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Sociocultural Brokers in Commerce: The Indonesian Migrant Entrepreneurship in Japan

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In migrant economies, traditional narratives often focus on the economic adaptation of ethnic minorities, with entrepreneurship serving as a pathway to integration and upward mobility. However, the increasing diversity of immigrant populations and the complexities of contemporary globalization challenge these established frameworks. This study explores the role of Indonesian migrant entrepreneurs in Japan's evolving economic and social landscape. Through qualitative research methods, including observations and in-depth interviews, we found that these entrepreneurs leverage their cultural capital and strong social networks to establish businesses catering primarily to their co-ethnic community. Beyond economic pursuits, they act as sociocultural brokers, i.e. promoting halal food, fostering community cohesion, and introducing Indonesian values into the Japanese context. Our findings do not only develop the traditional view of entrepreneurship as solely profit-driven, but also highlight its potential as a strategy for marginalized groups to achieve both economic independence and social solidarity.

Keywords: migrant, entrepreneurship, sociocultural broker, networks, solidarity

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1. Introduction

Year 2022 marks the twentieth year of Aulia (a female Indonesian halal store owner) running a business in Japan. She started as a small stall in the Ueno neighborhood market at the heart of Tokyo. Her store is one of the first Indonesian stores in the Tokyo area and has developed from street vendor to such a permanent and online store and reached out to Muslim migrant groups network and customers in Northern part of Japan. She has been successfully running combination business and religious practices in Japan despite the image of it as a non-immigrant and non-Muslim country. It is common knowledge for Muslims living in a non-Muslim country to maintain the Islamic way of life in order not to be affected by non-Muslim behavior, such as drinking alcohol or eating non-halal food. She develops social activities, from selling halal products to organizing Indonesian Muslim communities to help each other. This assistance provides a kind of minority solidarity for Muslim migrant sojourners earning money in Japan. Then, she helped apply Islamic laws and values in collecting and distributing *zakat* (the obligatory payment of 2.5% of one's salary) to other Muslims in need.

The above narrative illustrates entrepreneurs extending beyond just business growth and profit, such as actively promoting halal food and selling religious products, but supporting the social life of Indonesian communities at the same time. They transition from a purely economic focus to a social one, positioning themselves as key advocates for religious values and community support. In these practices, migrants doing entrepreneurship at host countries can be articulated as a socialized process and entrepreneurs are social actors, 'double embeddedness' between business and social activities in one space. Our findings reveal that migrant entrepreneurs become embedded in social and individual networks, while also relying to some extent on intermediaries to reach the local market and co-migrant customers. Practically, migrants involved in host-country entrepreneurship utilize their social resources, such as social and cultural networks (Yuniarto, 2016a) to facilitate economic actions and shape business outcomes (Yuniarto, 2016b). By tapping into local resources, they rapidly acquire institutional knowledge of the host country, adding value to their foreign businesses (Welter, 2011). Mainela et.al (2018) found that strong local networks and deep relational ties provide firms with dynamic and valuable capabilities.

We argue that the idea of double embeddedness is specific and is represented by immigrants in diverse ways. For instance, immigrant entrepreneurship involves the process by which immigrants identify social and cultural activities and exploit economic opportunities in their host nations (Dheer, 2018). However, it also presents unique challenges that must be carefully navigated. Studies by Schiller and Caglar (2006, 2012) and Zhou (2004) suggest a practical framework that extends beyond the traditional focus on individual entrepreneurs and the limited scope of ethnic enclave economies. These studies emphasize the importance of incorporating symbolic and cultural aspects into the analysis of entrepreneurial activities. Other research, such as that by Light (2005), Kloosterman and Rath (2014), and Sahin (2012), highlights the connection between entrepreneurship and the economic mobility of migrants. Their findings suggest the need to acknowledge the significant influence of factors such as cultural background, labor dynamics, and broader societal context on entrepreneurial endeavors. Therefore, understanding the interplay between migrant workers, their specific cultural circumstances, and social entrepreneurial activities helps bridge the gap between macro-level economic structures and micro-level individual interactions within the realm of socio-cultural broker in the entrepreneurship way (see Yuniarto, 2015, 2016a; Setyaningsih et

al., 2023). This concept is further supported by studies like Gao (2024), Goduscheit et.al. (2021) or Engidaw (2021).

From a socio-cultural standpoint, aligning with the views of Brettell and Alstatt (2007) and Zhou and Cho (2010), analyzing migrant entrepreneurship purely from an economic perspective is insufficient. It is equally important to perceive entrepreneurs as individuals embedded in social contexts and to explore their social backgrounds, as this approach facilitates a deeper comprehension of their unique entrepreneurial patterns and models. Given the background, this study addresses two research questions: (1) How do Indonesian entrepreneurs experience running a business in Japan and cope with the entrepreneurship constraint and migrant conditions? (2) How do Indonesian entrepreneurs develop social and cultural business strategies and leverage their personal and social networks?

The structure of our study is as follows: The subsequent section analyzes related studies in migrant entrepreneurship in Japan and social-cultural broker. Following that, the third section elaborates on the research methodology, encompassing the approach, data collection, and stages. The fourth section details the main findings and describes several examples forms of Indonesian migrant entrepreneurship in Japan. Subsequently, the coping strategies and the effects of entrepreneurship will be depicted in the fifth section. Finally, the conclusions and future directions will be outlined in the last section.

