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Developing Indonesia's palm sugar industry for the ASEAN market: A SWOT–AHP–Maslahah and digital Islamic economy framework

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ABSTRACT

Introduction

Indonesia's palm sugar industry has considerable potential to support export growth, strengthen the creative economy, and expand the country's participation in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations market. However, palm sugar producers continue to face limited production capacity, low technological adoption, inadequate promotion, weak quality standardization, insufficient capital, and incomplete business formalization. These constraints require a development strategy that improves competitiveness while creating public welfare in accordance with Islamic economic principles.

Objectives

This study evaluates strategic alternatives for developing Indonesia's palm sugar industry in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations market. It also develops an integrated Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats–Analytic Hierarchy Process–Maslahah framework to assess strategic priorities based on competitiveness and the objectives of Maqasid al-Shariah.

Method

The study employed a quantitative approach using primary data collected through structured questionnaires. Five palm sugar companies in Bone Regency, South Sulawesi, were selected through purposive sampling. Internal and external strategic factors were evaluated through Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats analysis. The Analytic Hierarchy Process was used to assign weights to the dimensions of Maqasid al-Shariah, while the Maslahah

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Scorecard assessed each strategy's contribution to protecting religion, life, intellect, lineage, and wealth.

Results

The findings show that weaknesses outweighed strengths, while opportunities exceeded external threats. The strategic position was located in Quadrant Three, indicating the need for a turnaround strategy that uses market opportunities to address internal limitations. The total Maslahah score was 3.01, representing a moderate contribution to public welfare. Halal certification, Sharia-compliant business practices, digital innovation, and halal e-commerce received relatively strong assessments. Business continuity, financing access, technological capability, export income, and industry regeneration require further improvement.

Implications

Policymakers and industry practitioners should prioritize e-commerce training, halal certification assistance, business registration, quality improvement, Islamic financing, and access to regional export and distribution networks.

Originality/Novelty

This study introduces an integrated strategic framework that evaluates palm sugar development through both commercial competitiveness and Shariah-oriented welfare, connecting digital Islamic economy instruments with sustainable development in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations market.

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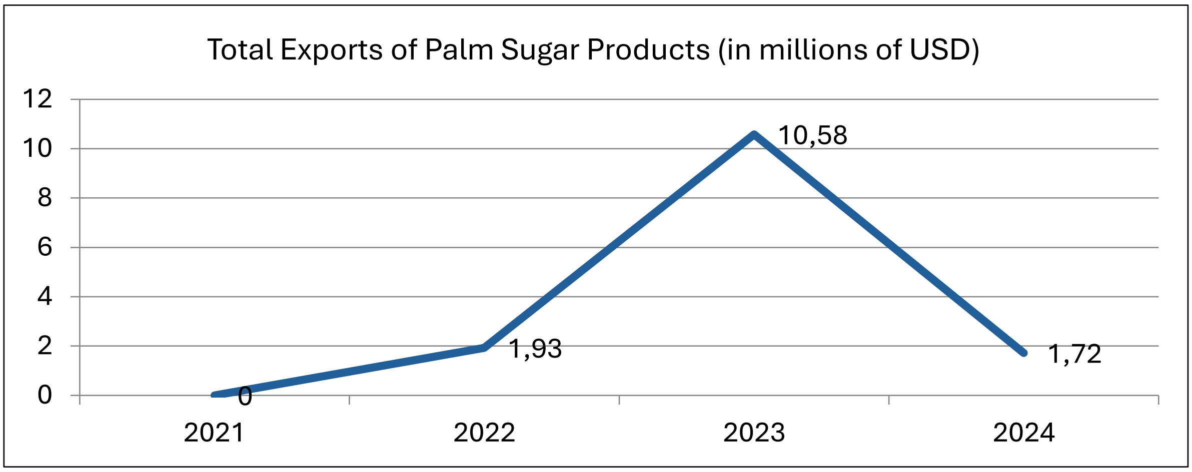
INTRODUCTION

A country's economic growth is one of the indicators used to measure the national economy, and economic growth is driven by the country's export activities because they are a growth engine. Several studies have proven that exports are the most important indicator for the government to boost economic growth (Ibrahim & Abdalla, 2020; Kollie, 2020; Nasyaa et al., 2024; Surbakti et al., 2023), as they also increase the country's foreign exchange reserves (Rasyid et al., 2023; Sinaga et al., 2023). Export activities are generally carried out when a country produces goods in large quantities, and the domestic demand for those goods is met (Pakhucha et al., 2021; Febriana et al., 2023).

A higher export value than import value is one aspect of increased national income that positively impacts a country's economic growth and serves as an indicator of improved international trade outcomes (Uddin & Khanam, 2017). Additionally, international trade enables more efficient use of resources and greater product specialization. Furthermore, export activities also provide indirect benefits in the fields of education, health, and infrastructure (Almodóvar et al., 2013; Apriyanti, 2020; Agung et al., 2023). Therefore, it is highly likely that every country will strive to continuously increase the value of exports and demand businesses to continuously improve the competitiveness of their products in the competitive global market (Nguyen & Khoa, 2020; Novia et al., 2021). Through product innovation, quality improvement, and access to global markets, the competitiveness of the national economy can be strengthened (Chandra & Neelankavil, 2008). In addition, it also encourages exports and becomes a solid foundation for sustainable growth. Appropriate support from the government and various related parties is needed to prevent a decline in exports (Krisna, 2024). The government's efforts to encourage MSMEs to compete in the global market are reflected in the Job Creation Law, which contains policies to support and facilitate the export of MSME products (Sebastio et al., 2023).

Figure 1

Realization of Indonesian Palm Sugar Product Exports



Source: Ministry of Trade of the Republic of Indonesia.

Figure 1 shows that there were no exports of Indonesian palm sugar in 2021. Palm sugar exports began in 2022 with a value of $ 1.93 million, and there was a significant increase in the value of palm sugar exports in 2023, reaching $ 10.58 million, a rise of 448.41% compared to 2022 (year-over-year). However, in 2024, the export value was only 1.72 million USD, a decrease of 8.86 million USD (515.11%) (Pusat Data dan Sistem Informasi Kementerian Perdagangan Republik Indonesia, 2024). To overcome the decline in palm sugar exports, a strategy or program is needed that can increase competitiveness and identify the benefits of the product in terms of public interest (maslahah) (Purnamasari et al., 2025).

