FESTIVALIZED NEOLIBERAL PIETY: ISLAMIC FAIRS, HALAL GOVERNANCE, AND POST-PANDEMIC RELIGIOUS LIFE IN URBAN INDONESIA

Torkis Lubis [1*], Muhammad Alan Juhri [2], Nuzul Fitriansyah [3]

[1,3] *Universitas Islam Internasional Indonesia (UIII) Depok, Indonesia.*
[2] *Universitas Islam Negeri Sultan Syarif Kasim, Riau, Indonesia*

ABSTRACT

This article examines how post-pandemic Islamic festivals in urban Indonesia reorganize the relationship between devotion, consumption, and collective affect. Drawing on semi-ethnographic fieldwork conducted at three major halal-themed festivals in 2024, the study analyzes spatial arrangements, embodied practices, immersive technologies, and micro-level interactions among participants. The findings demonstrate that these festivals function as curated moral environments in which gender segregation, halal certification, aestheticized da'wa, and branded religious commodities converge to minimize ambiguity and facilitate religious participation. Rather than positioning pleasure and piety as oppositional, festival spaces normalize their compatibility through sensorial intensification and lifestyle-oriented expressions of faith. The concept of festivalized neoliberal piety is proposed to capture this configuration, where market rationalities, religious regulation, and post-pandemic affective recovery intersect to reinforce urban middle-class Muslim identity. The analysis does not suggest the homogenization of Indonesian Islam, but highlights how large-scale curated events operate as temporary laboratories for negotiating contemporary religious life. By foregrounding spatial curation, responsibilized consumption, and embodied experience, this study contributes to broader debates on religion under neoliberal conditions and the transformation of public religiosity in post-pandemic contexts.

1. INTRODUCTION

Across Muslim-majority societies, the past two decades have witnessed an intensified entanglement between piety, market rationalities, and neoliberal forms of subject formation (Anand & Mulyani, 2020). From halal branding and Islamic finance to celebrity preachers and digital da'wa, scholars have documented how religious expression is increasingly mediated through consumption, aesthetics, and entrepreneurial self-fashioning (Al-Fadhat, 2022). Rather than signaling secular decline, these developments point to a reconfiguration of religiosity under late capitalism, where faith circulates through lifestyle markets and affective economies.

Indonesia offers a particularly instructive case. Since the Reformasi era of 1998, the rapid expansion of an urban Muslim middle class has reshaped the country's Islamic public sphere (Herlambang et al., 2024). Existing scholarship has explored Islamic commodification, halal consumerism, media-driven religiosity, and the hijrah movement, demonstrating how middle-class Muslims negotiate modernity through consumption and symbolic self-presentation (Mukhlis et al. 2023). These studies have significantly advanced our understanding of market Islam and the moral economy of piety. However, despite these advances, the spatial and affective consolidation of these dynamics in the post-pandemic period remains undertheorized. What remains insufficiently examined is how religion, consumption, entertainment, and communal sociality are architecturally assembled into immersive environments that actively produce particular forms of Muslim subjectivity.

This article argues that post-Covid Islamic festivals in Indonesia represent a critical new phase in the transformation of public Islam (Rodiah, 2023). Unlike earlier forms of Islamic commodification dispersed across media platforms and retail markets, festivals condense religious authority, halal commerce, aesthetic performance, and collective affect into a single curated arena. They do not merely display Islamic goods or host religious lectures; rather, they stage what we conceptualize as a cohesive Islamic lifeworld—a deliberately designed moral-consumer ecosystem that minimizes friction between religious obligation and neoliberal modernity (Negara et al., 2024). Within these spaces, halal and shar'i labels operate not only as theological markers but as regulatory discourses that organize mobility, gender interaction, consumption choices, and self-presentation.

The Covid-19 pandemic forms an essential backdrop to this development. Extended restrictions on public gatherings generated not only economic disruption but also affective deprivation and fragmented communal life (Mukhlis & Saidah, 2025). In the aftermath of lockdowns, festivals have proliferated globally as spaces for reclaiming collective presence and emotional intensity. In Indonesia, Islamic-themed festivals such as Halal Fest, Muslim Life Fair, and Halal Fair have rapidly expanded, attracting thousands of urban middle-class participants (Bima et al., 2025). These events combine segregated entrances, halal-certified product expos, modest fashion shows, creative da'wa sessions featuring celebrity preachers, immersive technologies such as virtual-reality prophetic storytelling, matchmaking services, and aesthetic stage productions. The result is neither a conventional religious gathering nor a secular commercial fair, but a hybrid arena in which market logics and devotional practices become mutually constitutive.

Building on scholarship on neoliberal governmentality, market Islam, and lifeworld sociology, this article advances the concept of festivalized neoliberal piety to explain how these events normalize what we term pleasurable piety (Wijaya Mulya & Sakhiyya, 2021). Here, enjoyment and devotion are no longer positioned in tension; instead, they are institutionalized as compatible and desirable. Through curated environments that guarantee halal legitimacy and aesthetic coherence, festivals invite participants to enact religiosity through responsible consumption, lifestyle discipline, and affective participation (Yasih & Rakhmani, 2024). The market, therefore, should not be understood merely as eroding religious authenticity. Rather, it functions as an active agent in shaping contemporary Muslim subjectivities—disciplined, aspirational, and entrepreneurially oriented.

This study addresses three central analytical questions:
1. How do Islamic festivals construct immersive moral-consumer ecosystems that reorganize the boundaries between religion and leisure?
2. In what ways do halal and shar'i discourses function as regulatory mechanisms within these spaces?