2. Literature Review

The number of foreign nationals living in Japan hit a record of 2.93 million at the end of 2019 (The Asahi Shimbun, 2020). As of October 2018, around 24,000 foreign residents were holding a business manager visa, twice as many as five years earlier (Nikkei Asian Review, 2018). However, it does not include foreign business owners holding permanent residence or other types of visas that allow them to open a business without an investor/business manager visa. This number is expected to increase even further because of recent efforts by the government to encourage foreigners to start up in this country, e.g., the introduction of a new start-up visa which allows up to 1-year stay and "national strategic special" (The Japan Times, 2018). This also applies to entrepreneurs who mainly are holding various types of visas, such as permanent residence, spouse of Japanese nationals, and business-management visa (Tang, 2021). The surge in immigrant entrepreneurship in Japan can be attributed to a growing population of foreign residents and supportive governmental policies but there is no exact number of migrant entrepreneurs (Yamamura, 2022). Immigrant entrepreneurs in Japan are scattered in many areas, a relatively new phenomenon, lack of access to comprehensive macro-level data and difficulties in generating micro-level data such as language and cultural barriers for Japanese scholars and less opportunities and high cost for foreign scholars in Japan (Karunaratne, 2017).

The literature on migrant entrepreneurship in Japan can be classified into studies focused on specific countries and thematic areas. First, an overview of migrant entrepreneurship from Southeast and South Asian countries. Tang & Alcantara (2022) study on Vietnamese entrepreneurs in Japan found that they often use an "effectuation" approach to identify business opportunities, which involves taking calculated risks and adapting to changing circumstances. Interestingly, Vietnamese entrepreneurs who feel integrated into Japanese society may still be aware of their identity (Tang & Alcantara, 2022). Another study by Kharel (2016) found that there were over 55,000 Nepalese migrants in Japan by the end of 2015, and that many of these

migrants had started their own businesses. Kharel's study also found that social networks and social capital play an important role in immigrant entrepreneurship. Study by Billore (2011), examined the entrepreneurship of Indian female migrants in Japan. Billore's study found that these women entrepreneurs originally came to Japan as housewives, but that they were able to use their skills and talents to start their own businesses. Billore's study also found that these women entrepreneurs were able to create jobs for fellow migrants and residents. Rahman and Fee (2011) and Karunaratne (2017) have examined the role of Bangladeshi and Sri Lankan migrant entrepreneurs in Japan. Rahman and Fee's study found that there were over 40,000 Bangladeshi migrants in Japan in 2010, many of whom had started their own businesses. The study also revealed that Bangladeshi migrant entrepreneurs were constantly innovating to enhance their products and services, and were exporting them to South Asia. Meanwhile, Karunaratne's study focused on Sri Lankan migrant entrepreneurs in Japan, revealing that most were either married to Japanese, fluent in Japanese, or had initiated their careers in Japan as migrant workers, tourists, or business visa holders. All studies emphasize the significant role of migrant entrepreneurs in Japan, highlighting their innovation and potential to strengthen business and economic ties between their home and host countries. Opportunities for immigrant entrepreneurs include access to a large market and support from social networks.

Second, an overview of the issues and challenges faced by migrant entrepreneurs. Migrant entrepreneurship in Japan mostly discusses generational entrepreneurial activities and business strategy. For instance, migrant entrepreneurship can serve as an economic strategy for immigrants facing barriers like language deficiency, institutional constraints, or racial discrimination, but it can also limit their social mobility, especially when visa policies push migrants into narrow economic niches (Liu-Farrer, 2023). Since 2010, the Japanese government has viewed migrant entrepreneurship as a specific strategy to attract new entrepreneurs, rather than merely a response to better integrate or support existing migrants in the labor market (Yamamura & Lassalle, 2025). Several studies highlight the specifics of entrepreneurship strategy; for example, how citizen spouses help immigrant entrepreneurs in Japan pull up their bootstraps (Billore, 2011; Karunaratne, 2017; Rahman & Fee, 2011; Suppatkul et al., 2021). Research by Suppatkul et al. (2021) shows that Japanese spouses play a crucial role in supporting these entrepreneurs, providing language assistance, financial support, and help with networking and customer acquisition. According to Wu (2022), Japanese citizen spouses play a major role in helping migrant businesses succeed by helping them overcome challenges such as language barriers and legal issues. There are three supports that immigrant entrepreneurs receive from their spouses: 1) learning Japanese, which can be essential for doing business in Japan; 2) navigating the Japanese legal system, which can be complex and difficult to understand; 3) introducing immigrant entrepreneurs to potential customers and partners (Suppatkul et al., 2021). The emergence of migrant entrepreneurs in Japan and their integration into Japanese society was also studied by Karayılmaz (2018). This study highlights the migrant business opportunity identification, development process among immigrant entrepreneurs and the impact of social identity on perceived inclusion in Japan.

Based on the explanation above, none of the mentioned studies emphasize the social role of entrepreneurs, especially in Japan. Most discussions on migrant entrepreneurship focus on leveraging business opportunities to improve social and economic status, facilitated by networks that provide support and information for business initiation and growth. This phenomenon is shaped by opportunity structures, which enable entrepreneurs to identify and capitalize on economic prospects through networking and awareness of supportive government

policies. Unlike foreign students or Nikkeijin (see: Liu-Farrer, 2011), who are fluent in Japanese, immigrant entrepreneurs, often categorized as 'middleman minorities', establish businesses catering to the needs of migrant communities due to their limited access, language barrier and skills. These businesses include travel agencies, remittance companies, graphic design/printing firms, grocery stores, food processing/distribution, language schools, and media outlets (Elo & Dana, 2023). Moreover, these migrant entrepreneurs are often confined to ethnic enclaves, facing intense competition from other minority groups in Japan for lucrative employment opportunities.