To promote the creative sector as the foundation of Indonesia's economic exports, the government started a "creative economy program." The creative economy is believed to strengthen national identity, enhance the competitive advantage of a region, and drive positive social impacts. The development of a creative economy with an export-based foundation holds significant potential for driving Indonesia's economic growth (Haryadi et al., 2021; Atmojo et al., 2023). The presence of a creative industry can stimulate the creation of new jobs, innovation, and social inclusion, and play a crucial role in enhancing the wealth of a region or area in Indonesia. Several studies have shown the influence of the creative economy on community economic activities (Rachman et al., 2020; Pratomo et al., 2021; Yuslin, 2021; Chollisni et al., 2022; Pavliuk, 2023). However, few have investigated strategies for developing the creative economy of traditional goods in export activities in developing countries (Indonesia). Therefore, this study was conducted to fill this research gap based on empirical evidence to establish the country's identity as an exporter and producer of palm sugar in ASEAN.

Competitiveness is one element that affects exports. Given the growing competitiveness in global markets, especially the ASEAN market, this is becoming more and more crucial (Sudirjo, 2023). The ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) could pose a threat to businesses if competitiveness does not improve (Permatasari, 2020; Ishikawa, 2021). Additionally, the Indonesian market could be flooded with foreign products. Future trade in the creative economy would be highly competitive as a result. It is crucial to talk about this subject in order for Indonesia's creative industry exports to become one of its primary exports. This study aims to evaluate SWOT-based strategic alternatives and Maslahah dimensions while examining the contribution of the Islamic digital economy to the development of the palm sugar industry. The findings are expected to provide both academic and practical insights for policymakers, industry practitioners, and researchers. By identifying key internal and external factors, this study contributes to the formulation of effective strategies that support the sustainable development of the Islamic digital economy.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Digital Islamic Economy

Growing economic demands and constraints in the supply of financial transaction services and trade payment systems have propelled the development of financial technology (FinTech) in emerging nations (Arner et al., 2016; Frost, 2020; Sanga & Aziakpono, 2023). According to da Silva (2018),the rapid growth of FinTech in emerging markets is largely fueled by increasing public demand for accessible and efficient financial services. Consequently, most studies on FinTech in developing economies have focused on digital payment services and electronic fund transfers, which are considered strategic instruments for promoting more inclusive creative economic development (Arner et al., 2016)

The reconstruction of the digital Islamic economic ecosystem toward 2026 marks a fundamental paradigm shift from a fragmented Financial Technology (FinTech) model to an integrated Halal-as-a-Service (HaaS) framework. HaaS transforms the value proposition of the Islamic economy from merely facilitating "*riba*-free transactions" to establishing a fully digitalized *tayyib* lifestyle ecosystem. This paradigm is closely aligned with the principles of *Maqasid al-Sharia*, particularly in safeguarding wealth (*Hifz al-Mal*), lineage (*Hifz al-Nasl*), and life (*Hifz al-Nafs*) by ensuring that every economic unit circulating within the digital ecosystem is verified as halal in a real-time and sustainable manner (Laldin & Furqani, 2013; Mardini & Muyasarah, 2026)

Within the framework of Islamic economics, digital financial transactions, including FinTech services, are expected to promote Maslahah (public benefit and welfare) while preventing *Mafsadah* (harm and social detriment) in both worldly and spiritual dimensions. Accordingly, the development and operation of the FinTech industry should remain consistent with these objectives (Muchtar & Zubairin, 2022). Conceptually, Maslahah refers to anything that brings benefit, goodness, and welfare to individuals and society (Kadir et al., 2019). In Islamic jurisprudential discourse, it represents Sharia-based welfare, whereby profit and material wealth are not considered ends in themselves but instruments for achieving broader socio-economic and spiritual prosperity (Kadir et al., 2023).

Halal Value Chain

The concept of halal constitutes a fundamental principle of Islamic jurisprudence, encompassing all products, services, and activities that are permissible under Islamic law. In the food and halal product industries, halal certification institutions serve a critical function in assessing production processes, issuing halal certifications, and ensuring continuous compliance with Shariah requirements and regulatory standards. The Department of Islamic Development Malaysia (JAKIM) and Indonesia's Halal Product Assurance Organizing Agency (BPJPH) are two internationally renowned halal certification authorities (Karyani et al., 2024; Kristanto & Kurniawati, 2025; Maflahah et al., 2026).

In addition, Halal Supply Chain Management (HSCM) refers to an integrated managerial approach that governs the flow of materials, information, and financial resources through strategic coordination and collaboration among supply chain stakeholders. Beyond ensuring adherence to Shariah principles, HSCM seeks to strengthen food safety, guarantee product quality, enhance business sustainability, and improve profitability. The implementation of halal certification and Sharia-compliant practices throughout the supply chain generates added value, improves overall supply chain performance, and ensures the preservation of halal and *tayyib* integrity across all stages of production and distribution (Changalima, 2025; Mutmainah & Romadhon, 2023; Takhim et al., 2025). Simplifying the certification process and strengthening access to digitally integrated financing for MSMEs are important pillars in maturing the global halal industry ecosystem (Arianty et al., 2025).

ASEAN SME Strategy

Achieving global competitiveness requires SMEs to develop products with distinctive competitive advantages that are closely aligned with customer preferences and market demands (Tojiri, 2023; Akbar, 2024). In addition, trust can be strengthened through greater transparency and information accessibility facilitated by digital technologies (Burgess et al., 2023; Ullrich et al., 2023; Dutta & Kumar, 2024). Argue that technological capabilities and the strategic utilization of social media significantly enhance firms' competitive advantages, which in turn contribute to superior export performance among Indonesian SMEs. Strong technology capabilities allow SMEs to sustain long-term customer satisfaction, regularly meet international quality requirements, and build a positive brand reputation in international markets (Djiu et al., 2024).

At the national level, measures that encourage the local economy and private or public-private partnerships, as well as the growth of territorial networks like ASEAN, are essential for bolstering the creative economy. In all assessments of the creative economy, developing countries appear to lack strategies or policies (Boccella & Salerno, 2016; Kusumaningrum et al., 2024; Ismail et al., 2025). The creative economy has great potential to contribute to the Indonesian economy (Fahmi et al., 2016). Both the creative industry and economy in Indonesia, especially in South Sulawesi, are beginning to be recognized as places where creativity thrives (Akhmad et al., 2025). To enhance the competitiveness of Indonesian creative economy enterprises and SMEs in the ASEAN market, a well-defined export-oriented strategy is required. Exports refer to the activity of selling goods and services to foreign markets (Alsy et al., 2023; Pramesti, 2023; Trilarasati et al., 2023). Exports are the activity of selling goods to other countries (Gabriele, 2006; Lewis, 1989).

