



Navigating Global Halal Standardization: A Pluriversal (Multi-Worldview) Approach to Fiqh Diversity and Minority Inclusion

Sopyan Munir¹ and Mulawarman Hannase²

^{1,2} Department of Middle East and Islamic Studies, Universitas Indonesia, Indonesia
sopyanmunier@gmail.com

Abstract. With the rapid growth of the global halal industry, a rigid halal standardization system has created a hegemony that adversely affects halal practices in Muslim-minority countries. This problem is compounded by the perception among immigrant Muslims that local halal standards in these nations are not entirely halal. This study aims to analyze the epistemic hegemony concerning halal practices in Japan and to provide a theoretical foundation for halal pluriversality as a concept for achieving inclusive halal governance. Through a qualitative method with a decolonial approach, this study explores the epistemic hierarchy wherein halal standards from Muslim-majority countries are deemed more valid than those from Muslim-minority nations. The study reveals that the invalidation of a halal standard solely because it originates from a Muslim-minority country is unjustifiable. This is attributed to the highly pluralistic nature of halal practices, even within Muslim-majority countries themselves. Furthermore, halal practices in Muslim-minority countries represent an innovation within the halal standardization landscape and a form of resistance against the prevailing epistemic hegemony. This study recommends recognition and education from Muslim-majority countries concerning the validity of halal practices in Muslim-minority contexts. For implementation, a dialogue among global halal standardization bodies is necessary to discuss a dual-scheme certification policy that can accommodate the standards of Muslim-minority countries.

Keywords: Halal standard, Muslim Minority Countries, Pluriversality, Fiqh.

1 Introduction

As global halal markets expand, a rigid halal standardization system has created a hegemony that significantly disadvantages and complicates halal practices in countries with minority Muslim populations [1]. This system, while functioning as a benchmark to ensure a product's compliance with Sharia principles, often overlooks the unique challenges faced by these minority communities. The foundation of any halal standard is inextricably linked to the principles of Islamic jurisprudence (fiqh), which plays a central role in determining a product's halal status [2].

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It's important to recognize that *fiqh* is not a monolithic entity, but rather a rich intellectual tradition with diverse interpretations (*ikhtilāf*). The existence of diverse practices in applying Sharia is not a competition between right and wrong, but a reflection of the principles of ease and flexibility that are central to the spirit of Islam. This dynamic jurisprudential diversity, continuously transmitted from the era of the Prophet Muhammad to the present day, is evident in established schools of law (*madhāhib*) such as the Hanafī, Maliki, Shafī'i, and Hanbali. Even within a single school of law, a diversity of *fiqh* views can emerge, often triggered by variations in geographical, social, and cultural contexts in which Islamic law is applied [3].

Despite its pluralistic jurisprudential foundation, the global market often sees the dominance of a rigid halal standard model. This standard, typically originating from Muslim-majority countries, is often perceived as very strict in its requirements [1]. While such a strict standard is feasible for implementation in countries with a supportive industrial ecosystem, it poses fundamental challenges when adopted wholesale in Muslim-minority countries. The application of this standard often disregards unique local contexts, highlighting the need for more adaptive local standards and the innovation they bring.

This hegemony is manifested in Japan. When the strict standards from Muslim-majority countries are adopted, they are deemed exceedingly difficult to apply within local industrial practices. This triggers high production costs, rendering it an impractical and unsustainable system for many local entrepreneurs seeking to enter the halal market [1]. As a logical and contextual response, initiatives have emerged to establish more adaptive local halal standards, such as certification practices issued by local community religious authorities, for instance, by a Mosque Imam [4]. This innovation is not just a response, but a necessary and urgent solution to navigate between the demands of Sharia and the socio-economic realities of a minority environment.

However, instead of being recognized as a legitimate and contextual solution, the local halal standards that emerged from within the Muslim community in Japan have faced rejection. This rejection is primarily believed to stem from consumer perceptions, particularly among Muslim immigrants, who carry with them and place greater trust in the standards from their countries of origin. A problematic assumption has formed that the stricter the standard, the better and more guaranteed its halal status [1]. This assumption indirectly ignores the fact that the halal practices of the Japanese Muslim community are, in fact, jurisprudentially defensible and have the potential to become a valid alternative knowledge model within the global halal standardization landscape. This potential offers a hopeful perspective for the future of halal standards.

This phenomenon, the hegemony of knowledge on halal practices from Muslim-majority countries and the rejection of knowledge from minority countries, can be interpreted as a replication of colonial dynamics. In this case, a hegemonic body of dominant knowledge systematically marginalizes local knowledge. The difference, however, is that this hegemony does not occur between the West and the non-West, but rather is an internal hegemony within the Islamic world. This is despite the clear possibility of diverse, valid halal practices that align with varying social contexts. A concept that captures this diversity is 'Halal Pluriversality,' a term coined by Yakin [5] to refer to a multi-worldview of halal practice.