Conceptually and practically, the middleman minority in ethnic economy shows his/her role not only as a liaison and mediator between producers and consumers but also as a link between minority and majority groups. They help in the provision and distribution of products, reducing the gap between producers and consumers, as well as offering other services to consumers in need such as being translators, document management, and training. This positions Indonesian entrepreneurs as a sociocultural broker in Japan. Eric Wolf (in Geertz, 2009) suggests that the broker of social and culture plays a role in "keeping the crucial points in a synapse of relationships that connect the local system with the larger whole". Here, the Indonesian social cultural broker in entrepreneurship acts as an intermediary in harmonizing the relationship between Indonesian migrants who work or study in Japan with the customs and values that apply in Japan.

Socio-cultural broker also can be used to convey the idea of links between the mainstream culture in a pluralistic society and the various subcultures which brokers are bridging knowledge gaps between two parties, about the specialized knowledge and culture and establish links between all spaces and contexts involved (see Gentemann and Whitehead, 1983; Bräuchler et al., 2021). The role of a social cultural broker is necessary for migrants who do not fully have the network and understanding of a country. According to de Haas (2021) the dynamics of international migration in contemporary era that tend to increase for economic motives have increased the role of citizens or similar ethnic groups in a particular country to be connectors of social, economic, and cultural needs. Cultural brokers in international migration in contemporary era contexts act as intermediaries between diverse cultural groups, aiding in integration and delineating boundaries. However, their roles can be subject to contestation and manipulation (de Jong, 2016). de Jong (2021) explains that contemporary cultural brokers not only reinforce integration economics and culture and define boundaries between the 'self' as entrepreneur and the 'other' as market cultural but also a counter-hegemonic view shows that they can use their dual perspective to alter roles. In this regard, the role of Indonesian entrepreneurs in supporting the daily needs of other Indonesians positions them as social and cultural brokers. They act as middlemen, bridging cultural gaps between local and migrant communities, and connecting various diverse daily products, social groups, and interests.

3. Research Methods

This study employs a qualitative approach with a biographical narrative in investigating and understanding the entrepreneurial strategy of Indonesian entrepreneurs in Japan. Biographical narrative methods empower participants to articulate the vicissitudes of their life and experiences of entrepreneurship while also providing the researcher with a framework for data analysis and interpretation to give meaning to entrepreneurs' life stories (Fillis, 2015). It also

devotes to the rethinking of entrepreneurial marketing epistemology. Its interpretive approach holds the complexities of subjective worlds and the lived experience. This methodological approach has been considerably under-represented from migrant entrepreneurship viewpoints (Fillis, 2015).

The qualitative data was collected through observations and in-depth interviews with five Indonesian business owners in Japan. The fieldwork was conducted in Japan between September 2018 and March 2020 with follow up interviews conducted online between February to July 2022. All the informants were recruited through snow balling techniques. All these people have satisfied the criteria of being respondents in this study, i.e., Indonesian nationals who run their business in Japan. To protect the privacy of our informants, the authors use pseudonyms instead of writing their real names. The data from interviews were recorded, transcribed, and translated into English before being categorized and analyzed to find out what it means to run a business in Japan.

4. Findings

4.1. Patterns and Characteristics

As of December 2022, there are 37 Indonesian citizens possessing business-management visas out of a total of 83,169 Indonesians residing in Japan (MHLW, 2023). The number is relatively small compared to other countries, such as China, South Korea, and Nepal which have thousands of people holding such visas. The Indonesian Entrepreneurs Association in Japan (APIJ) has noted a shift in the entrepreneurial trends among Indonesian migrants in Japan, especially in Indonesian restaurant ownership. Around the 2000s, Indonesian restaurants in Japan were only owned by Japanese people. In recent years, Indonesians have begun to manage and have their own restaurants. By the end of 2020, there were 64 Indonesian restaurants in Japan that were fully or partially owned and run by Indonesian migrant entrepreneurs. Among these 64 restaurants, around one third are in Tokyo and the surrounding prefectures.

As observed, Indonesian entrepreneurship in Japan illustrates that the predominant business types align with the demands of the Indonesian community in the country, focusing primarily on food and daily necessity products. In Japan, Indonesian migrant workers are scattered and are mostly found at railway stations, parks, mosques, or association basecamps. However, on their off days, they are visible as they enjoy shopping and eating together with their fellow migrant workers in restaurants or public areas, such as Southeast Asian stores and restaurants near the Ueno Station in Tokyo. The stores and restaurants in Tokyo that are run by some ethnic businesses mainly supply the migrant workers' needs and they are managed by mostly former workers married to Japanese nationals, likewise in some other cities like Osaka, Nagoya, and Ibaraki. This is what is termed that ethnic community serves as a capital source for the networks of migrant workers (e.g. Koike, 2015; Zhou & Cho, 2010) including Indonesian. The growth of demand for Indonesian products aligns with the increasing number of Indonesian migrants in Japan, creating business opportunities, including the demand for staple goods and entertainment.