3. How does the normalization of pleasurable piety reshape contemporary middle-class Muslim identity in post-pandemic Indonesia?

Methodologically, this article draws on semi-ethnographic fieldwork conducted at three major Islamic festivals in Padang, Bogor, and Jakarta between May and August 2024. Through participant observation and interviews with organizers, vendors, and attendees, we analyze how these festivals are designed, experienced, and narratively framed. Rather than treating them as isolated cultural events, we approach them as condensed sites where broader transformations in Indonesia's Islamic public sphere become visible.

By foregrounding the festivalization of Islam in post-pandemic Indonesia, this article contributes to global debates on religion under neoliberalism, the affective reconfiguration of public religion after Covid-19, and the spatial production of moral economies. It demonstrates that contemporary Muslim middle-class religiosity is not simply commodified but architecturally staged, affectively intensified, and collectively rehearsed within festival environments. Islamic festivals thus emerge as key laboratories for understanding how faith, capitalism, and modern subjectivity are being recalibrated in the twenty-first century.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Neoliberal Rationalities and Contemporary Muslim Subject Formation

Contemporary transformations of Islamic public life increasingly unfold within the broader expansion of neoliberal rationalities (Muhalim, 2023). Rather than functioning solely as an economic doctrine, neoliberalism operates as a mode of governance that encourages individuals to become responsible, self-managing, and aspirational actors (Wardana, 2020). Under such conditions, moral responsibility is often internalized, and everyday life becomes organized around lifestyle choices, self-discipline, and ethical consumption.

In many Muslim societies, including Indonesia, religiosity has not retreated in the face of market expansion (Adriany & Newberry, 2022). Instead, scholars have shown that religious practice has adapted to and, in some cases, flourished within market-oriented environments. The rise of halal industries, Islamic branding, modest fashion, and digitally mediated da'wa illustrates how piety increasingly intersects with consumer culture (Koeswahyono et al., 2022). Religious devotion is frequently expressed through consumption choices, aesthetic self-presentation, and participation in ethically framed markets.

Rather than suggesting that neoliberalism "produces" religious subjects in a deterministic sense, this article approaches Islamic festivals as spaces that participate in shaping contemporary Muslim subjectivities (Yasih & Hadiz, 2023). They provide infrastructures, narratives, and affective atmospheres that encourage particular forms of self-understanding—such as being a responsible halal consumer, a modest yet stylish Muslim, or an aspirational participant in Islamic modernity (Mukhlis & Abdullah, 2025).

2.2 Market Islam and the Productive Ambivalence of Commodification

The notion of "market Islam" has been widely employed to describe the commercialization of religious goods and symbols (Sunendar & Adriany, 2025). In Indonesia, research has examined halal certification regimes, celebrity preachers, Islamic media industries, and lifestyle branding as key components of this transformation (Suaidi et al., 2025). These studies demonstrate that commodification does not necessarily erode religious commitment; instead, it reorganizes how authority, authenticity, and belonging are negotiated.

Islamic festivals extend these dynamics by concentrating them within immersive environments (Mukhlis et al. 2025). Unlike dispersed forms of market Islam operating through media or retail spaces, festivals gather commerce, da'wa, entertainment, and communal interaction into a temporary but intensified setting (Rahmatullah et al., 2025). Halal and shar'i labels in these contexts function not merely as marketing devices but as moral assurances that structure interaction and consumption practices.

At the same time, commodification remains ambivalent. While festivals promote halal-conscious lifestyles and aesthetic religiosity, participants are not simply passive recipients of market logics (Saefullah et al., 2025). They selectively interpret religious messages, evaluate product authenticity, and negotiate the meaning of piety in relation to their personal aspirations. Recognizing this ambivalence allows us to avoid reducing Islamic festivals to either pure commercialization or pure spiritual revival (Nusran et al., 2025). Instead, they can be understood as negotiated spaces where market forces and devotional commitments intersect.

2.3 Cohesive Islamic Lifeworld and Spatial Curation

To capture the experiential dimension of these festivals, this study draws on the concept of the lifeworld (Ruiz Estrada & Levy, 2025). In phenomenological sociology, the lifeworld refers to the horizon of taken-for-granted meanings within which everyday life unfolds (Mukhlis, Janwari, et al., 2023). It provides coherence and familiarity to social experience.

Islamic festivals can be conceptualized as constructing a cohesive Islamic lifeworld—a curated moral environment designed to reduce uncertainty regarding religious legitimacy (Nizar & Ahmad, 2025). Through segregated entrances, halal-certified booths, hijab-access stations, sharia-compliant fashion displays, and religiously themed entertainment, festivals create a space where participants can move between shopping, leisure, and devotional activities with minimal moral ambiguity (Madjid et al., 2022).

This cohesive lifeworld differs from the broader urban environment, where Muslims may encounter ambiguity concerning halal status, gender interaction norms, or religious authenticity (Azalie, 2025). Within festival settings, these ambiguities are temporarily bracketed. However, this cohesion should not be understood as total or absolute (Mukhlis, 2025). It operates as an aspirational framework—an idealized environment that participants inhabit temporarily, while still bringing with them diverse interpretations, expectations, and degrees of religious commitment.

2.4 Festivalization and the Normalization of Pleasurable Piety

Festivals are characterized by spectacle, affective intensity, and collective immersion (Che Mohd Zain & Zakaria, 2022b). In the post-pandemic context, they also function as spaces for rebuilding social connection and emotional vitality after prolonged restrictions on public gatherings (Mukhlis, Arifin, Ridwan, Zulbaidah, et al., 2025). Islamic festivals, in particular, combine devotional practices with aesthetic performance and market participation.