Therefore, the phenomenon at hand is no longer merely a matter of differing tastes or reasonable diversity of opinion. It has shifted into an epistemic hierarchy, where knowledge and *ijtihad* (independent legal reasoning) originating from a minority context are inherently considered inferior. Consequently, the rejection of these local standards constitutes a form of epistemic injustice, as their validity is doubted not based on any weakness in their jurisprudential arguments, but solely due to their marginal position in the global knowledge order. This injustice calls for a reevaluation of the current global halal standardization landscape.

Proceeding from these issues of hierarchy and epistemic injustice, this research proposes to answer the following central question: How can the decolonial framework of pluriversality be utilized to formulate a global halal standard governance that is more just and capable of accommodating the contextual halal practices of Muslim minority communities? This question underscores the urgent need for a more equitable global halal standard governance.

Specifically, this study aims to provide a theoretical foundation for the concept of halal pluriversality as an alternative paradigm. This paradigm is expected to pave the way for the formulation of a more equitable global halal standard governance, one that not only recognizes but also actively accommodates the validity of contextual halal practices born from the experiences of Muslim minority communities. To achieve this objective, this research will conduct an in-depth analysis of halal practices in Japan, using it as a case study of a Muslim-minority country, and compare them with the dynamics in Indonesia, which represents a Muslim-majority country. Through this comparative analysis, the study will identify the existing hierarchical structures and propose a pluriversal model as a solution.

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 A Decolonial Lens for Understanding the Halal World

The concept of pluriversality, deeply rooted in decolonial theory, has become a significant analytical lens in various contemporary critical studies. It serves as a conceptual tool to counter epistemic hegemony, the notion that there is only one valid, universal worldview for understanding the world. By championing the vision of a world where many worlds can coexist, pluriversality validates the various knowledge systems, experiences, and ways of life that have long been marginalized [5], [6].

However, the application of this framework to halal studies is a relatively new and underexplored area of research. To date, the study specifically linking the concept of pluriversality to the halal landscape was pioneered by Yakin. In his work, Yakin introduced the term halal pluriversality to highlight how modern standardization processes threaten and suppress the rich diversity in the understanding and practice of halal that has historically existed among Muslims [5].

Although Yakin has laid a crucial foundation, his analysis has not explicitly employed halal pluriversality as a framework of resistance against dominant epistemic hegemony, particularly the hegemony that occurs internally within the Muslim world. This gap serves as the starting point for the present study. Therefore, this research seeks to fill this gap in the literature. Moving beyond mere problem identification, this study

will actively explore how halal practices originating from the minority context in Japan can be understood not merely as different local practices, but as a form of legitimate alternative knowledge production. Thus, these practices are proposed as a contextual and valid model for halal standardization that deserves recognition on the global stage.

2.2 Epistemic Hierarchy

The core problem in global halal standardization is not merely a technical issue of differing standards; instead, it is rooted in an unequal knowledge structure. To frame and deconstruct this hegemony, this research adopts the framework of pyramidal epistemology. This concept, articulated by Cleofas [7] based on the work of Connell (2015), effectively maps the dominant global knowledge hierarchy, where the production of valid theory and knowledge is concentrated at the apex of the pyramid and subsequently disseminated in a one-way manner to its base.

The apex of the pyramid can be understood as the 'center' of knowledge production, which is considered universal, objective, and possessing the highest authority. Conversely, the base of the pyramid is the 'periphery,' occupied by communities positioned as passive recipients of knowledge from the center. This hierarchy is not a static structure but an active mechanism of domination with tangible consequences. It fosters the marginalization of knowledge, where innovative and contextually relevant solutions from minority communities are often overlooked [7].

2.3 Pluriversality

Walter Mignolo's concept of pluriversality is a pivotal element of decolonial thought, providing an alternative to the universalistic narrative that has long dominated Western modernity. Pluriversality underscores the coexistence of multiple worldviews and epistemologies, challenging the single, often Eurocentric perspective that has been presented as a universal truth. This concept is closely intertwined with decoloniality, which aims to dismantle the colonial structures of power and knowledge that have marginalized non-Western ways of knowing and being. The pluriversality advocated by Mignolo promotes a world where diverse perspectives are recognized and valued, fostering a more just and inclusive global discourse [5], [6].

Pluriversality is proposed as an alternative to the universality of Western modernity, which Mignolo critiques for its Eurocentric bias. This universality has historically positioned Western norms and values as the standard for all of humanity, while often dismissing or marginalizing other cultural perspectives. The concept of pluriversality is rooted in the idea that there are many interconnected worlds, each with its valid epistemology and ontology. This stands in opposition to the notion of a single, dominant worldview [8], [9]. Decolonial thought, as expressed by Mignolo and other figures, seeks to challenge and dismantle the colonial legacies embedded in modernity. Pluriversality is a crucial component of this effort, as it fosters the recognition and integration of knowledge systems that have been marginalized [6].