Our finding indicates that Indonesian entrepreneurship in Japan emerges from this opportunity and conditions. Reza, a man who owns a halal store in central Japan, describes the development of Indonesian entrepreneurship in Japan and found that migrant-worker communities are

invisible on weekdays. On the weekends or on their off-days, Indonesian migrants gather to enjoy shopping and eating together with their compatriots in Indonesian stores and restaurants near their residences. These gatherings as ethnic communities that serve as nodal points for networks of Indonesian workers and their entrepreneurial activities. Reza was a student in Japan in the early 2000s when he first realized business opportunities in the country. At that time, finding halal food in Japan was challenging. This paved the way for him to start a business by selling tempeh (soybean cake) to supply the needs of other fellow Indonesian migrants, especially Muslim migrant groups.

Our finding also indicates that when first-time doing businesses, Indonesian entrepreneurs identify the core of Indonesian cultural values, for instance, the living and working conditions, the religious activities and values, and the group association, as the basic knowledge to open a business. Learning from all these cultural values help migrant entrepreneurs to develop their businesses. In particular, the entrepreneurship activities of Indonesians in Japan benefit from the high number of Indonesian migrant workers and their cultural value and living conditions by combining business with social activities. Some Indonesian migrant entrepreneurs engage in social activities that allow them to build migrants' capacity through economic empowerment by providing entrepreneurship training programs and sponsorship, which are very much a part of these migrant businesses. Here, the entrepreneurs attempt to benefit the fellow migrants economically, for instance, by offering financial assistance. Indonesian entrepreneurship stands between the migrant consumers' condition and business value practices where they are meant for both by migrants and for migrants. In this regard, cultural and socio-psychological attributes of a migrant group affect their entrepreneurial behavior. Therefore, entrepreneurship helps Indonesian migrants in the socio-economic integration and effectively addresses their marginalization as foreign workers. The following subsections illustrate four patterns of Indonesian migrant entrepreneurship in Japan.

4.1.1 Standing as the Traditional Entrepreneurs

Even though most Indonesian living abroad successfully adapt to local food and taste, some of them still crave for Indonesian food, and it means they must look for cooking spices from Indonesia. In Japan, it is relatively difficult to find Indonesian cooking spices. There are some spices that are easier to obtain than other types of spices. As observed, the current development of this type of entrepreneurs has undergone a diversification of more 'traditional' business activities commonly found in other migrant communities. They can be categorized into various types: 1) Shipping cargo from Japan to Indonesia, 2) Private money remittances, such as one day transfer remittance; 4) Hair salon or selling a variety of clothing and accessories; 5) Selling various cosmetics and body care medicine, 6) Tour travel and airplane ticket; and 7) Lunch box.

Aulia's shop in Ueno, for instance, sells most items that Indonesian migrants would need. It sells daily products from Indonesia, i.e., instant noodles, instant herbals, Indonesian instant coffee, mukena (a white cloak covering Muslim women's head and body for prayer), Muslim clothes, snacks, instant seasonings, etc. It does not only sell Indonesian products that are needed by Indonesian people there, but also serve as a place for Indonesian migrants, particularly trainees, when they are missing their home country.

She has developed the basis of mutual trust in her entrepreneurship activity. She has a lot of friends and acquaintances, mostly customers that she met in Tokyo and keep in contact by Facebook or LINE messenger. Her Facebook friends reach almost 4000s and more than 600 friends in LINE. She has also built relations with Indonesian migrants and allowed them to work part time in her shop. She maintains all the business connections with Indonesian migrant workers by smartphone and it allows her to recognize the old and new Indonesian workers from daily intensive communication. She treats young Indonesian workers, especially trainees, like her own sons, so it is no wonder that some of them call her "Mother."

This signifies that some Indonesian entrepreneurs support Indonesian migrants' needs and religious nuances. They provide Indonesian local products that affirm them as traditional entrepreneurs. They are active in some sectors like Indonesian food and drinks, crafts, medicines, even clothes and body care with some innovations and e-commerce adoptions to enhance both profit and social network.

4.1.2 The Halal Food Suppliers and Promoters

Indonesian migrants in Japan are involved in social, cultural, and religious life; also have religious ideas and lifestyles during their work. The idea of Ukhuwah Islamiyah (Islamic brotherhood) has been used as a basic tool in making social networks, strategic adaptation to differences in culture by Indonesian Muslim and economic opportunities for entrepreneurship in Japan. Living in Japan can be challenging for Muslim as it is quite difficult to find halal food. This, however, opens opportunities for migrant entrepreneurs in targeting niche markets of Muslim communities looking for halal foods. Numerous migrant entrepreneurs therefore provide halal food to help the Indonesian Muslim community in Japan and play a role as halal food suppliers.

Reza is one of such entrepreneurs. When he was a student, he experienced difficulties in finding halal food in Nagoya and from that he got the idea to start producing tempeh and selling halal food. In the initial stage, he rode a bicycle to sell his products door to door to Indonesian Muslim workers in Aichi Prefecture and made deliveries to the neighboring prefectures of Osaka and Kyoto. He promotes the halal tempeh as well to Japanese people. The business was developing and promising until he managed to establish his own halal food company in February 2005. Mostly, the products are intended for migrants, such as halal meatballs, tempeh, fried duck, and catering halal lunch box at special events, like Tabligh Akbar (a large-scale Muslim gatherings) or Indonesian national holidays, and they can be ordered online via Facebook, a website, or LINE phone apps services.