Maslahah

Maqasid al-Sharia is the economic objective of Islam, meaning maslahah or public interest. The concept of maslahah itself is the most important aspect in strengthening the economy and industry today (Al-Ayubi & Halawatuddu'a, 2021; Karimullah, 2023). Certainly, with maslahah, the concept of economy and industry will aim to realize public interests. Maslahah not only favors individuals but also broader societal interests (Zameri et al., 2024). Focusing on maslahah can lead to a wealthy and just society with far-reaching effects in both material and spiritual realms (M. D. Putra, 2017). Prominent Muslim scholars outlined five aspects of maslahah known as the aldharuriyat al-khamsah (the five primary maslahah), namely: preserving religion, life, intellect, lineage, and property (Kadir et al., 2019; Widiyanti et al., 2024; Kadir et al., 2023; Amir et al., 2024). The second maslahah is hajiyat, which refers to what is needed by humans for comfort and ease. The last is tahsiniyat, which etymologically means to perfect or improve something (Said et al., 2019). Maslahah is often associated with benefits. That is, goodness is related to material, physical, and psychological aspects. Maslahah product uniqueness refers to a product's superiority over other items. This distinctiveness is created using the ideas of halal, thoyyib, and religious-oriented product attributes as values offered to customers (Nurudin et al., 2023; Izzati et al., 2025).

Strenghts-Weaknesses-Opportunity-Threats (SWOT)

SWOT is generally used as an analytical approach, which is defined as a strategic planning method for assessing and evaluating strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats in business activities or within a company (M. D. Putra, 2017; I. G. N. A. B. Putra, 2019). This analysis is essential for enhancing competitiveness through the SWOT matrix (Strengths-Weaknesses-Opportunities-Threats), which is referred to as a strategy for determining the next steps. The SWOT matrix serves as an analytical tool for determining strategies and developing competitiveness. Additionally, it is also referred to as a mapping tool that can assist company leaders in determining the next direction and developing the four strategies from SWOT. The types of strategies are: a) SO (Strengths-Opportunities), a strategy that optimizes strengths (S) to leverage existing opportunities (O); b) WO (Weaknesses-Opportunities), a strategy that minimizes weaknesses (W) to leverage existing opportunities (O); c) ST (Strengths-Threats), a strategy that leverages strengths (S) to minimize threats (T); d) WT (Weaknesses-Threats) is a strategy used to reduce weaknesses (W) in minimizing and avoiding threats (T) (Haryadi et al., 2021; Azwar et al., 2026).

Gaps in the Literature

Research on palm sugar as a local Indonesian product remains limited, despite Indonesia's significant role in the global economy. Studies that integrate SWOT factors with Maslahah values are particularly scarce. Addressing this gap is essential for developing a comprehensive framework for analyzing SWOT strategies and Maslahah (*Maqasid al-Sharia*) values. To this end, this study develops an integrated SWOT–AHP–Maslahah measurement model that combines conventional strategic analysis with Shariah-based evaluation, thereby providing a more comprehensive framework for strategic decision-making.

Relevance SWOT and Maslahah

Maslahah values serve as a filter and guide for the results of a SWOT analysis. The strengths and opportunities identified can be maximized to create economic and social benefits, while weaknesses and threats must be minimized to prevent losses. Integrating these two elements results in an approach that is not only business-efficient but also fair and sustainable. Therefore, SWOT and maslahah have a complementary relationship. SWOT can ensure the right marketing strategy to compete at the national and international levels, while maslahah ensures that the strategy has a broader positive impact on economic development.

METHOD

Research Design

This study employs a quantitative research design aimed at measuring SWOT scores and Maslahah indicators using a 1–5 rating scale.

Population and Sample

Purposive sampling was used to choose the sample based on predetermined standards. Accordingly, this study focuses on five companies actively engaged in palm sugar production in Bone Regency, South Sulawesi, which represents an important segment of Indonesia’s creative economy sector. The companies were selected based on data availability and operational scale to ensure that the sample accurately reflects the characteristics of the palm sugar industry in Bone Regency, South Sulawesi. Data were collected in 2023, providing a snapshot of the companies' conditions and the prevailing economic environment.

Data Collection

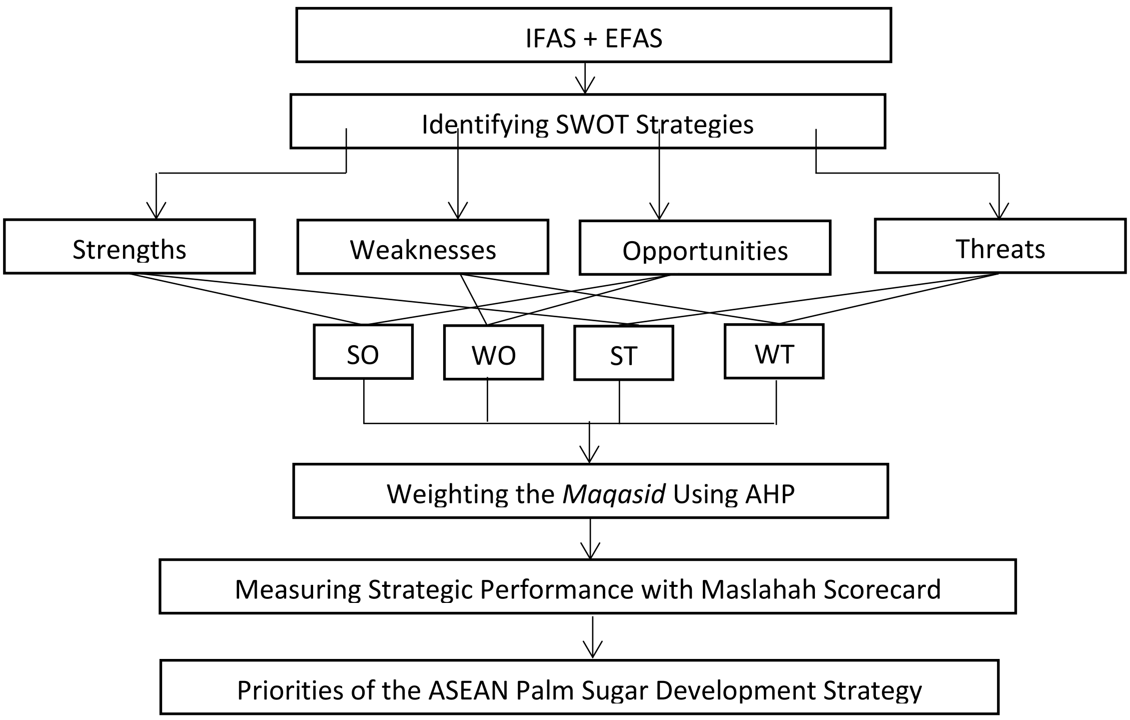
Both primary and secondary data sources are used in this investigation. Structured questionnaires with scale-based questions were used to gather primary data directly from the field. The respondents comprised five companies that are actively engaged in palm sugar production in Bone Regency, South Sulawesi. Secondary data were obtained through a literature review of various academic sources, including ScienceDirect, Scopus, Google Scholar, Mendeley, and university repositories.