Practically, pluriversality involves creating spaces for dialogue and mutual recognition among various cultural and intellectual traditions. This does not mean rejecting Western thought, but rather situating it within a broader context. Pluriversality fosters the development of innovative models for social transformation, informed by

the perspectives of indigenous and marginalized communities. These models aim to create healthier relationships with nature and with one another, moving beyond the paradigms of modern capitalism [10].

In considering the broader implications of pluriversality, it is important to recognize that the concept does not seek to eliminate dominant thought, but rather to position it within a more diverse and just global framework. By advocating for the coexistence of various epistemologies, pluriversality challenges the dominance of a single worldview and promotes a more inclusive approach to knowledge and power. This perspective aligns with the goals of decolonial thought, which aims to dismantle colonial legacies and create a more just and equitable world.

2.4 Border Thinking

Border Thinking is a fundamental epistemological concept in decolonial theory, introduced by Walter D. Mignolo to describe a critical way of thinking born from the experience of living on the border. The border here is not just a geographical line, but a socio-epistemic space created by the colonial difference. This difference intentionally separates and hierarchizes the modern world from the other world, which is deemed traditional or primitive. It is a way of thinking that emerges from the interstices, from living in the tension between two or more conflicting worlds [11].

Border Thinking has several elements, including its origins in the Colonial Difference and its articulation by the Subaltern. Border thinking is not a theoretical choice that just anyone can adopt. It is an epistemic necessity born from the real experiences of the Subaltern. The Subaltern are those positioned on the other side of the colonial difference, such as colonized peoples, immigrants, or minority communities. They are forced to constantly navigate between the dominant logic and the logic of their world. It is from this subaltern position that a unique and critical perspective can be articulated, as they perceive the contradictions and limitations of the dominant system that are invisible to those at the center [11].

The result of this navigation process is neither a total rejection of the dominant logic, nor an attempt to return to a pure past. Instead, border thinking creates a critical other logic. Furthermore, border thinking must also have the goal of decolonization. At its core, border thinking is a decolonial praxis. Its purpose is not just to analyze the world, but to change it. It aims to delink from the colonial matrix of power, which operates not only politically and economically, but also epistemologically. By creating and validating this other logic, border thinking becomes an act of epistemic disobedience. It challenges the hegemony of knowledge from the center. It affirms the right of marginalized communities to produce their valid knowledge, ultimately aiming to build a more just and pluriversal world.

3 RESEARCH METHODS

This study employs a qualitative method with a decolonial approach. This approach was chosen for its alignment with the research objective, which is to deconstruct and challenge the dominant power structures and knowledge hierarchies within the global

halal standardization landscape. Operationally, this decolonial approach is adapted from the three-step analytical framework formulated by Cleofas [7] for building pluriversity in nursing studies. These three steps are Deconstruction, Validation, and Reconstruction.

The first stage aims to deconstruct the claims of universalism and homogeneity of halal standards originating from the apex of the pyramid (The Apex), namely, Muslim-majority countries. The analysis will focus on standardization practices in Indonesia as the primary case study. Rather than accepting these standards as a monolithic entity, this research will deconstruct their internal dynamics, highlighting the diversity of opinions (*ikhtilāf*), contestations, and jurisprudential plurality within the center itself.

The second stage focuses on validating the knowledge and halal practices that emerge from the base of the pyramid (The Base), namely, Muslim-minority communities. In this phase, the concept of Fiqh of Minorities (*Fiqh al-Aqalliyāt*) will be utilized as a jurisprudential framework to provide Sharia legitimacy for these practices. This validation aims to elevate local practices from a marginal position to that of an alternative knowledge model possessing a strong theological and practical foundation.

The final stage is a constructive step that synthesizes the findings from the two preceding stages. After deconstructing the myth of a monolithic center and validating knowledge from the periphery, this study will reconstruct a more equitable paradigm for halal standard governance. This reconstruction proposes a shift from the hierarchical pyramidal model to a more egalitarian and just network model.

4 RESULT AND ANALYSIS

Epistemic Hierarchy in Halal Standardization

Although fiqh, as the jurisprudential foundation of halal, is fundamentally pluralistic and dynamic, the current global market landscape is dominated by a standardization model that tends to be singular, rigid, and originates from Muslim-majority countries. These standards, born from specific socio-economic, political, and industrial contexts, are then projected and accepted as a universal reference by other nations, including the Muslim community in Japan [1].

This hegemony is not merely administrative; it has also profoundly shaped the collective perception and consciousness of the global Muslim community. Consequently, a general view has formed that considers standards from Muslim-majority countries as the single source of truth. This perspective has indirectly, and often unconsciously, marginalized the local halal practices developing in Japan by labeling them as not 100% halal, less guaranteed, or even doubtful [1].