Within these spaces, the relationship between fun and piety is reconfigured. Creative da'wa sessions featuring celebrity preachers, multimedia technologies, humor, and interactive engagement illustrate how religious instruction is increasingly integrated with entertainment (Che Mohd Zain & Zakaria, 2022a). Halal lifestyle products promise not only compliance with religious norms but also aspiration, comfort, and aesthetic pleasure.

This article conceptualizes this dynamic as the normalization of pleasurable piety—a mode of religiosity in which enjoyment and devotion are framed as compatible rather than contradictory. Festivals do not eliminate the tension between spirituality and consumption; rather, they provide structured environments where that tension is managed and symbolically reconciled (Mukhlis, Maryam, et al., 2023). In doing so, they contribute to the ongoing reconfiguration of middle-class Muslim identity in contemporary Indonesia.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

This study employs a qualitative approach grounded in semi-ethnographic fieldwork to examine how Islamic festivals function as spaces of contemporary religious expression among Indonesia's urban Muslim middle class (Padgett, 2017). Rather than conducting long-term immersive ethnography, this research adopts a focused, event-centered design that prioritizes in-depth observation and interaction within temporally bounded festival environments.

The semi-ethnographic approach is particularly suited for analyzing curated public events where spatial organization, embodied practices, and performative elements are central (Berg, 2001). It allows close engagement with participants while acknowledging the episodic and temporally concentrated nature of festival settings.

3.1.1 Field Sites and Duration of Observation

Fieldwork was conducted between May and August 2024 at three major Islamic festivals:
- Halal Fest (Padang, May 2024)
- Muslim Life Fair (Bogor, June 2024)
- Halal Fair (Jakarta, August 2024)

These festivals were selected purposively due to their scale, thematic emphasis on halal lifestyle, and prominence within urban middle-class Muslim networks.

Each festival was attended for the full duration of its main public program (approximately 8–10 hours per day), enabling sustained observation of spatial dynamics, audience engagement, and program sequences. This extended presence allowed the researchers to move beyond surface impressions and observe variations in crowd interaction, vendor strategies, and religious programming throughout the day.

3.2 Data Collection

Data collection consisted of three primary methods:

3.2.1 Participant Observation

The researchers attended the festivals as both observers and participants. Systematic field notes were recorded during and immediately after each event to capture:

1. Spatial arrangements (e.g., booth organization, segregated entrances)
2. Visual and aesthetic elements
3. Interaction patterns among visitors, vendors, and organizers
4. Da'wa sessions and performative components
5. Consumption practices and branding strategies

Attention was also given to affective atmospheres, crowd responses, and embodied performances of piety.

3.2.2 Semi-Structured Interviews

Approximately fifteen informants were interviewed, including:

1. Event organizers
2. Vendors and exhibitors
3. Attendees from different age groups (youth aged 15–30 and adults aged 31–50)

Participants were selected through purposive sampling based on their active engagement within festival activities.

Interviews lasted between 30 and 60 minutes. With participants' consent, interviews were either audio-recorded or documented through detailed written notes. The conversations focused on:

1. Motivations for attending or participating
2. Interpretations of halal and shar'i labeling
3. Perceptions of religious authenticity
4. Reflections on the integration of leisure and devotion

3.2.3 Visual and Material Documentation

Photographs of spatial layouts, signage, product displays, and performance stages were collected to support spatial and aesthetic analysis. These materials functioned as complementary data to enrich interpretive examination of curated festival environments.

3.3. Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using thematic analysis. Field notes and interview materials were coded inductively to identify recurring patterns related to:

1. The organization of halal and shar'i discourse
2. The interplay between consumption and devotion

3. The integration of entertainment and da'wa
4. Participants' narratives of identity and piety

Coding was conducted iteratively, moving between empirical materials and theoretical concepts in a process of constant comparison. Rather than testing predetermined hypotheses, the analysis sought to generate interpretive insights grounded in participants' experiences while situating them within broader theoretical debates on neoliberal rationalities and market-mediated religiosity.

The aim of the analysis is not statistical generalization but analytical interpretation. The findings are presented as contextually grounded reflections on how Islamic festivals contribute to contemporary middle-class religious formations.

3.4 Reflexivity and Ethical Considerations

The researchers engaged with the festivals as academic observers in publicly accessible spaces. Participation in interviews was voluntary, and informants' identities have been anonymized where appropriate. Observations were conducted openly without covert methods. The researchers acknowledge that their interpretations are shaped by their scholarly engagement with Indonesian Islamic discourse. Efforts were made to remain attentive to participants' own meanings and to avoid imposing rigid analytical categories onto lived experiences.

4. RESULTS

4.1. Spatial Reorganization and the Construction of a Cohesive Islamic Lifeworld

Across the three festivals observed, Islamic coherence was spatially enacted rather than merely symbolically asserted. At Muslim Life Fair Bogor (2 June 2024, 09:15 AM), two clearly separated entrances labeled "IKHWAN" (men) and "AKHWAT" (women) structured gendered circulation patterns. The queue for women was longer and moved more slowly, largely composed of small groups dressed in dark abayas and long hijabs.

A young couple briefly paused before separating. The wife instructed her husband to enter through the men's gate and suggested they meet inside near the food booths. This moment illustrates how spatial segregation temporarily fragmented shared movement and reorganized bodily rhythm. Yet the separation did not generate visible resistance. A woman waiting in line commented that such arrangements were already common and even preferable because they reduced physical crowding.

Segregation thus functioned less as prohibition and more as normalized spatial choreography. Religious norms were embedded into infrastructure, shaping flow, posture, and coordination. This supports the concept of a cohesive Islamic lifeworld: a curated environment designed to minimize moral ambiguity and allow participants to navigate consumption, leisure, and devotion within a pre-structured Islamic framework.