Data Analytical

This study integrates SWOT analysis, the Analytic Hierarchy Process (AHP), and the Maslahah Scorecard into a unified framework to determine strategic development priorities for the palm sugar industry. SWOT analysis is utilized to identify key internal and external factors, while AHP is employed to assign weights to the dimensions of Maqasid al-Shariah. Subsequently, the Maslahah Scorecard is used to evaluate the extent to which each strategic alternative contributes to the achievement of Maslahah, encompassing Hifz al-Din, al-Nafs, al-'Aql, al-Nasl, and al-Mal. The analytical process is carried out through the following stages:

Figure 2

Conceptual Framework of the Analysis Model



Ethical Considerations

This study utilizes primary data collected through questionnaires administered in the field and is supported by publicly available references. As the study does not involve sensitive personal information or vulnerable participants, it poses no direct ethical risks. The integrity of the analysis is maintained through the accurate representation of data and by ensuring transparency throughout the research process.

RESULTS

IFAS Matrix (Internal Strategic Factor Analysis Summary)

Following the identification of a company's internal strategic factors, an IFAS (Internal Factor Analysis Summary) table is created to organize these factors within the framework of the strategic development of palm sugar exports in Bone Regency, South Sulawesi's leading creative economy sector in the ASEAN market. This is done by: a) List the elements that make up the company's strengths and weaknesses in column 1; b) Give each element a weight on a scale of 1.0 (most important) to 0.0 (least important); the total weight cannot be greater than 1.00; c) Give each factor a rating between 1 and 4 to indicate whether it has a major weakness (rating = 1), moderate weakness (rating = 2), minor strength (rating = 3), or major strength (rating = 4). To put it simply, the weight is the approach employed, and the rating is the farmer. d) To get the score, multiply each weight by its rating; e) Add up all of the scores for each variable.

The weighted average total spans from a low of 1.0 to a high of 4.0, with an average of 2.5, regardless of how many elements are included in the IFAS matrix. The company has a weak internal position if the total average is less than 2.5, and a strong internal position if it is greater than 2.5.

Strength and Weakness

The internal environmental values for the strengths and weaknesses factors were obtained from questionnaire responses collected from five respondents, namely, palm sugar producers in Bone Regency, South Sulawesi. The weighting results indicate that the total weight assigned to the strength factors must equal 1.00, as presented in Table 1 below.

Table 1

Assesment of Strengths and Weaknesses Scores

IFAS	Amount	Weight %	Average	Rating	SCORE (Weight x Rating)
Strength	93	0.35	18.6	19	1.34
Weakness	172	0.65	34.4	35	2.57
Total IFAS Score	265	1.00	53.2	54	3.91

Source: Primary Data After Processing

Based on Tables 1, the weighted value of the weakness elements totals 2.57, which is a positive value and greater than the weighted value of the strength elements, which is only 1.34. This indicates that the weaknesses in palm sugar production are greater than its strengths, particularly in the questionnaire statement on weaknesses with the highest value, where all 5 respondents (palm sugar producers) in Bone Regency, South Sulawesi, stated limited production capacity, low technology, lack of promotion, and difficult/remote production locations.

EFAS Matrix (External Strategic Factor Analysis Summary)

The external strategic factor matrix is prepared in five steps: a) Identify the elements that represent opportunities and dangers; b) Give each factor a weight between 1.0 (extremely significant) and 0.0 (not important). Strategic variables may be affected by these elements. The overall weight must be 1.0. c) Determine each factor's rating on a scale of 1 to 4, where 4 represents a very good reaction, 3 represents an above-average response, 2 represents an average response, and 1 represents a below-average response. This grade is based on how well the export development strategy for palm sugar works in Bone Regency, South Sulawesi's creative economy sector; hence, the farmers' conditions determine its value. d) To get a score, multiply each weight by its rating; e) Add up all of the scores to get the overall farmer strategy score. This total value shows how the palm sugar export development strategy in Bone Regency, South Sulawesi's creative economy sector, responds to external strategic elements.

Naturally, the maximum total score in the EFAS matrix is 4.0, and the lowest is 1.0. With a total score of 4.0, palm sugar producers are avoiding risks in their industry market and responding to current possibilities in a remarkable way. A total score of 1.0 means that the techniques used by palm sugar producers are not taking advantage of opportunities or protecting themselves from outside threats.

Opportunity and Threats

The external environmental values for the opportunity and threat factors were obtained from questionnaire responses collected from five palm sugar producers in Bone Regency, South Sulawesi. The weighting results indicate that the combined weight of all external factors was standardized to a total value of 1.00, as presented in Table 2 below.

Table 2

Assesment of Opportunity and Threats Scores

EFAS	Amount	Weight %	Average	Rating	SCORE (Weight x Rating)
Opportunity	138	0.61	27.6	27.0	2.49
Threat	89	0.39	17.80	17	1.36
Total EFAS Score	227	1.00	45.40	44.0	3.85

Source: Processed Primary Data

Table 2 shows that the weighted value of opportunity is 2.49, which is positive and greater than the weighted value of threat, which is only 1.36. The questionnaire statement with the highest value, where all 5 respondents (palm sugar producers) answered strongly agree, states that palm sugar producers in Bone Regency, South

Sulawesi, believe that palm sugar, which is a traditional product and a regional specialty, still has a wide market share opportunity due to the high level of demand from the community.