Upon deeper analysis, both models of halal practice are manifestations of different ways of knowing, and the conflict between them is inseparable from a larger epistemological phenomenon. The knowledge of halal practices produced, codified, and disseminated by institutions in Muslim-majority countries has, slowly but surely, marginalized the knowledge of halal practices produced organically by Muslim communities in minority countries. This is not merely a difference of opinion, but a process in which one knowledge system not only becomes dominant but also acquires the power to define and assess the validity of other knowledge systems.

In this context, the apex of the pyramid can be understood as the center of halal knowledge production. Standardization bodies and fatwa authorities from Muslim-majority countries, such as Indonesia and Malaysia occupy this position. The knowledge and standards they produce, which are inherently born from their struggles with their own socio-historical, political, and industrial contexts, are then projected as universal norms. Supported by state regulations, established infrastructure, and significant market power, the standards from this center claim universality and position themselves as the primary reference for the entire Muslim world.

Meanwhile, the base of the pyramid is the periphery, which in this case is occupied by Muslim-minority communities like those in Japan. Within this structure, they are positioned as passive recipients of standards from the center. The local knowledge, practices, and *ijtihād* (independent legal reasoning) that they develop in response to their unique conditions are often deemed less valid or less pure compared to the knowledge from the center. Consequently, they are pushed to become consumers of knowledge. They must conform to the framework originating from the apex to be considered legitimate and credible in the eyes of the global Muslim community.

To borrow a term from Cleofas [7], the phenomenon of rejecting local halal standards in Japan is a clear example of epistemic injustice. The validity of their local *ijtihād* is doubted not because of any fundamental weakness in its jurisprudential reasoning, but solely because of their marginal position within the global knowledge structure. Thus, the problem we face is not merely about technical differences between standards or practices. It is a more fundamental struggle over which knowledge system is considered legitimate, who holds the authority to define correct halal, and how the dominant knowledge system systematically marginalizes other knowledge systems. This analysis paves the way to view local practices in Japan not as a deficiency, but as an important act of epistemic resistance.

4.1 Deconstruction of the “Center”

The halal practices of Muslim-majority countries are often perceived as a singular body of knowledge. In reality, however, these countries themselves exhibit diverse halal practices. The following case from Indonesia serves as an example.

Carmine

The debate over the use of carmine as a food and beverage coloring in Indonesia has sparked controversy within Islamic jurisprudence, particularly between the Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI) and the Nahdlatul Ulama's Lajnah Bahtsul Masa'il (LBMNU) of East Java. This difference in fatwas reflects differing methodologies in the interpretation of Islamic law regarding the halal status of carmine, which is derived from the cochineal insect. MUI and LBMNU issued conflicting fatwas on the halal status of carmine, which is the center of this debate.

The East Java LBMNU issued a fatwa declaring carmine to be *ḥarām* (forbidden) and *najis* (impure). This decision was based on the fact that carmine originates from insects, which, in the view of the LBMNU, are considered impure and therefore not permissible for consumption under Islamic law [12]. This approach reflects a strict

adherence to traditional interpretations of Islamic dietary law, with an emphasis on the impurity of the ingredient's origin, which is deemed repulsive and inconsistent with the principles of cleanliness in Islam.

On the other hand, the MUI issued a fatwa declaring carmine to be halal, provided it is not harmful and beneficial. MUI Fatwa Number 33 of 2011 permits the use of carmine as a food and beverage coloring because, as long as it does not endanger health and provides a benefit, it can be used in the modern food industry [12]. The MUI's approach is more pragmatic, focusing on the utility and safety of carmine's use, which is relevant in the context of ever-evolving food production.

This difference in fatwas can be attributed to the differing methodologies employed in Islamic legal interpretation by the MUI and the LBMNU. The MUI's approach is more moderate and pragmatic, tending to accommodate the practical needs of modern society and technological developments, without being overly influenced by external political pressures [13]. Conversely, the LBMNU's decision reflects a more conservative stance, prioritizing traditional interpretations and concern for the intrinsic nature of the ingredients used in food and beverages.

The implications of this fatwa difference are broad, particularly regarding the impact of MUI's fatwas on public policy and social norms in Indonesia. MUI's fatwas, including the one related to carmine, often influence government regulations and public behavior, and play a role in shaping more expansive social views, even on issues beyond diet, such as the eradication of corruption and intellectual property rights [14]. Meanwhile, the LBMNU's fatwas are more influential within specific communities that prioritize the application of traditional Islamic law. Thus, the debate over carmine exemplifies the dynamics of Islamic jurisprudence in Indonesia, highlighting the tension between the pragmatic approach represented by the MUI and a more conservative interpretation, such as that of the LBMNU.

