social trust, religious ethics, and intergenerational learning. This socio-economic fabric contributes to inclusivity and resilience but also perpetuates informality, technological backwardness, and limited access to certification and finance. Despite national initiatives under the *Masterplan Ekonomi Syariah Indonesia (MEKSI) 2019–2024* and the establishment of the *Halal Product Assurance Agency (BPJPH)*, local implementation remains fragmented. The weak integration between local policy frameworks, industry actors, and certification institutions continues to impede Pekalongan's participation in global halal value chains.

The study further demonstrates that Pekalongan's cultural heritage—particularly its batik industry—offers significant potential for advancing halal fashion development. The city's designation as a *UNESCO Creative City of Crafts and Folk Arts* provides both legitimacy and opportunity to align traditional craftsmanship with contemporary demands for ethical, sustainable, and Sharia-compliant production. However, this transformation requires coherent institutional mechanisms, participatory governance, and adaptive policy frameworks capable of bridging cultural creativity with formal regulation.

A sustainable halal fashion ecosystem for Pekalongan must therefore rest upon four interlinked pillars: institutional coordination, cultural integration, financial and technological empowerment, and environmental ethics. The *halalan tayyiban* principle provides a moral and operational foundation that unites these dimensions, emphasizing that halal production should not merely comply with procedural standards but also embody spiritual integrity, social justice, and ecological balance. The strengthening of institutional collaboration—through a city-level Halal Fashion Council, creative industry clusters, and digital innovation hubs—could help operationalize this vision.

Ultimately, the evolution of Pekalongan's halal fashion industry should not be seen as a linear transition from tradition to modernity, but as a process of ethical reinvention in which faith, creativity, and innovation coalesce. By embedding Islamic moral values within sustainable creative practices, Pekalongan can position itself as both a cultural guardian and a global actor in the halal economy. The city's future depends on its ability to harmonize the richness of its heritage with the rigor of institutional governance—transforming its cultural capital into an enduring model of inclusive, ethical, and resilient development.

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Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest related to the publication of this study.

Data Availability

The data supporting the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

Author Contribution

All authors contributed equally to the design, data collection, analysis, and writing of this manuscript. All authors have read and approved the final version of the paper.

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