4.2. Halal Lifestyle as Identity Performance and Regulatory Assurance

Observation at Halal Fair Jakarta (10 August 2024, 14:30 PM) revealed patterned middle-class consumption behavior. Following the Zuhr prayer, visitor density increased significantly, especially in food and fashion zones. Movement patterns followed the U-shaped booth layout, creating circular consumption flows.

Micro-observations indicated:
1. Visitors paused approximately two to five minutes at fashion booths.
2. Women aged 20–35 tested halal cosmetics while discussing products in small groups.
3. Many visitors photographed product displays before purchasing.
4. The backdrop reading "Halal is My Lifestyle" functioned as a popular selfie location.
5. Excitement visibly increased when the master of ceremonies announced door prizes.

Halal operated here not only as a compliance marker but as an aspirational lifestyle identity. Photographing products and sharing social media content extended participation into digital self-presentation. The halal label functioned simultaneously as regulatory assurance and as a performative marker of belonging.

Importantly, participants framed halal governance as enabling responsible consumption rather than restricting autonomy. Halal and shar'i labeling structured behavior while being internalized as voluntary moral discipline.

4.3 Immersive Technology and the Sensorial Intensification of Devotion

The VR Journey Indonesia booth demonstrated how religious experience was intensified through immersive technology. Average queues ranged between 10–15 participants per session. Lighting was dimmed, and synchronized seats introduced vibration, wind, and scent effects. During the Isra' Mi'raj sequence, one participant audibly exclaimed "Oh God" while gripping the chair tightly. After removing the headset, a 28-year-old woman,

visibly emotional, stated that the experience felt as though she had personally witnessed the event.

Several participants commented that the experience was more emotionally engaging than conventional sermons. Religious engagement in this context was embodied rather than purely cognitive. Bodies reacted through posture shifts, physical grip, tears, and spontaneous speech. This illustrates the normalization of pleasurable piety: immersive enjoyment and affective intensity were integrated into devotional practice rather than positioned in opposition to it.

4.4. Negotiated Commodification: Reflection Within Market Exchange

The booth "Baju Terakhir" ("The Last Garment") presented burial shrouds and shroud-inspired daily garments. Initial reactions from visitors included mild amusement at the booth name. However, after reading the slogan encouraging preparation for one's final garment, visitor demeanor shifted noticeably. A middle-aged man handled the fabric slowly and commented that the marketing was clever yet thought-provoking. Gestures became slower and voices softer compared to interactions at adjacent fashion booths.

Here, commodification did not trivialize mortality; it created a micro-space of contemplation within commercial exchange. Participants interpreted such booths differently—some emphasizing spiritual reflection, others highlighting creative branding—demonstrating negotiation rather than passive absorption of market logic.

4.5 Aesthetic Da'wa and Post-Pandemic Affective Recovery

Evening da'wa sessions blended religious instruction with aesthetic production. At Halal Fest Padang (18 May 2024), animated calligraphy appeared on large LED screens, accompanied by modern devotional music with soft electronic rhythms. When the preacher humorously remarked that individuals should not be more updated on cryptocurrency prices than on Qur'anic verses, the audience responded with laughter and applause. Participants recorded segments of the lecture and sat casually, some holding halal-branded beverages.

Several attendees referenced the absence of such communal gatherings during Covid-19 restrictions. Festivals were described as opportunities to gather again and experience religious instruction collectively. Sound levels

were immediately lowered when the call to prayer was broadcast, reinforcing a moral rhythm within the festive atmosphere. In this sense, festivals functioned as post-pandemic affective recovery spaces, reassembling collective presence, emotional intensity, and devotional performance within curated Islamic environments.

To synthesize the empirical patterns observed across the three festivals, Table 1 summarizes key micro-level observations and their analytical significance in relation to the study's theoretical framework.

Table 1: Empirical Observations and Analytical Mapping

Empirical Observation	Analytical Interpretation	Theoretical Anchor
Gender-segregated entrances	Spatial choreography of piety	Cohesive Islamic lifeworld
Selfie activity at halal backdrop	Identity performance through consumption	Market Islam
Emotional reaction in VR booth	Sensorial intensification of devotion	Pleasurable piety
Slowed gestures at shroud booth	Reflective commodification	Negotiated market Islam
Multimedia da'wa with humor	Institutionalized fun–piety compatibility	Festivalization

As shown in Table 1, micro-level practices—ranging from spatial segregation to embodied emotional responses—consistently align with broader patterns of curated religious modernity. These observations demonstrate that Islamic festivals operate simultaneously at infrastructural, affective, and symbolic levels. To further clarify the conceptual relationship between these empirical findings, Figure 1 presents the analytical model developed from this study.
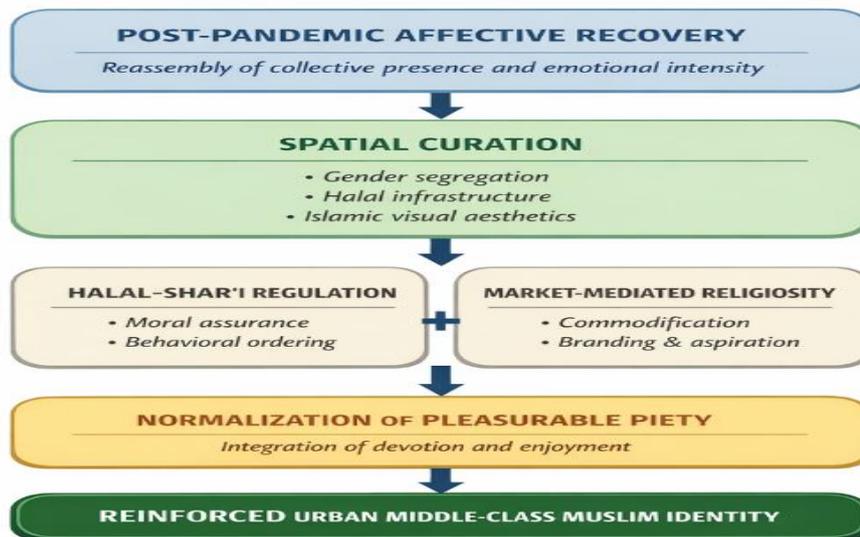
Figure 1: Festivalized Neoliberal Piety in Post-Pandemic Indonesia