The Ajinomoto Fatwa

The Ajinomoto controversy began when the Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI) issued a fatwa on December 16, 2000, declaring the MSG (Monosodium Glutamate) product by Ajinomoto to be *haram* for consumption by Muslims. This fatwa was issued after it was discovered that in its production process, Ajinomoto had used a processing aid called bacto soytone, which contained a porcine enzyme. The use of this ingredient took place from June to November 23, 2000, replacing the previously used polypepton due to cost efficiency reasons [15].

In response to the fatwa, the Director-General of Domestic Trade decided to withdraw all PT Ajinomoto products from the market. PT Ajinomoto Indonesia issued an apology and withdrew its MSG products from the Indonesian and Singaporean markets, with an estimated volume of 2,000 to 3,000 tons withdrawn. The police also began legal proceedings against the company, and several executives of PT Ajinomoto Indonesia were temporarily detained [15]. The situation became more complex when President Abdurrahman Wahid (Gus Dur) stated on January 9, 2001, declaring the Ajinomoto product to be halal, following a visit from a Japanese minister. This statement directly contradicted the previously issued MUI fatwa, creating public confusion and tension between the government and the MUI [15].

In the MUI's view, the use of Bacto Soyton, which contains a porcine enzyme, in the MSG production process rendered the final product haram, even though the enzyme was not scientifically detectable in the final product. KH Sahal Mahfudz, the General Chairman of the MUI at the time, asserted: "MUI understands the scientific explanation that the pig enzyme is not carried into the final product of PT Ajinomoto. However, due to the utilization of a haram substance in the production process, the final product is still haram." The principle upheld by the MUI refers to the provision in Islamic law that the use of a haram substance in a production process makes the final product haram as well [16].

Meanwhile, Gus Dur argued that the Ajinomoto product remained halal because the pig enzyme only functioned as a catalyst in the production process and did not become part of the final product. The Agency supported this opinion for the Assessment and Application of Technology (BPPT), which stated that Ajinomoto contained no residue of the porcine enzyme because the bacteria only catalyzed to accelerate the reaction. Gus Dur also advised that MUI should not just declare things haram; they should consult with Ajinomoto first [16].

From the Ajinomoto case, it is evident that determining halal status does not necessarily require an institutional process. In this instance, Gus Dur possessed religious authority and decisively issued a halal fatwa using his method of *ijtihad*. Although Gus Dur's fatwa ultimately did not have a significant influence, it nonetheless serves as evidence of the phenomenon in the world of halal fatwas, where they can very well be carried out through authoritative individual *ijtihad*.

The AstraZeneca Vaccine

The controversy surrounding the AstraZeneca vaccine emerged following indications of the use of porcine trypsin in its production process. This controversy widened when the Central Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI) and the East Java MUI issued differing fatwas regarding the vaccine's legal status [17]. This divergence in fatwas created confusion among the public, especially concerning the halal status of a vaccine that was a critical part of the national vaccination program to combat the COVID-19 pandemic [18]. With a limited choice of available vaccines and the urgent need to achieve herd immunity, this difference in fatwas had significant implications for the success of the national vaccination program.

The Central MUI, through Fatwa Number 14 of 2021, stipulated that "The AstraZeneca Covid-19 vaccine product is legally haram because in its production stages it utilizes trypsin derived from pigs." Nevertheless, the Central MUI permitted the use of this vaccine based on considerations of an emergency. The use of the AstraZeneca vaccine was permitted due to an urgent need that constituted a *shar'iy* emergency, the risk of fatality if vaccination was not carried out promptly, the limited availability of halal vaccines, assurances of safety from the government, and the government's limited capacity to choose vaccine types [19].

The Central MUI employed a method of *ijtihad jama'i* (collective legal reasoning) and an interdisciplinary approach, combining *bayānī*, *ta'līlī*, and *istiḥlāhī* methods. The fatwa was based on the audit results from the MUI's Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Assessment Institute (LPPOM), which reported the presence of porcine trypsin in the production process of the AstraZeneca vaccine. This approach emphasizes the principle

of caution (*ihtiyat*) in determining the halal status of a product that comes into contact with an impure element during its production.

In contrast to the Central MUI, the East Java MUI, through Fatwa Number 1 of 2021, declared that the AstraZeneca vaccine was legally halal and pure [20]. The chairman of the East Java MUI, Hasan Mutawakkil Alallah, affirmed this halal status in the presence of President Joko Widodo during a review of a mass vaccination process in the Sidoarjo Regency [21]. This statement demonstrated a fundamental difference in views with the Central MUI regarding the legal status of the AstraZeneca vaccine.

In determining the halal status of the AstraZeneca vaccine, the East Java MUI employed a different approach, considering the process of material transformation in the vaccine's manufacturing [22]. The fatwa was issued following a deliberation by its Fatwa Commission and was based on a different interpretation of the LPPOM audit results [21]. The methodology used placed greater emphasis on the aspect of substance change during the production process, leading to the conclusion that the AstraZeneca vaccine had changed into both substance and form, thereby changing its nomenclature as well [17].