Thus, the values of X and Y are obtained:

X = S-W = Strength-Weakness

Y = O-T = Opportunity-Threats

Thus, we obtain :

X = 1.38-2.57 = -1.23

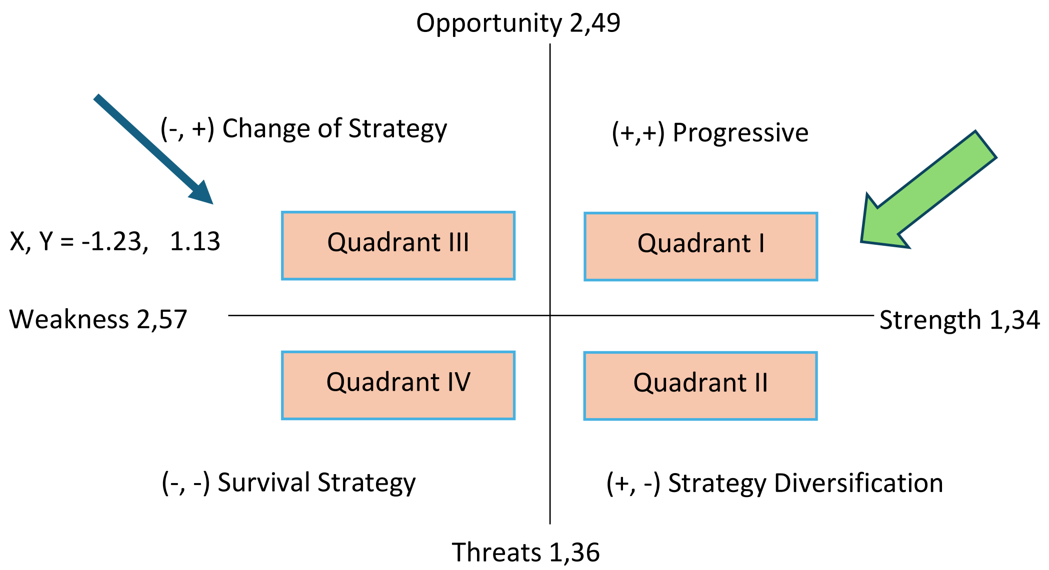
Y = 2.52-1.36 = 1.13

Thus, X & Y = -1.23 & 1.13

The Cartesian Diagram of the SWOT Analysis for Palm Sugar Producers in Bone Regency, South Sulawesi is as follows:

Figure 3

Cartesian Diagram of the SWOT Analysis



The export development strategy for palm sugar in Bone Regency, South Sulawesi's top creative economy sector, is located in quadrant III of the Cartesian figure above, where it has to be modified. The overall scores for every factor can then be divided as follows: 1.34 for strength, 2.57 for vulnerability, 2.49 for opportunity, and 1.36 for dangers. The strength and weakness factors' total scores differ by (-) 1.23, but the opportunity and threat factors' total scores differ by (+).1.13.

SWOT and Maslahah Matrix

The export development plan for palm sugar, a prominent creative economy sector in Bone Regency, South Sulawesi, is evaluated using the SWOT matrix. This matrix clearly illustrates the external opportunities and threats. It produces four possible alternative strategies, as shown in the table below:

Table 3

SWOT Matrix and Maslahah

SWOT	Strength	Weakness
Internal	Able to produce palm sugar according to orders	Does not use internet facilities to communicate with consumers
	Easy ordering procedure	No business legality
	Has access to consumers within and outside the city	No quality standards
	Palm sugar that is unique and dense in shape	Limited production capacity
	Palm sugar that tastes sweeter than other palm sugars	Insufficient capital
		Low technology
Eksternal		Lack of promotion
Oppurtunity	Strategy SO	Strategy WO
People like to make snacks from palm sugar	Increase palm sugar production to meet the demand of the snack food industry by cultivating palm trees, which are the raw material for palm sugar (SO1: *Hifz al-Din*)	Work with the government to provide guidance, training, and assistance to palm sugar producers in using e-commerce to market their palm sugar products (WO1: *Hifz al-Nasl*).
The palm sugar industry continues to grow	Facilitate palm sugar orders so that more people place orders, which will boost the growth of the palm sugar industry (SO2: *Hifz al-Nasl*)	Register palm sugar businesses to obtain legal status so that they can be marketed to a wider market (WO2: *Hifz al-Nasl*).
A wider market area (across districts or provinces)	Expand market reach/access with the unique characteristics of palm sugar, which differs from other types of sugar due to its unique shape and sweeter taste (SO3: *Hifz al-'Aql*).	Strengthen partnerships with banks so that palm sugar producers can increase their capital to develop their businesses using more modern technology (WO3: *Hifz al-Mal*).
Cooperation with the trade office in terms of marketing: The product is a traditional product that is a characteristic of the region	Collaborating with the trade department to assist in marketing and packaging products to make them more appealing (SO4: *Hifz an-Nafs*)	
The demand for palm sugar continues to increase (because it is used as an	Collaborating with local governments to provide guidance and mentoring to	

ingredient in other food and beverage industries)	palm sugar producers so they can expand their production and market their products to wider areas (SO5: *Hifz al-'Aql*).	
Threat	**Strategy ST**	**Strategy WT**
Cheaper and higher quality competitors (hygienic, good packaging)	Increase production capacity by cultivating palm trees in collaboration with the forestry and plantation agencies and working with the industry agency to assist with product packaging and legality (ST1: *Hifz al-Din*)	Ensuring that the quality of palm sugar produced is always maintained in order to face fierce market competition (WT1: *Hifz an-Nafs*).
Palm trees that do not grow well	Strengthening partnerships with relevant parties such as banks, the government, and non-governmental organizations (ST2: *Hifz al-Nasl*).	Working with the forestry and plantation agencies to cultivate palm trees (WT2: *Hifz al-Nasl*).
Lack of government support	Improving the quality of palm sugar produced to meet market demand (ST3: *Hifz al-Mal*).	Forming cooperatives to overcome the threat of price fluctuations and high market competition (WT3: *Hifz an-Nafs*).
Weak product durability	Expanding market reach by seeking more buyers and marketing products online so that agents no longer monopolize the purchase of palm sugar at low prices (ST4: *Hifz al-Mal*).	