Supplying halal food is not only meant for business profit but also providing a way to promote halal food. In recent years, the number of halal food shops in Japan, especially in the central and southern regions, is increasing. These shops are an important aspect of the convergence of migrant workers and Islamic culture and halal food is significant for everyday celebration of deep-rooted traditions. Reza's company continues to expand and start to reach more consumers outside of the Indonesian communities. The company also managed to do trading, importing halal products from several countries, especially from Indonesia, Malaysia, Vietnam, Thailand, and several European countries. The products are currently distributed throughout Japan, from Aichi, which is in the middle between Tokyo and Osaka, to all cities in Japan where Indonesian migrant workers or Muslim reside. Reza, and other Muslim business owners, are seen in this

study to fall in this category, the halal food suppliers who actively promote halal food through the products and values of their companies.

The promotion of halal food in Japan is influenced significantly by Muslim migrants, particularly those from Southeast Asia, such as Indonesia. Although halal food primarily targets specific market segments, its promotion through social media reaches a broader audience and market. Halal suppliers play a crucial role in extending the reach of halal products to wider consumers.

4.1.3 Serving as the Middlemen

In the context of migration, the middlemen are almost synonymous with the entrepreneurs who mediate between the dominant and the subordinate groups. One of the example businesses playing this role is restaurant owners. Currently, there are approximately 64 Indonesian restaurants throughout Japan fully or partly owned and run by Indonesians. Not less than 23 restaurants are in Tokyo and surrounding prefectures. With the involvement of Indonesian people in Indonesian restaurants, either as the business owners or the workers, Indonesian restaurants in Japan have begun to function as meeting places for Indonesian fellows. One of the Indonesian restaurants in western Tokyo, for instance, provides karaoke facilities for the guests. Some other restaurants also function as places for the Indonesian government to socialize its programs. In addition, Indonesian restaurants also function as Indonesian storefronts that do not only sell but also introduce Indonesian food, snacks, and knick-knacks. They introduce Indonesian culture via restaurant décor, customer interaction, music, or art displays to attract the customers and set up business in the cozy place with ease to reach. Indonesian restaurants can also make their visitors, especially foreigners in Japan, wanting to visit Indonesia to experience the taste of authentic cuisines there.

Generally, middlemen play a role in market spheres by acting as intermediaries between customers and sellers or producers (e.g., Elo & Dana, 2023). In Japan, Indonesian entrepreneurs do not only do businesses as mediators, but also facilitate administrative matters for migrant residents. They assist with tasks related to formalities in Japan, providing local currency, cargo services, and remittances. As observed in one of the shops in Tokyo's neighborhood of Nishi-Ogikubo, the place in which migrant entrepreneurship and migrant activities meet, the entrepreneurs become middlemen for their co-migrant fellows.

These shops serve Indonesian workers who rarely go out and are unfamiliar with local administrative procedures. These people also tend to be afraid of entering the bank with all the bureaucracy and impersonal service and avoiding additional cost. Instead, they choose to go to these migrant businesses since they provide more personalized services with Indonesian service providers. With this, if a problem occurs, they can quickly ask for assistance, such as, why the money has not been received or why the ordered goods have not been delivered. The migrants will find these stores because they are already familiar with them. This mode picks up a service system built based on trust, so that store owners are expected to keep maintaining migrants' trust if they want the business to continue. For example, one of the Indonesian owned stores in Tokyo becomes a neighborhood shop for shipping and currency exchange services from Japanese Yen to Indonesian Rupiah. They could promote shipping goods to Indonesia, covering cities and the countryside. This shop promotes unlimited shipping cargo weight, provides insurance for loss of goods, has competitive prices, and is fast, safe, and reliable in

doing business. The shop directly delivers migrants' boxes of goods to all destination addresses in Indonesia, and offers services such as home pick-up and delivery in the migrants' home address with no extra cost.

4.1.4 The Emerging Transnational Investors

The large number of Indonesian migrants scattered abroad opens a widely potential global market for Indonesian small-scale businesses and products. Starting as traditional entrepreneurs with specific market segments, several Indonesian entrepreneurs are transitioning into more innovative culinary businesses. Cozy restaurants equipped with modern facilities and service innovations have transformed these entrepreneurs into modern entrepreneurs. One of them is an Indonesian coffee shop located in the Kanto region. Andi, one of the coffee shop owners, has seen a big opportunity in Japan's domestic coffee market. Japan is one of the countries with high consumption of coffee where the sales of specialty coffee increase 10-13% per year. Andi saw this big opportunity and started a coffee shop business in Japan.

Starting from his experience managing a coffee shop in Indonesia, he had ideas to develop other associated businesses in Japan. He started looking for information on how to invest and establish business in Japan and searching places in the Kanto region that were potential for his Indonesian coffee shop. He contacted his closest social networks to inform him about how to make export and import products and how to do agreement transactions. The greatest challenge was creating contract agreements in Japan since he did not know the trade regulations between both countries. He managed to learn how to do business in Japan by supplying the raw materials from Indonesia and sell in He acted as a transnational investor and learned how to run the business and found his own style, namely 'transnational business' which is running a business with Indonesia as raw products supplier and Japan as the marketplace. He learned about transnational business to be applied in his coffee shop, and he applied this system for trade between the two countries. From Indonesia, he imports coffee raw materials and sells them at his coffee shop in Japan. From this, the type of transnational investor entrepreneurs starts to emerge, which there are transferring sources, creating jobs, and collaborating businesses

When it comes to coffee shop business in Japan, according to Andi, localization of Indonesian products is a very important strategy to introduce Indonesian coffee. It is like adjusting or adapting the design, taste, and packaging to suit the Japanese market. In developing his business, Andi received the support of various parties, such as the Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Trade, that provided both advice or promotions. Synergy between the government and bank was also carried out, such as holding events for business matching and various meet and greet events. Previously Indonesian coffee beans known in Japan were only Mandailing and Toraja. However, after various events were held and people visited his coffee shop, more and more residents began to know more about other Indonesian coffees. With this coffee shop, they can sell types of coffee and the responses are positive. From this business, they can build a network not only with Indonesian but also residents, and become a business hub for Indonesian small-scale businesses that can provide further direction for Indonesian to develop business in Japan, following Andi's step.