The East Java MUI applied the theory of *istihalah* in determining the halal status of the AstraZeneca vaccine. *Istihalah* is a concept of state transformation, wherein an impure substance that has undergone a complete transformation can change its legal status to pure [23]. According to the East Java MUI, the trypsin used in the AstraZeneca vaccine's production process had changed into both substance and form, so the law of prohibition was no longer applicable because the reason for the prohibition had been eliminated [17].

The East Java Regional Board of Nahdlatul Ulama (PWNU), through its Bahtsul Masail Institute, has determined that the AstraZeneca vaccine is halal and pure, despite the presence of a porcine element in its production process. They employed a method of *ijtihād jama'iy* and an interdisciplinary approach, incorporating *qauli* and *ilhaqī* methods [23]. The PWNU assessed that the trypsin, a porcine enzyme, was only used as a catalyst for the propagation of the coronavirus and was not mixed into the final vaccine product. This was analogized to manure fertilizer and sweets that never come into contact, meaning the final product remains pure even if the cultivation medium contained an impure element [24].

The difference in fatwas between the Central MUI and the East Java PWNU reflects methodological differences in legal derivation [23]. The Central MUI emphasized the presence of a haram element in the production process but permitted its use due to the emergency. Meanwhile, the PWNU emphasized the transformation of substance (*istihalah*) and the primary objective of saving human lives. Both institutions essentially issued fatwas with the same goal to save human lives but through different lines of argumentation.

The fundamental difference lies in the interpretation of the concept of impurity (*najis*) and the application of the *istihalah* theory. The Central MUI considered the porcine trypsin in the production process to render the AstraZeneca vaccine haram, although it could be used in an emergency. In contrast, the East Java MUI and PWNU argued that the trypsin had undergone *istihalah* (transformation) and was therefore no longer impure; moreover, its presence was only as a catalyst that was not in the final product [24]. This difference in interpretation showcases the dynamics of contemporary fiqh thought in response to technological developments [25].

Collectively, the cases above prove that the halal landscape in Indonesia is, in fact, a highly dynamic and pluralistic arena. There exist various valid and competing halal worlds, born from differences in fiqh methodology, authority, and jurisprudential logic. This fact fundamentally weakens the claim that there is only one monolithic and uniform halal practice, rendering the argument for imposing it as a single global standard academically indefensible.

4.2 Minority Practice as Border Thinking

The halal certification initiative undertaken by the Muslim minority community in Japan, as exemplified by the Fukuoka Mosque in 2019, which issued free halal certificates to local restaurants [4], can be analyzed as a powerful manifestation of border thinking. This practice is more than just a pragmatic solution; it is an epistemic act born from the predicament of being caught between the hegemony of global standardization and the demands of local reality. In practice, the Fukuoka Mosque assumed the authority to certify, grounding it in the fatwas of local scholars and the direct supervision of the mosque's imam. This model fundamentally challenges the dominant logic of standardization, which is bureaucratic, commercial, and decontextualized. When analyzed using a decolonial framework, this practice precisely reflects the key elements of border thinking:

First, the innovation carried out by the Fukuoka Mosque did not emerge in a vacuum. It was born directly from the pressure created by the colonial difference that exists within the global halal landscape. In this context, coloniality does not refer to Western colonization but to the internal knowledge hierarchy within the Muslim world. This colonial difference creates an epistemic border, a zone where the minority community must live under the shadow of center standards that are misaligned with their reality. The impossibility of implementing the expensive and impractical standards from the center is precisely what forced them to think from the border and create their own solutions.

Second, this alternative knowledge is produced and articulated by subaltern actors: the mosque's imam and the local Muslim community in Japan. From their marginalized position within the global halal epistemic hierarchy, their *ijtihad* and experiences are often considered inferior or not halal enough. In contrast, they actively reclaim the authority to interpret and apply Islamic principles in accordance with the reality they face. This is an act of reclaiming the right to perform *ijtihad* at the local level. They cease to be objects of regulation from the center and become subjects who produce their own knowledge. By conducting direct supervision, they replace the logic of impersonal, technocratic audits with a logic of communal trust based on local religious authority.

Third, the practice emerging from Fukuoka effectively creates another logic that operates outside of and as a counter to the dominant system. If the dominant logic in global halal standardization is marked by the principles of universalism, commercialization, and complex bureaucracy, then the logic created in Fukuoka is its antithesis. It is a logic founded on the principles of contextuality, ease, communality, and non-commercialism.

This logic consciously replaces the expensive and impersonal audit-based system with a system based on trust and direct supervision by a local religious authority who is known and respected by the community. The provision of free certificates is a radical

rejection of the commodification of religion. It shifts the paradigm of certification from a business transaction to a communal service, which is closer to the original spirit of *fiqh*. This other logic is an authentic product of border thinking; it neither imitates the center nor blindly rejects it, but rather creates a third, hybrid path that intelligently responds to the specific needs at the border.