Source: Processed Data

Based on Table 3, the contribution of each Maslahah indicator to the palm sugar business strategy was identified to determine areas requiring improvement. Subsequently, the total Maslahah–SWOT score was calculated by assigning ratings ranging from 1 (lowest) to 4 (highest) to each indicator. These ratings indicate whether an indicator represents a major weakness (rating = 1), a minor weakness (rating = 2), a minor strength (rating = 3), or a major strength (rating = 4).

Each indicator weight was multiplied by its corresponding rating to obtain the weighted score. The weighted scores for each SWOT code were then summed to generate the total SWOT score. Finally, the Maslahah–SWOT score was interpreted using the following scale: 1 = Very Low, 2 = Low, 3 = Moderate, 4 = High, and 5 = Very High, reflecting the extent to which the strategy contributes to Maslahah (public benefit and welfare).

Table 4

Maslahah Assessment of SWOT Strategies

Maslahah	Indicator	Code	Weight	Rating	Score
Hifz Al-Din	Halal Certification, Labeling, Sharia Compliance	SO1	0.10	4	0.40
		ST1	0.10	3	0.30
Hifz Al-Nafs	Food Safety, Product Quality	SO4	0.07	3	0.21
		WT1	0.07	4	0.28
		WT3	0.07	2	0.14
Hifz Al-'Aql	Digital Innovation, E-Commerce, Training	SO3	0.10	4	0.40
		SO5	0.10	2	0.20
Hifz Al-Nasl	Business Sustainability	SO2	0.04	3	0.12
		WO1	0.04	3	0.12
		WO2	0.04	3	0.12
		ST2	0.04	2	0.08
		WT2	0.04	2	0.08
Hifz Al-Mal	Profitability, Revenue, Exports	ST3	0.07	2	0.14
		ST4	0.07	4	0.28
		WO3	0.07	2	0.14
Total			1.00		3.01

Source: Processed Data

DISCUSSION

IFAS and EFAS Analysis

The Cartesian diagram above, shows how the export development strategy for palm sugar in the creative economy sector of Bone Regency, South Sulawesi, is located in Quadrant III, where the strategy must be changed. Although there are many prospects for the palm sugar sector in Bone Regency, South Sulawesi, it also has internal problems and vulnerabilities. The biggest internal issue is the lack of cultivation of palm trees/enau trees, and the sap is obtained from wild-growing enau trees, compounded by the fact that packaging remains highly traditional.

In Bone Regency, South Sulawesi, palm sugar is shaped like a cone. In Bone Regency, South Sulawesi, even the goods made from this home-based enterprise have grown. This province has become a center for palm sugar production, with most people working as palm sugar makers. This palm sugar has its unique characteristics, both in terms of shape and taste. Moreover, its production remains traditional. In the process of making the sugar, residents collect the raw materials by tapping enau trees in Bone Regency, South Sulawesi, which requires walking. The tapping of enau trees is done twice a day, in the morning and the afternoon.

The tapping process yields a sweet liquid from the palm trees, which is collected in bamboo containers. The liquid is then processed by cooking it in specially designed pans, constantly stirred, and molded into palm sugar blocks using cone-shaped molds. The molds for the palm sugar blocks are made of wood.

The Head of the Industry and Trade Agency (Disperindag), Chaeril Azis, S.T., acknowledged that palm sugar is indeed a leading commodity in terms of both production and business operators. He said, Disperindag Bone Regency, South Sulawesi, recently provided training to palm sugar producers in the region on packaging and the form of palm sugar. The training, he explained, taught how to transition from traditional to modern packaging to enable sales in supermarkets. Palm sugar in Bone Regency, South Sulawesi, has been proposed in the Regional Industrial Core Competency Program (KIID) as a flagship commodity and regional specialty product, not only for its raw materials but also for its numerous business operators.

The IFAS matrix indicates that the strength and weakness aspects have a total score of 3.91 based on the SWOT analysis results mentioned above. This suggests that Bone Regency, South Sulawesi's export development strategy for palm sugar, the region's hallmark creative economy, is in a very strong internal position. Additionally, the opportunity and threat variables in the EFAS matrix have a combined value of 3.85, rounded to 4. This indicates that the export development strategy for palm sugar as a flagship creative economy of Bone Regency, South Sulawesi, has a good SWOT value. By combining strengths with opportunities or the SO strategy, the strengths that must be maintained to capitalize on existing opportunities are identified. According to the ST strategy, businesses must make the most of their advantages in order to counter current dangers. Utilizing current opportunities while reducing the company's shortcomings is the goal of the WO strategy. Companies must reduce vulnerabilities and steer clear of risks in order to implement the WT strategy.

Maslahah Palm Sugar

Based on Table 4, the total Maslahah score of 3.01 indicates that the palm sugar development strategy falls within the "Moderate" category in generating Maslahah (public benefit and welfare). This suggests that the proposed strategies have been able to accommodate the objectives of *Maqasid al-Sharia*; however, their contribution has not yet reached an optimal level and still requires strengthening in several dimensions.

The *Hifz al-Din* dimension achieved the highest score among all *Maqasid* dimensions. This finding indicates that the palm sugar development strategy places strong emphasis on Sharia compliance, particularly through halal certification, halal labeling, and the implementation of Sharia-based business practices (Maflahah et al., 2026). The highest score was recorded for SO1 (0.40), suggesting that the utilization of opportunities within the halal market can serve as a major strength in enhancing the competitiveness of palm sugar products in the ASEAN market. Meanwhile, ST1 (0.30) demonstrates that halal compliance also functions as a defensive mechanism against substitute products and increasing global market demands. From the perspective of *Maqasid al-Sharia*, these findings indicate that the business strategy is not solely oriented toward economic gains but also seeks to preserve the halal integrity of production and consumption processes. Consequently, palm sugar producers contribute meaningfully to the protection of religious values within economic activities.

The *Hifz al-Nafs* dimension obtained a relatively high score, indicating that food safety and product quality (Changalima, 2025) are important considerations in the palm sugar development strategy. The WT1 strategy achieved the highest score (0.28), suggesting that reducing product quality risks is a key priority for safeguarding consumer health and safety. In contrast, SO4 (0.21) indicates that improvements in product quality can also be leveraged as an opportunity to expand market reach. Furthermore, the palm sugar industry may establish cooperatives to address market competition and price volatility, thereby enhancing its resilience in the increasingly competitive ASEAN market. Within the framework of *Maqasid al-Sharia*, the protection of life is realized through the provision of safe, hygienic, and high-quality products. High-quality palm sugar products not only enhance consumer confidence but also reduce potential health risks.