4.2. Managing Business

4.2.1 Issues and Challenges

This study found several challenges faced by Indonesian migrant entrepreneurs when establishing and managing a business in Japan. The challenges are related to (1) guarantor and capital, (2) Japanese language and business-related knowledge, (3) sustainability issues related to supply chain and human resources, (4) market expansion, and (5) business knowledge production.

The guarantor and capital are found to be the biggest challenge faced by the Indonesian migrant entrepreneurs in Japan. For a foreign resident to start a business in Japan, a guarantor is required. Reza recalled his experience when applying for a business-investor visa.

> *"I tried to change my student visa to an investor one, but was rejected three times for a lack of capital. I had to get a recommendation letter from the bank. The bank required me to have enough money before issuing a recommendation letter for me to start a business. In the fourth attempt, I finally received the recommendation and managed to apply for the business visa."*

Typically, Indonesian migrant entrepreneurship in Japan is relatively different from their fellows in Taiwan, Hongkong, or Malaysia where migrants-run businesses are more informal and unregistered due to small or home scale business activities (Setyaningsih, et. al., 2023). In Japan, they established more legal administratively by adopting local regulations. They have registered business under their own names or together with partners and paid for consultations to Japanese lawyers, accountants, or foreign lawyers with offices in Japan. To do so, enough capital is needed and it becomes a biggest challenge for those who wish to establish a business in Japan.

Language and business culture are other important factors when it comes to running a business in Japan. Since the use of English in Japanese business settings remains very limited, Japanese language proficiency opens the networks not only to Indonesian communities but also the local people. Furthermore, when it comes to the challenges related to business culture in running a business in Japan, this study found that they need to lessen their expectations since they are entering a whole different business world. Andi explained:

> *"When it comes to business culture, you must put off everything you know from Indonesia. Because what is preferred by Indonesians is not always the same for Japanese. It is better to create a new standard operation that matches Japan's context rather than using the Indonesian standard."*

The business culture in Japan was found to be different from Indonesia. Therefore, knowledge of Japanese business culture and Japanese culture in general becomes indispensable.

Furthermore, Indonesian entrepreneurs saw challenges related to sustainability of their businesses in Japan. There are at least two big issues: the supply of the raw materials and the human resources. The limited raw materials and the process of production permits are the challenges for product and business development. Reza's business, for instance, has chicken

meatball products, but chicken meat import to Japan is difficult because there must be a G-to-G agreement. The same applies to Andi's business which saw an uncertainty in the coffee bean supply. Another issue is related to human resources. The support of capable human resources is found to be very significant. The problem is that not so many Indonesian people are willing to work for Indonesian entrepreneurs or Indonesian companies in Japan. Human resources play a very significant role and the lack of it will be an obstacle in developing business even when they have sufficient competencies in Japanese language and business culture. Our study found that Indonesian students and haafu (descendants of Japanese and non-Japanese) are the major pool of human resources for Indonesian businesses in Japan. Not only serving as competent staff, but also, they play a great role in bridging the Japanese and Indonesian side of the company, especially in Japanese business culture related practices.

The other challenge is about market expansion. Bayu recalled, "Actually what we prefer is to be able to enter Japan's domestic market. The question is how Indonesian products can enter local supermarkets in Japan." He pointed out that it is not enough for him, and other Indonesian entrepreneurs, if only targeting Indonesian migrants and Muslim market. Therefore, they need to expand their products to the local market. The last challenge faced by Indonesian entrepreneurs is that there is little consultation for Indonesian to open business abroad, including in Japan, while the support from Indonesian government is also very little. For entrepreneurs who studied in Japan, the pattern is that they ask for consultation with their seniors at school. This means that they produce knowledge on business in Japan by themselves through the assistance of their social networks. The entrepreneur associations, such as APIJ, also plays a great role in not only building networks, but also developing skills and knowledge among the Indonesian entrepreneurs in Japan. Even though most of the entrepreneurs have a business background and are well-educated, they still aspire to have a mentoring on doing business in Japan.

From the above cases, it is evident that entrepreneurial endeavors among Indonesian migrants serve as adaptation strategies aimed at achieving profitability or economic adjustment amidst their migration to Japan. Issues and challenges in entrepreneurship highlight various approaches to sustaining livelihoods, either by leveraging different forms of human capital within the migrant community or by capitalizing on resources available in the host country. Two key issues emerge: 1) economic adaptation, and 2) the diverse strategies it engenders. Migrants engage in entrepreneurial adaptations to navigate and sustain their livelihoods. As Brettell (2003) suggests, entrepreneurial adaptation involves migrants actively pursuing objectives, addressing needs, and responding to evolving social and environmental conditions to ensure survival. In this case, Indonesian entrepreneurship in Japan is constructed based on opportunity structures (structural entrepreneurship), social solidarity (cultural entrepreneurship) and sociocultural inclination (strategies for adapting to the business and social environment). This entails enhancing performance, optimizing production processes, and navigating the social landscape through negotiation. Rath et al. (2006) conceptualizes this dynamic as a structural opportunity within constrained circumstances, involving the mobilization of migrant resources, the formation of immigrant economic networks, and the implementation of self-employment strategies.