Figure 1 illustrates how post-pandemic affective dynamics intersect with spatial curation and halal governance to facilitate the normalization of pleasurable piety. Rather than functioning as isolated phenomena, these elements interact to reinforce middle-class Muslim identity within curated festival environments.

5. DISCUSSION

Post-pandemic Islamic festivals in Indonesia operate as curated environments where religiosity, consumption, and collective affect intersect in structured and mutually reinforcing ways (Alexander et al., 2021). Rather than functioning merely as commercial exhibitions or religious gatherings, these festivals reorganize the boundaries between devotion and leisure, morality and market participation, and individual aspiration and collective presence.

5.1 Spatial Curation and the Production of Moral Coherence

The observed gender-segregated entrances, halal-certified infrastructures, and aesthetic uniformity illustrate how religious norms are embedded into spatial design (Ngabiyanto & Atmojo, 2026). As demonstrated in Section 4.1, participants adjusted bodily rhythms and coordination patterns without visible resistance. Spatial segregation was normalized as part of the event's moral architecture. This supports the concept of a cohesive Islamic lifeworld: a curated moral ecosystem in which ambiguity is minimized through infrastructural alignment (Mukhlis et al., 2024). Unlike everyday urban settings—where halal legitimacy or interaction norms may require individual verification—festival environments pre-structure these concerns.

However, this coherence is not absolute. Micro-interactions, such as couples negotiating temporary separation at gendered gates, reveal pragmatic adaptation rather than total submission (Sanjatmiko & Hardiah, 2022). The lifeworld is curated but inhabited actively. Participants navigate spatial rules strategically, indicating that moral order is stabilized through repetition and familiarity rather than coercion.

5.2 Neoliberal Rationalities and Soft Responsibilization

While the festivals are explicitly religious, elements of neoliberal rationality are visible in how moral responsibility is individualized and enacted through consumption (Rakhmani, 2024). Visitors express responsibility through selecting halal-certified products, adhering to modest presentation norms, and publicly performing lifestyle alignment (e.g., photographing halal branding for social media). This reflects a form of responsibilization in which individuals manage their religious legitimacy through market choices. Halal governance operates as a soft regulatory mechanism: rather than imposing discipline externally, it invites voluntary alignment (Yustikasari, 2025). Certification logos, shar'i labels, and Islamic visual markers structure trust while allowing participants to experience agency.

Importantly, neoliberal rationalities here are not secular but religiously reframed (Yulista, 2025). Entrepreneurial logics—branding, aspirational aesthetics, immersive technology—are integrated into devotional contexts (Fajri et al., 2023). The convergence of market rationality and religious discourse suggests not the retreat of faith, but its recalibration within consumer-mediated environments.

5.3 Grounding Middle-Class Identity

The reinforcement of urban middle-class Muslim identity is evidenced not merely through assumption but through patterned behaviors observed across festivals:

1. Family-oriented leisure participation (halal playground zones)
2. Digital documentation and social media circulation
3. Engagement with branded modest fashion and halal cosmetics
4. Use of Islamic financial applications for digital payment

These practices reflect consumption-based identity formation typical of urban middle-class environments (Sudrajat & Aman, 2023). The festivals serve as spaces where economic capacity, aesthetic preference, and religious aspiration converge visibly. Nevertheless, this configuration may privilege particular socio-economic segments (Sulastri, 2025). The curated aesthetic—minimalist design, branded products, technologically immersive booths—may not equally resonate with lower-income Muslims or those whose religious expression does not align with lifestyle branding.

5.4 Negotiated Commodification and Moral Ambivalence

The "Baju Terakhir" booth and immersive VR experience demonstrate that commodification does not operate uniformly (Sukmawati, 2025). Market-mediated religious products generated reflection, emotional response, and embodied engagement. Participants interpreted these offerings in diverse ways—some emphasizing spiritual depth, others acknowledging marketing strategy (Syahidah et al., 2025). This ambivalence is central. Islamic festivals neither fully commodify nor fully transcend market logic. They create spaces where religious seriousness and commercial strategy coexist. Rather than reducing religion to branding, festivals mediate ongoing negotiation between authenticity and aspiration.

Future research might examine whether such curated environments generate subtle exclusions—for instance, for Muslims who resist aestheticized religiosity or who cannot access branded halal consumption.

5.5 Pleasurable Piety and Post-Pandemic Reassembly

The integration of humor, multimedia da'wa, and relaxed audience posture illustrates the normalization of pleasurable piety. Devotion unfolds within aesthetic production and collective enjoyment (Ade Sitorus, 2025). Rather than positioning pleasure and piety as oppositional, festivals institutionalize their compatibility. In the post-pandemic context, these dynamic carries additional weight. Attendees referenced the absence of communal gatherings during Covid-19 restrictions (Arofah et al., 2025). Festivals reassemble sensory presence—sound, movement, collective laughter, synchronized prayer pauses. Emotional intensity becomes part of religious revitalization.