Fourth, it has a decolonial goal. Fundamentally, the purpose of this practice is decolonial, manifesting in two simultaneous actions: liberation and resistance. The practice liberates the local Muslim community from the burden of impractical and expensive standards, which often act as a barrier for them to access halal food or for small entrepreneurs to provide halal services. By removing financial and bureaucratic obstacles, this model allows them to fulfill their religious obligations more easily. This is a more subtle yet profound form of resistance. By creating and legitimizing their own standards, the Fukuoka community implicitly challenges the monopoly on knowledge and authority held by institutions in the 'center.' They reclaim the right to perform *ijtihad* at the local level. This is a form of epistemic disobedience that asserts that valid knowledge can and must be produced from various locations, including from the most marginalized positions.

Ultimately, this analysis aims to fundamentally change the narrative. Through a hegemonic lens, local practices like those in Fukuoka would be easily labeled as loser, unprofessional, or less guaranteed standards. However, the lens of border thinking allows us to read it in a different light. This practice is not a loser standard, but rather a unique, adaptive, and innovative alternative standard.

It is unique because it is born from the fusion of *fiqh* tradition and the Japanese social context. It is adaptive because it can respond to the real needs of a minority community with a sustainable solution. Moreover, it is innovative because it successfully creates a non-commercial, trust-based model amidst an increasingly commercialized halal industry. Thus, the practice on the periphery is not a deficiency but a source of creativity and tangible proof of Islam's intellectual vitality, capable of flourishing anywhere.

4.3 The Legitimacy of *Fiqh al-Aqalliyat*

The alternative halal practices that emerge from Muslim minority communities in Japan, as exemplified by the Fukuoka Mosque, often face accusations of being lax or illegitimate. However, this accusation arises from the perspective of a pyramidal epistemology that overlooks the fact that these practices actually have a solid and relevant foundation in Islamic jurisprudence. The legal framework that provides strong legitimacy for these practices is *Fiqh al-Aqalliyat* (Fiqh of Minorities).

Fiqh al-Aqalliyat is a branch of Islamic jurisprudence specifically designed to address the unique problems and challenges faced by Muslim communities living as minorities in non-Muslim countries [4], [26]. It is not an entirely new body of laws, but rather a methodology of *ijtihad* that applies the universal principles of Sharia while seriously considering the specific geographical, social, and cultural conditions in which the community exists. Its primary objective is to provide guidance that enables minority Muslims to practice their religion with ease and without difficulty, while still preserving the essence of their Muslim identity [26], [27].

Furthermore, *Fiqh al-Aqalliyat* prioritizes the achievement of the higher objectives of Islamic law. In the context of halal, the main goal is to preserve the religion by

ensuring that Muslims can access permissible food to maintain their identity and religious practices [28]. Expensive and complicated certification models can actually hinder the achievement of this goal by making halal food scarce and unaffordable. In contrast, the model applied by the Fukuoka Mosque, which ensures halal status through direct supervision and at no cost, directly achieves this objective in the most effective way.

Based on these principles, the certification practice by the Fukuoka Mosque's Imam can be viewed as a legitimate application of *Fiqh al-Aqalliyat*. This is not a compromise on Sharia, but rather a collective *ijtihad* by the local community to fulfill its religious obligations in the most feasible and wise manner within their context. Thus, the local standard is not only practically necessary but also jurisprudentially valid according to the rich Islamic legal tradition. It possesses its own Sharia legitimacy that is not dependent on recognition from the 'center' at the apex of the epistemic pyramid. Acknowledging the validity of this fiqh is a crucial step toward deconstructing the hierarchy and validating the knowledge born from the experience of the periphery.

4.4 Proposing Halal Pluriversality

As the culmination of the deconstruction of the epistemic hierarchy and the validation of practices on the periphery, this study proposes Halal Pluriversality as a theoretical and ethical framework for the future. This concept recognizes that halal is not a monolithic entity with a single, rigid universal standard, but rather a pluriverse, a world comprised of many valid and authentic halal worlds. Each of these 'worlds' is born from the dynamic and inevitable interaction between the universal principles of Sharia and highly diverse geographical, social, cultural, and economic contexts. It is an acknowledgment that the way Islam is lived and practiced will always be contextual.

This framework is rooted in the decolonial idea of pluriversality as conceived by thinkers like Walter D. Mignolo. This idea fundamentally rejects singular universalism, the claim that one worldview is the only correct one, and instead promotes a model of just coexistence among various worldviews and ways of life. In the context of halal, this means rejecting the hegemony of a single standard and opening a space for the recognition of various valid models of standardization.