The *Hifz al-'Aql* dimension, as a dimension of the digitalized thayyib lifestyle ecosystem (Mardini & Muyasarah, 2026), demonstrates a relatively strong contribution through digital innovation, e-commerce, and capacity-building initiatives. SO3 recorded the highest score (0.40), indicating that digital transformation represents a highly promising strategy for improving the operational capacity of palm sugar enterprises. Conversely, SO5 achieved a score of only 0.20, suggesting that training and human resource development have not yet been fully optimized. The palm sugar industry has considerable potential to foster creativity, innovation, and human capital development through training, mentoring, and technical assistance in production processes, marketing, and online transactions, thereby facilitating access to broader ASEAN markets. From the perspective of *Maqasid al-Sharia, Hifz al-'Aql* extends beyond formal education to encompass knowledge enhancement, innovation, and adaptability to technological advancements. Therefore, this dimension serves as a critical foundation for the successful integration of the Islamic digital economy.

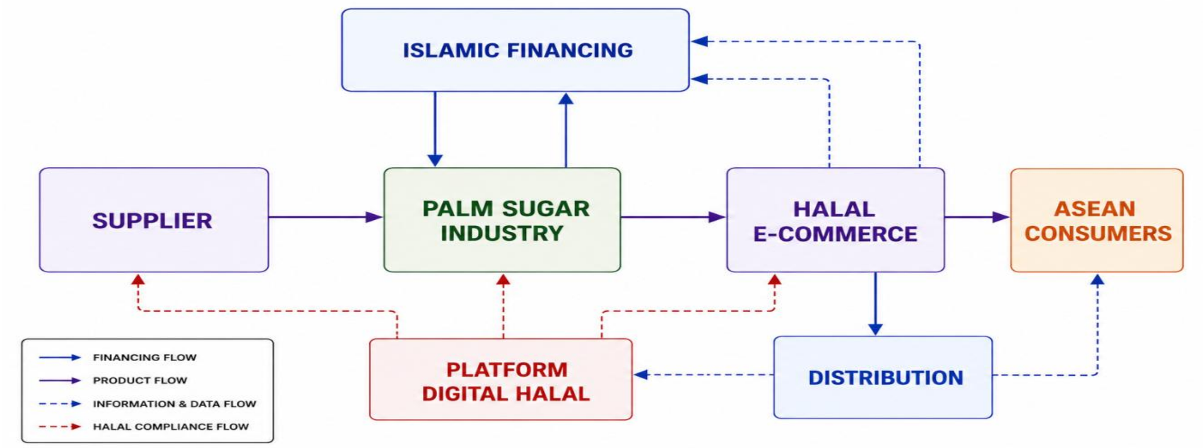
The *Hifz al-Nasl* dimension received a lower score compared to the three preceding dimensions. This result indicates that business sustainability and industry regeneration have not yet become primary priorities within the proposed strategic framework. The relatively balanced scores for SO2, WO1, and WO2 (0.12) suggest that business sustainability is recognized as important but has not emerged as a dominant strategic concern. Furthermore, the relatively low scores of ST2 and WT2 (0.08) indicate the presence of ongoing threats to long-term business continuity, including limited workforce regeneration and challenges in adapting to changing market conditions. Within the context of *Maqasid al-Sharia*, *Hifz al-Nasl* may be interpreted as intergenerational economic sustainability (Laldin & Furqani, 2013). Accordingly, the suboptimal score highlights the need for stronger strategies to ensure that the palm sugar industry remains viable, competitive, and sustainable for future generations.

The *Hifz al-Mal* dimension indicates that strategies related to profitability (Laldin & Furqani, 2013), revenue generation, and exports have made a meaningful contribution, although they have not yet become the dominant dimension. The highest score was recorded for ST4 (0.28), suggesting that leveraging internal strengths to address market challenges can generate significant economic benefits. However, the relatively low scores of ST3 and WO3 indicate that the potential for increasing revenue and export performance has not yet been fully realized. The palm sugar industry possesses substantial potential to meet the growing demand for palm sugar products across ASEAN markets while simultaneously generating lawful and socially beneficial income without engaging in market monopolization. From the perspective of *Maqasid al-Sharia, Hifz al-Mal* emphasizes the protection and productive development of wealth through lawful means. Therefore, these findings suggest that while economic objectives have been partially achieved, more proactive strategies are required to enhance value creation, strengthen export performance, and expand access to international markets.

Digital Islamic Economy for Palm Sugar

Figure 4

Islamic Digital Economy Illustration For The Palm Sugar Industry



Based on the illustration above, the model represents an integrated Islamic digital economy framework that connects Islamic financing, suppliers, the palm sugar industry, halal e-commerce, distribution networks, and ASEAN consumers within a single ecosystem. The model suggests that the development of the palm sugar industry depends not only on production activities but also on the integration of financing, digital marketing, distribution, and market access. This strategy is especially pertinent to the ASEAN market, which presents substantial prospects because of its sizable population, expanding economy, and rising demand for sustainable and halal goods (Ab Halim et al., 2022).

Suppliers support the palm sugar industry by providing raw materials, production equipment, processing technologies, and packaging that meet market requirements. At the same time, Islamic financing provides Sharia-compliant capital that enables producers to expand production capacity, improve product quality, develop innovations, and meet export standards. As a result, both suppliers and Islamic financing contribute to strengthening the competitiveness and sustainability of the palm sugar industry in ASEAN markets.

Products made from palm sugar are sold through Halal E-Commerce platforms, which connect producers with consumers across ASEAN countries and provide access to market information, consumer trends, and export opportunities. After transactions are completed, products are delivered through distribution systems that ensure timely delivery and maintain product quality. The Halal Digital Platform serves as the core of this model by linking all stakeholders, facilitating information exchange, reducing information asymmetry, and improving business efficiency. Consequently, the model supports a more transparent, competitive, and market-oriented palm sugar industry in the ASEAN region.

SWOT-Maslahah-Digital Islamic Economy

Based on Figure 4, the proposed model demonstrates a strong alignment with the strategic priorities identified in the previous SWOT analysis. The utilization of Halal E-Commerce and a Halal Digital Platform reflects Strategy SO3, which emphasizes digital innovation and technology-based marketing development. Access to the ASEAN halal market through digital platforms also supports the implementation of Strategy SO1, which focuses on leveraging opportunities within the international halal market. Furthermore, the availability of Sharia-compliant financing and expanded market access are consistent with Strategies ST4 and WO3, which aim to enhance profitability, increase revenue, and promote the export of palm sugar products. Meanwhile, the need for digital training and human resource capacity building in managing digital technologies corresponds to Strategies SO5 and WO1, highlighting the importance of developing entrepreneurial competencies and digital capabilities among business actors.