As illustrated in Figure 1, post-pandemic affective recovery interacts with spatial curation and halal governance to stabilize a model of festivalized neoliberal piety (Handayani, 2025). This model does not simply commercialize faith; it

reorganizes how devotion is embodied, aestheticized, and publicly performed.

5.6 Theoretical Contribution and Scope

This study contributes to scholarship on religion under neoliberal conditions in three ways. First, it advances the concept of festivalized neoliberal piety to describe how temporary, curated events function as concentrated sites where spatial design, halal regulation, market aesthetics, and collective affect converge (Satory, 2025). Second, it extends discussions of market Islam by foregrounding embodied micro-interactions—gesture, tone, rhythm, and emotional reaction—within commercial religious environments (Nismawati, 2025). Third, it situates these dynamics within post-pandemic affective recovery, highlighting how collective religious gatherings regain significance after prolonged social restriction.

The findings are limited to large-scale urban festivals and do not claim to represent the entirety of Indonesian Muslim religiosity (Indra Martadinata, 2025). Instead, they offer an analytically grounded interpretation of how curated Islamic events participate in reshaping contemporary urban religious life.

6. CONCLUSION

Post-pandemic Islamic festivals in urban Indonesia demonstrate how curated religious environments reorganize the relationship between devotion, consumption, and collective affect. Through spatial curation, halal governance, immersive technology, and aestheticized da'wa, these festivals stabilize a configuration in which pleasure and piety are rendered compatible rather than contradictory. The concept of festivalized neoliberal piety captures this convergence: a model in which market rationalities, religious regulation, and embodied experience interact to reinforce contemporary urban Muslim identity. Rather than displacing religiosity, market-mediated infrastructures provide structured spaces where moral certainty, aspiration, and enjoyment are symbolically reconciled.

At the same time, this configuration reflects a historically specific moment shaped by post-pandemic affective recovery and middle-class consumption patterns. The findings do not suggest the homogenization of Indonesian Islam, but rather highlight how large-scale festivals function as temporary laboratories for negotiating modern religious life. By foregrounding spatial design, micro-interaction, and sensorial experience, this study contributes to broader debates on religion under neoliberal conditions and invites further research on how curated religious environments may both enable and delimit forms of contemporary piety.

6. ACKNOWLEDGMENT

Conflicts of Interest: The author declares that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this article.

REFERENCES

Ade Sitorus, S. (2025). Phenomenological Study of Senior Executive Experiences in Navigating Strategic Ambiguity in VUCA Environments. *Journal of Business, Management, and Accounting*, *1*(5), 194–202.

Adriany, V., & Newberry, J. (2022). Neuroscience and the construction of a new child in early childhood education in Indonesia: A neoliberal legacy. *Current Sociology*, *70*(4), 539–556. Scopus. https://doi.org/10.1177/0011392120985875

Alexander, F., Tameon, S. M., Manuain, L. M. M., & Dami, Z. (2021). Similarities between the pedagogy of shalom and shared christian faith as a synergetic partnership a critical reflection on neoliberal pedagogy. *European Journal of Science and Theology*, *17*(2), 43–56. Scopus.

Al-Fadhat, F. (2022). Indonesia's G20 presidency: Neoliberal policy and authoritarian tendencies. *Australian Journal of International Affairs*, *76*(6), 617–623. Scopus. https://doi.org/10.1080/10357718.2022.2070598

Anand, M., & Mulyani, M. (2020). Advancing 'Environmental Subjectivity' in the realm of neoliberal forest governance: Conservation subject creation in the Lokkere Reserve Forest, India. *Geoforum*, *110*, 106–115. Scopus. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.geoforum.2020.01.025

Arofah, K., Dewayanti, A., Eliyanah, E., & Rakhmani, I. (2025). Mediatized eco-religious movements in Indonesia: Negotiating religiosity and environmentalism in digital Islam. *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies*,

26(3), 530–551. Scopus. https://doi.org/10.1080/14649373.2025.2489888

Azalie, I. A. N. (2025). Halal Technocracy and Certification Governing: Social Media as Platform for Knowledge Dissemination. *Journal of Communication, Language and Culture*, 5(2), 218–239. Scopus. https://doi.org/10.33093/jclc.2025.5.2.13

Berg, B. L. (2001). *Qualitative research methods for the social sciences* (4th ed). Allyn and Bacon.

Bima, M., Alim, M. N., & Adnan, N. I. M. (2025). Assessing the Reliability of Halal Certification Implementation: A Qualitative Study on Perceptions of Halal Supervisors and Micro Business Actors. *Journal of Islamic Economic Laws*, 8(1), 79–105. Scopus. https://doi.org/10.23917/jisel.v8i01.7305

Che Mohd Zain, C. R. C. M., & Zakaria, Z. (2022a). A REVIEW OF HALAL GOVERNANCE IN MALAYSIA FROM THE PERSPECTIVES OF MAQASID AL-SHARIAH. *Journal of Shariah Law Research*, 7(2), 199–222. Scopus. https://doi.org/10.22452/jslr.vol7no2.3

Che Mohd Zain, C. R. C. M., & Zakaria, Z. (2022b). Integration of Islamic Management Principles and Values according to the Qur'an and Hadith in Fostering Halal Governance in Malaysia. *AlBayan*, 20(2), 157–181. Scopus. https://doi.org/10.1163/22321969-12340112

Fajri, M. S. A., Rahim, H. A., & Rajandran, K. (2023). A Corpus-Assisted Discourse Study on the Construction of 'Obesity' in Indonesian News Media. *Studies in English Language and Education*, 10(3), 1467–1484. Scopus. https://doi.org/10.24815/siele.v10i3.28822

Handayani, L. (2025). Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis of University Students' Experiences of National Identity among Indonesian University Students in the Digital Age: An IPA Approach. *Journal of Educational Innovation and Research*, 1(5), 173–179.