To be operationalized, Halal Pluriversality stands on three mutually reinforcing foundational principles:

Recognition of Fiqh Plurality (Ikhtilāf)

The first and most fundamental principle is to explicitly recognize that the diversity of opinion within fiqh is a valid norm and an integral part of the rich intellectual tradition of Islam, not an anomaly to be standardized or eliminated. The history of Islamic jurisprudence, with the birth of various schools of law, is tangible proof that methodological and legal differences are a productive necessity. Modern attempts to create a single, monolithic global halal standard actually contradict this spirit of intellectual pluralism. Halal Pluriversality, in contrast, calls for a return to appreciating *ikhtilāf* as a mercy and acknowledging that there can be more than one legitimately *shar'i* approach to ensuring halal status in different contexts.

Rejection of Epistemic Hierarchy

The second principle directly challenges the pyramidal structure of epistemology previously discussed. Halal Pluriversality firmly rejects the notion that *ijtihād* originating from the center is inherently superior, more authentic, or more valid than *ijtihād* from the periphery. The validity of a fiqh opinion or a religious practice should be judged on the strength of its argumentation and its ability to realize the higher objectives of Sharia (*maqāṣid al-sharī'ah*), not on the geographical location or demographic status of its practitioners. This principle demands a democratization of religious authority, where the voices and knowledge from communities on the periphery are given equal weight and legitimacy.

The Centrality of Context

The third principle asserts that the validity and relevance of a halal practice cannot be separated from the context in which it is applied. A standard that may be ideal in one place could be extremely burdensome and counterproductive in another. Halal Pluriversality underlines that halal practices in minority communities must be understood and evaluated through the lens of their local relevance. The framework of *Fiqh al-Aqalliyat* becomes a crucial jurisprudential tool here, as it inherently protects and legitimizes adaptations aimed at providing ease and avoiding hardship for Muslims in non-majority environments. Thus, context is not a secondary factor but a central determinant in assessing the legitimacy and wisdom of a halal practice.

4.5 Formulating a Pluriversal Halal Standard Model

Based on the principles of recognizing fiqh plurality, rejecting epistemic hierarchy, and the centrality of context, this research ultimately does not stop at critique but also proposes a constructive step forward: a pluriversal halal standard model. It is essential to emphasize that the objective of this model is not to establish a new, superior standard to replace existing ones. To do so would only replicate the very logic of universalism that has been critiqued. Instead, its primary goal is to establish a global governance framework that can manage the diversity of halal practices in a just and equitable manner. This is a framework for the relationship between halal worlds, not a rigid technical blueprint.

This governance model would operate through a mechanism of mutual recognition based on contextual validation. This means that standardization bodies in Muslim-majority countries are encouraged to acknowledge the legitimacy of local standards developed in Muslim-minority countries, as long as those local standards can demonstrate a solid jurisprudential foundation. Thus, this pluriversal model transforms a previously hierarchical relationship into a more horizontal network. It allows innovations to no longer be viewed as threats or deviations, but as valuable contributions to the richness of the global halal ecosystem. Ultimately, this model is an effort to restore the fundamental spirit of Islam as a mercy to all creation (*rahmatan lil-'ālamīn*), adaptive, and upholds justice for all its followers, wherever they may be.

5 CONCLUSION

After exploring the epistemic hegemony within the knowledge order of halal practices between Muslim-majority countries, represented by Indonesia, and Muslim-minority countries, represented by Japan, several observations and recommendations can be made.

First, the diversity of halal practices is an absolute, as *fiqh* has fundamentally never been singular. Therefore, considering the standards of a Muslim minority to be less valid simply because they differ from the standards of a Muslim-majority country is erroneous.

Second, the concept of halal pluriversality does not mean rejecting the idea of harmonizing global halal standards. Rather, it proposes the accommodation of halal practices in Muslim-minority countries as special practices, as they are based on *fiqh al-aqalliyāt* (*fiqh* of minorities), which cannot be applied in Muslim-majority countries.

Third, based on the second observation, it is recommended that SMIIC (The Standards and Metrology Institute for the Islamic Countries), as a standardization organization for Muslim-majority countries, consider a dual-scheme for global halal certification. One part of this scheme would be the official recognition and accreditation of the validity of local-level halal certifications, especially those in Muslim-minority countries.

Fourth, national halal bodies in Muslim-majority countries, such as BPJPH (Indonesia), JAKIM (Malaysia), ESMA (UAE), and others, should educate and inform their respective Muslim populations about the validity of halal certifications in Muslim-minority countries, even if there are differences in practice. This is crucial, as the public is more likely to be receptive when educated directly by their own country's authorities. This will ensure that when they visit minority countries, they can purchase halal products with confidence.

Fifth, the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) should facilitate dialogue between nations regarding this problem of differing halal practices. Religious institutions must initiate this dialogue as the foundation of halal standardization. The *ulama* (scholars) must also engage in this dialogue and rethink the purpose of halal certification: is it for the *ummah* (the global Muslim community) or merely for business and political interests? If it is for business interests, then Muslim minority communities will inevitably become victims in this industry. Islam must not only be a mercy for majority-Muslim lands, but a mercy for all of creation.

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