The model also contributes to the realization of the five dimensions of *maslahah* (public welfare). *Hifz al-Din* (protection of faith) is reflected through the use of Sharia-compliant financing and the marketing of halal-certified products, ensuring adherence to Islamic principles. *Hifz al-Nafs* (protection of life) is promoted through improvements in product quality and distribution systems that support food safety and consumer well-being. *Hifz al-'Aql* (protection of intellect) is demonstrated through the adoption of digital technologies, innovation, and enhanced digital literacy, all of which foster knowledge development and entrepreneurial creativity. *Hifz al-Nasl* (protection of future generations) is achieved through the sustainability of the palm sugar industry, creating long-term economic opportunities for future generations. Finally, *Hifz al-Mal* (protection of wealth) is reflected in increased income, broader market access, improved profitability, and export opportunities generated through the integration of Sharia-compliant financing and digital marketing strategies.

Overall, the model illustrates how the integration of Islamic digital economy instruments can serve as a strategic mechanism for strengthening the competitiveness of the palm sugar industry in the ASEAN market while simultaneously advancing the objectives of *maqasid al-shariah*. By combining digital transformation, halal market development, and Sharia-compliant financial support, the model offers a comprehensive framework for achieving both economic growth and societal welfare in a sustainable manner.

CONCLUSION

The results demonstrate that the palm sugar industry in Bone Regency possesses considerable growth potential in the ASEAN market. Nevertheless, its development remains constrained by several internal weaknesses, including limited production capacity, low technological adoption, insufficient digital promotion, and inadequate business formalization. The SWOT analysis positions the industry in Quadrant III (*turnaround strategy*), highlighting the necessity of strategic transformation through the effective utilization of external opportunities to overcome internal limitations.

Furthermore, the Maslahah Scorecard assessment yielded a total score of 3.01, indicating a moderate level of contribution to overall welfare (*Maslahah*). This finding suggests that the proposed strategic initiatives are broadly aligned with *Maqasid al-Sharia goals*, particularly in strengthening *Hifz al-Din* through halal certification and Shariah compliance, and *Hifz al-'Aql* through digital innovation and e-commerce adoption. Consequently, the integration of Islamic digital economy instruments such as halal e-commerce, Islamic financing, and halal certification has the potential to enhance the international competitiveness of the palm sugar sector, while concurrently generating sustainable economic and social benefits across the ASEAN market. To reach these markets, policymakers, regulators, and practitioners need to prioritize digital transformation programs for the palm sugar industry through e-commerce training, assistance with halal certification, business registration, and facilitation of access to ASEAN export markets.

Limitations of the Study

Although these findings provide valuable insights, the proposed model should be viewed as an initial step toward the development of a more comprehensive Islamic digital economy ecosystem. The integration of Islamic financing, halal digital platforms, e-commerce-based marketing, and regional ASEAN distribution networks has significant potential to enhance the competitiveness of the palm sugar industry. However, achieving greater Maslahah requires complementary efforts, including strengthening human resource capabilities, improving Shariah governance, and implementing policies that promote digital inclusivity. These steps are necessary to guarantee that the financial advantages of digital transformation are distributed equitably among all stakeholders within the palm sugar industry. Therefore, digital transformation should be assessed not only in terms of economic growth but also in terms of how it contributes to the long-term achievement of Maqasid al-Sharia's goals.

Finally, this study is context-specific to the local palm sugar industry in Bone Regency, South Sulawesi. It can restrict the findings' applicability to other areas or nations with distinct economic and regulatory contexts. Despite this limitation, the study offers a novel conceptual contribution by integrating SWOT analysis with the Maslahah framework through the proposed SWOT–AHP–Maslahah Scorecard model. Such an approach remains relatively underexplored in the existing literature and provides a comprehensive framework for evaluating strategic business development from both competitiveness and Shariah-oriented welfare perspectives.

Recommendations for Future Research

Future research ought to expand the analysis by incorporating palm sugar production centers from multiple regions across Indonesia and other ASEAN countries. Expanding the sample size and geographical coverage would improve the generalizability of the findings, enable comparative analyses across different institutional and market environments, and help create a more comprehensive and representative framework for the growth of the halal business.

In addition, future research could enhance the proposed SWOT–AHP–Maslahah Scorecard model by employing more sophisticated decision-making and causal analysis techniques, such as Fuzzy-AHP, DEMATEL, the Structural Equation Modeling (SEM), or the Analytic Network Process (ANP). To evaluate the direct and indirect effects of digitalization, Islamic financing, halal certification, and technological skills on export performance, competitive advantage, business sustainability, and the attainment of *Maqasid al-Shariah*. Such efforts would strengthen the theoretical and empirical foundations of the proposed Islamic digital economy framework while providing more rigorous evidence for policy formulation and strategic decision-making.

Author Contributions

Conceptualization	A.I.F., M.A.H., & S.K.	Resources	A.I.F., M.A.H., & S.K.
Data curation	A.I.F., M.A.H., & S.K.	Software	A.I.F., M.A.H., & S.K.
Formal analysis	A.I.F., M.A.H., & S.K.	Supervision	A.I.F., M.A.H., & S.K.
Funding acquisition	A.I.F., M.A.H.	Validation	A.I.F., M.A.H., & S.K.
Investigation	A.I.F., M.A.H., & S.K.	Visualization	A.I.F., M.A.H., & S.K.
Methodology	A.I.F., M.A.H., & S.K.	Writing – original draft	A.I.F., M.A.H., & S.K.
Project administration	A.I.F., M.A.H., & S.K.	Writing – review & editing	A.I.F., M.A.H., & S.K.

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Informed Consent Statement

Informed consent was obtained before respondents filled out online questionnaire for this study.

Data Availability Statement

The data presented in this study are available on request from the corresponding author.

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Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

Declaration of Generative AI and AI-Assisted Technologies in the Writing Process

The authors employed DeepL, Grammarly, and Turnitin to translate from Bahasa Indonesia into American English to enhance the article's readability and clarity. The authors took full responsibility for the published article's content after utilizing these tools to review and amend it as necessary.

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