Herlambang, S., Rizqina, A. L., Muslih, M., & Naffati, A. K. (2024). Ḥusn al-Jawāb 'an Ithbāt al-Ahillah bi al-Ḥisāb: Basyūnī 'Imrān's Method for Standardising the Determination of the Qamariyah Month in the Sultanate of Sambas (1913-1976). *Journal of Islamic Law*, 5(2), 222–241. Scopus. https://doi.org/10.24260/jil.v5i2.2775

Indra Martadinata, M. (2025). Phenomenological Study of Airport Staff's Experiences in Managing Increased Air Traffic during Peak Periods. *Journal Homepage: Https://Journals.Ai-Mrc.Com/jmriJournal of Multidisciplinary Research and Innovation*, 1(5), 194–202.

Koeswahyono, I., Anggoro, S., & Dahlan, M. (2022). Old Wine in a New Bottle: Neoliberalism and Water Resources Law 2019 in Indonesia. *Journal of Southeast Asian Human Rights*, 6(1), 26–54. Scopus. https://doi.org/10.19184/jseahr.v6i1.29084

Madjid, A., Latief, H., & Fauzan, A. (2022). Honoring the Saint through Poetry Recitation: Pilgrimage and the Memories of Shaikh Abdurrahman Siddiq Al-Banjari in Indragiri Hilir. *Religions*, 13(3). Scopus. https://doi.org/10.3390/rel13030261

Muhalim, M. (2023). Neoliberal ideology, faith-based higher education institutions, and English in Indonesia: Negotiating English teachers' ideological formation. *Globalisation, Societies and Education*, 21(3), 353–366. Scopus. https://doi.org/10.1080/14767724.2022.2033614

Mukhlis, L. (2025). A Phenomenological Study of Personal Spiritual Experiences in Navigating Religious Pluralism within Interfaith Communities. *Irfana: Journal of Religious Studies*, 1(6), 212–220.

Mukhlis, L., Arifin, T., Ridwan, A. H., & Zulbaidah. (2024). Integrating Artificial Intelligenceand Maqāṣid al-Syarī'ah: Revolutionizing Indonesia's Sharia Online Trading System. *Computer Fraud and Security*, 2024(11), 301–309. https://doi.org/10.52710/cfs.238

Mukhlis, L., Arifin, T., Ridwan, A. H., & Zulbaidah. (2025). Reorientation of Sharia Stock Regulations: Integrating Taṣarrufāt al-Rasūl and Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah for Justice and Sustainability. *Journal of Information Systems Engineering and Management*, 10(10s), 58–66. https://doi.org/10.52783/jisem.v10i10s.1341

Mukhlis, L., Arifin, T., Ridwan, A. H., Zulbaidah, Rosadi, A., & Solehudin, E. (2025). Reformulation of Islamic Stock Law: The Application of Taṣarrufāt al-Rasūl and Maqāṣid al-Syarī'ahto Develop a Dynamic and Sustainable Islamic Capital Market in Indonesia. *Journal of Posthumanism*, 5(3), 1–13. https://doi.org/10.63332/joph.v5i3.913

Mukhlis, L., Janwari, Y., & Syafe`i, R. (2023). INDONESIA STOCK EXCHANGE: THEORETICAL AND PHILOSOPHICAL ANALYSIS OF MUDHARABAH AND MUSYARAKAH CONTRACTS. *Yurisprudentia: Jurnal Hukum Ekonomi*, 9(2), 243–264. https://doi.org/10.24952/yurisprudentia.v9i2.8466

Mukhlis, L., Suradi, Janwari, Y., & Syafe`i, R. (2023). Sosialisasi Saham Syariah sebagai Instrumen

Pengembangan Ekonomi Masyarakat di Badan Kontak Majelis Taklim (BKMT) Kabupaten Mandailing Natal. *Jurnal Pengabdian Multidisiplin*, 3(2), 2–9. https://doi.org/10.51214/japamul.v3i2.604

Negara, T. A., Anggoro, S., & Koeswahyono, I. (2024). Indonesian Job Creation Law: Neoliberal Legality, Authoritarianism and Executive Aggrandizement Under Joko Widodo. *Law and Development Review*, 17(1), 155–197. Scopus. https://doi.org/10.1515/ldr-2023-0022

Ngabiyanto, N., & Atmojo, D. P. (2026). Studentification in the Global South: Neoliberal University Reform and Speculative Housing in Semarang, Indonesia. *Geoforum*, 170. Scopus. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.geoforum.2026.104541

Nismawati. (2025). Exploring Lived Experiences of Post-Therapy Recovery after Spinal Cord Injury. *Journal of Regenerative Medicine and Molecular Innovation*, 1(5), 174–181.

Nizar, M., & Ahmad, M. Z. (2025). Halal Governance and Its Societal Impact: A Comparative Study of Certification Regimes in Indonesia and Malaysia for Muslim Families. *El-Usrah*, 8(2), 952–978. Scopus. https://doi.org/10.22373/ujhk.v8i2.29191

Nusran, M., Noor, M. A. M., Marasabessy, S. A., & Mel, M. (2025). Sustainable Development Platform for a Halal Ecosystem: An Alternative Solution. *Industrial Engineering and Management Systems*, 24(4), 611–623. Scopus. https://doi.org/10.7232/iems.2025.24.4.611

Padgett, D. (2017). *Qualitative methods in social work research* (Third edition). SAGE.