4.2.2 Overcoming the Challenges

Such challenges leave Indonesian entrepreneurs with no choice but to come up with strategies: (1) to match with market demands, and (2) to make use of social capital. One of the most common strategies is to match with market demands, including localization of the products. Andi, for instance, adjusts his marketing strategy to match with the local context. In marketing his coffee products, he does not only adjust the taste to match with the local taste, but also put an emphasis on the quality of the coffee first. He would like to introduce his coffee as good coffee, not as Indonesian coffee. He wanted his coffee to be known for its quality. "After tasting my coffee, they would comment like, 'Ahh this coffee is from Indonesia? I did not know that Indonesian coffee has such a good taste.' This is the approach that I take. That is why in my coffee shop, there are no such things like Indonesian decorations." His strategy is to introduce Indonesia through the quality of products.

Furthermore, in running business, the Indonesian entrepreneurs realized that doing business in foreign country required a strong collaboration and needed to find products that could be distributed to other migrant communities in Japan. They also use their social networks in developing their business and target market. The social networks are not limited to the Indonesian fellows, but also migrants from other countries. In Japan, they try to expand their social networks by attending gatherings and business matchings organized by government bodies or business associations. Some of our interviewees even have a mission to promote entrepreneurship spirit to Indonesian student communities. Reza and Bayu, for instance, wish that they could influence the students to follow their steps becoming entrepreneurs. They realized that Indonesian students in Japan tend to aspire to make a career in Japanese companies after graduating from Japan's universities. Reza and Bayu want to change the mindset and invite these students to become entrepreneurs like what they do.

Another strategy related to social capitals is to gain support from various stakeholders. In developing his business, Andi has received support from various parties, such as the Indonesian Ministry of Agriculture as well as the Ministry of Trade. Andi also received support from the Indonesian Embassy in Tokyo in doing the coffee exports. He further reveals that the Indonesian government and financial sectors regularly carried out various events for business matching and numerous meets and greet events and he found the events helpful to expand his business network. Indonesian entrepreneurs such as Andi and Reza can deal directly with the other Indonesian diaspora in Tokyo, and get input on how to run their business. The events also provide a chance to introduce Indonesian products to the Japanese market. Andi exposes that previously known Indonesian coffees in Japan were only Mandailing and Toraja. However, after various events were held, residents began to get to know more about other Indonesian coffees. This opens opportunities to the market for more Indonesian products and reaches a wider consumer.

In general, Indonesian migrants in Japan's entrepreneurship context apply a simple organizational structure as either business units or individuals. We identified four types of entrepreneurs business networks: (1) relation between entrepreneurs with capital assistance groups commonly related to product and goods suppliers, lessees, relatives, or friends who acted to provide financial assistance; (2) relation between entrepreneurs with employees related to the work system, business management, and administrative personnel; (3) relation between entrepreneurs with customers, that mostly comprise relationships with migrant

workers as well as individual consumers or companies; and (4) relation between entrepreneurs with other entrepreneurs, a type of cooperative relationship that is very helpful if someone needs something, such as a product for his or her shop. This kind of strategic entrepreneurship is described in the diagram below.