Rahmatullah, n., Haryono, S., Ardi, M. Z., & Saputra, V. A. (2025). HALAL INDUSTRY AND CERTIFICATION IN DISGUISE: Is It Faith Implementation or Economic Ploy in Indonesia's Legal Framework? *Jurisdictie: Jurnal Hukum Dan Syariah*, 16(2), 334–373. Scopus. https://doi.org/10.18860/j.v16i2.33812

Rakhmani, I. (2024). Understanding the floating ummah in neoliberal Indonesia. *Contemporary Politics*, 30(2), 157–176. Scopus. https://doi.org/10.1080/13569775.2023.2267363

Rodiah, I. (2023). The Influence of Singo Ulung Dance in the Celebration of Islamic Festivals. *KARSA*, 31(2), 328–349. Scopus. https://doi.org/10.19105/karsa.v31i2.11819

Ruiz Estrada, M. A. R., & Levy, I. (2025). Can Massive Religious Festival Celebrations Encourage a Faster Spread of a Pandemic? The Case of COVID-19 in Israel. *Journal of Religion and Health*, 64(1), 590–602. Scopus. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10943-024-02153-x

Saefullah, A., Burhanudin, D., Syibromalisi, A., & Bahri, S. (2025). Religious Moderation and Halal Governance in Indonesia: A Wasatiyyah-Maslahah Framework. *Al-Istinbath: Jurnal Hukum Islam*, 10(2), 948–975. Scopus. https://doi.org/10.29240/jhi.v10i2.14554

Sanjatmiko, P., & Hardiah, S. (2022). The tragedy of the open society and COVID-19 pandemic: Local community resistance to neoliberal hegemony (A multispecies ethnography). *Journal of Applied Communication Research*, 50(5), 459–477. Scopus. https://doi.org/10.1080/00909882.2022.2123250

Satory, A. (2025). Emotional Meaning-Making in Legal Consultants Managing Digital Contract Disputes: An Interpretative Phenomenological Study. *Hukmuna: Journal of Law and Policy*, 1(5), 195–202.

Suaidi, S., Anjum, R., Nasrudin, M., Maksum, M., & Astuti, S. D. (2025). Halal Food Development in Bali: Dynamics of Muslim Beliefs, State Regulations, and Local Culture. *Al-Ahkam*, 35(1), 147–178. Scopus. https://doi.org/10.21580/ahkam.2025.35.1.25732

Sudrajat, A., & Aman, A. (2023). A Freirean Analysis of Indonesian Ministry of Education and Culture's School Literacy Movement. *Journal for Critical Education Policy Studies*, 20(3), 411–436. Scopus.

Sukmawati. (2025). Understanding the Emotional, Social, and Existential Dimensions of Living with Continuous Glucose Monitoring: An Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis of Adults with Type 2 Diabetes. *Journal of Digital Health Innovation and Medical Technology*, 1(7), 289–298.

Sulastri, A. (2025). Exploring the Experiences of Pharmaceutical Practitioners in the Development and Evaluation of Herbal Products as Alternative Therapy in Indonesia: Challenges and Strategies in Quality Control and Regulation. *PhytoCare: Journal of Pharmacology and Natural Remedies*, 1(3), 96–104.

Sunendar, D., & Adriany, V. (2025). 'It's all about the product': Doing research in neoliberal times in Indonesian higher education. *Globalisation, Societies and Education*, 23(3), 784–794. Scopus. https://doi.org/10.1080/14767724.2023.2212438

Syahidah, F., Rabbani, Q. S., Sopandi, T. P., & Putri, Z. N. (2025). Financial Literacy Intervention for Rural Farmers: A Qualitative Study on Collective Wealth Building through Simulation-Based Learning in Mekarmanik Village, Indonesia. *Journal Homepage: Https://Journals.Ai-Mrc.Com/finanomicsJournal of*

Economic and Financial Studies, *1*(7), 323–329.

Wardana, A. (2020). Neoliberalizing cultural landscapes: Bali's agrarian heritage. *Critical Asian Studies*, *52*(2), 270–285. Scopus. https://doi.org/10.1080/14672715.2020.1714459

Wijaya Mulya, T., & Sakhiyya, S. (2021). 'Leadership is a sacred matter': Women leaders contesting and contextualising neoliberal meritocracy in the Indonesian academia. *Gender and Education*, *33*(7), 930–945. Scopus. https://doi.org/10.1080/09540253.2020.1802407

Yasih, D. W. P., & Hadiz, V. R. (2023). Precarity and Islamism in Indonesia: The contradictions of neoliberalism. *Critical Asian Studies*, *55*(1), 83–104. Scopus. https://doi.org/10.1080/14672715.2022.2145980

Yasih, D. W. P., & Rakhmani, I. (2024). MAINTAINING LIFE UNDER NEOLIBERAL CAPITALISM: A CASE STUDY OF MUSLIMAH LABORERS IN SOLO RAYA, INDONESIA. *Studia Islamika*, *31*(3), 511–541. Scopus. https://doi.org/10.36712/sdi.v31i3.40458

Yulista, Y. (2025). Meaning-Making among Islamic Philosophy Students through Engagement with Sufi Literature. *Humanexus: Journal of Humanistic and Social Connection Studies*, *1*(7), 253–260.

Yustikasari. (2025). Digital Self-Reconstruction: Postgraduate Reflections on YouTube's Role in Identity Formation. *CommVersa: Journal of Communication Studies*, *1*(5), 175–181.