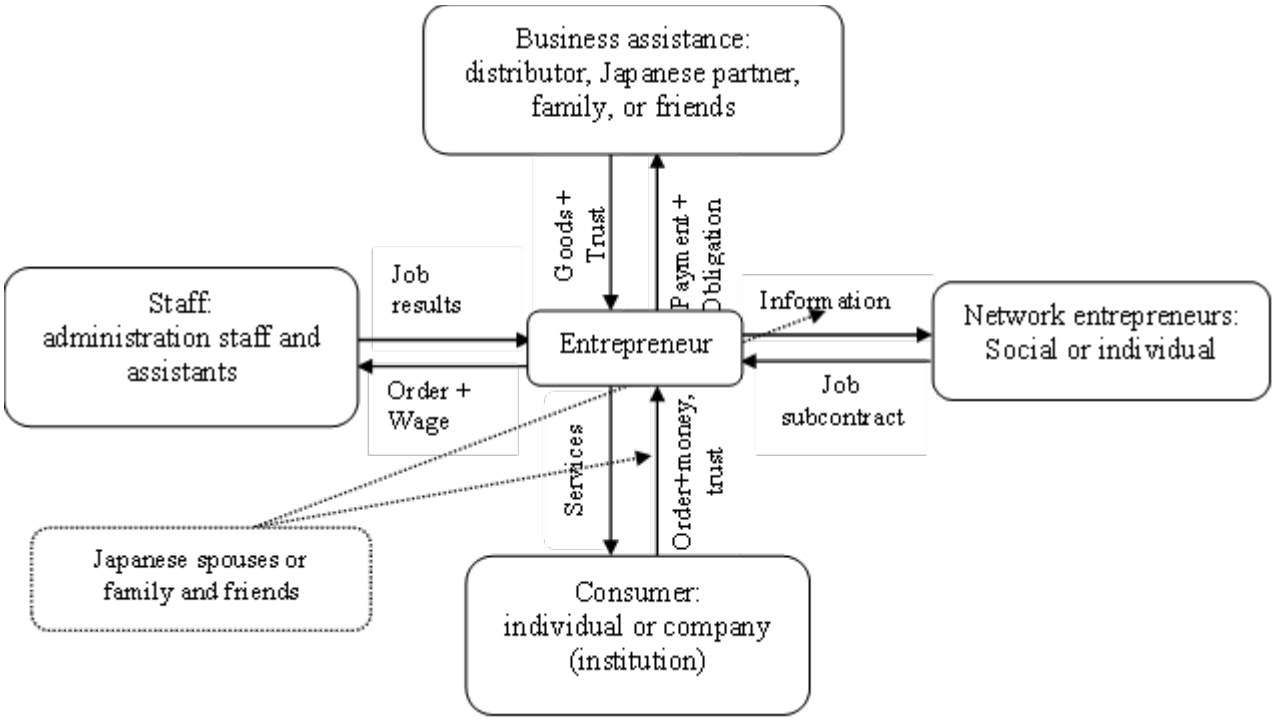

Figure 1. Strategy of Indonesian migrant entrepreneurship in Japan.

Based on the above figure, the entrepreneur normally gets financial/goods, help, or business trust from the providers of wares and products (distributor), Japanese partner/employer, relatives, family, or friends as business assistance. Business assistance is needed by entrepreneurs to develop their businesses further. Relationships with the product distributor and trust from Japanese employers, relatives, or friends can make a significant contribution, such as receiving loans without interest or staff assistance. Therefore, entrepreneurs need to have good and trusting relationships with all their counterparts. Technically, the relationships entrepreneurs have with their workers are divided into three types: with workers in a shop or stall, with staff who are trusted to manage the store when the owner is busy or absent, and with those chosen as special administrative staff. The condition of these relationships depends on the size of the business; if the employer only needs 4 to 5 people, he or she can act as a worker or perform administrative activities. All these three types of relationships can be cross-linked. Consumers are typically either individuals or those associated with institutions. For both individual consumers and institutions, entrepreneurs usually have certain minimum purchases for product delivery/services, and the goods will be directly delivered to the consumer's address. Finally, the relationship with other entrepreneurs is colored by competition for consumers; however, they have formed a partnership that is carried out individually or through associations. The cooperation of individuals normally happens when one party becomes a subcontractor to another party or a source of information that brings business to the other party.

5. Concluding Remarks

This article explains the characteristics and four patterns of Indonesian entrepreneurship in Japan: i.e. the classic entrepreneurs, the halal food suppliers and promoters, the middlemen, and the modern entrepreneurs as transnational investors. These different patterns resulted from the cultural and socio-psychological attributes of the Indonesian entrepreneurship practices in Japan's context. Our analysis of Indonesian migrants' entrepreneurship in Japan demonstrates that it results from the (re)production of socioeconomic knowledge about business situations, along with the migrants' practices and values, as they adapt to the 'way of life' of Indonesian migrant workers. Indonesian migrant entrepreneurship in Japan is also a manifestation of the interplay between opportunity, social solidarity, religious values, and the ability to adapt to both the business and social environment. This interplay illustrates how immigrant businesses, their social activities, and their relationships with the Indonesian migrant communities contribute to the adaptation of Indonesian marginal migrant workers into the host society. Additionally, adapting to the local culture opens business opportunities that cater to the preferences of the Japanese market while utilizing raw materials from Indonesia. Building relationships and trust with Japanese counterparts is crucial for establishing a business in Japan. Most Indonesian entrepreneurs focus on businesses that incorporate Indonesian tastes, often with modifications. As a result, double embeddedness in term of social networks, a deep understanding of local business culture and style, and strong relationships with Indonesian migrants all contribute to the growth of Indonesian entrepreneurs' businesses in Japan.

We argue that migrant entrepreneurship, both practically and conceptually, can serve as a mediator for the socio-economic integration of migrants with host social and bureaucratic behavior as well as effectively addresses the marginalization of migrant workers. These entrepreneurial endeavors can be seen as facilitating 'the economic presence that connects peoples'. Furthermore, the functions of entrepreneurship and the relationships among entrepreneurs shape their double embeddedness within migrant communities. This involvement in double embeddedness enables migrant entrepreneurs to discern the needs of the migrant community within their niche and address those needs. Migrant entrepreneurship double embeddedness is closely linked to four common social conditions among co-migrant minorities: nostalgic sentiments about home, identity, marginality, and solidarity. The practice of migrant entrepreneurship double embeddedness enhances the pattern of entrepreneurial practices at both individual and social levels. Entrepreneurial and social activities can act as mediators in the relationship between the structural and relational conditions of migrants within the broader host country society and the immigrant community itself. Entrepreneurs achieve this through social activities, serving as sociocultural brokers, as well as assuming roles as religious and altruistic co-migrants in their entrepreneurial endeavors.

However, the foundations of Indonesian migrant entrepreneurship in Japan, with its complex problems and practices, are not independent. Our suggestion, the future development requires specific preconditions for improvement. Firstly, understanding the practices and values of migrant communities is a major determinant factor in developing entrepreneurship. The motivations and strategies of Indonesian entrepreneurs in running businesses have been shaped by the intersection of their cumulative life experiences in business and their relationships with migrant communities, which need to be strengthened. Secondly, fostering mutual reliance on social networks within their own socio-cultural groups is essential for creating a significant

market share, while simultaneously enhancing outreach strategies towards new and innovative markets.

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