



# International Islamic Multidisciplinary Conference

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## Challenges in Self-Declared Halal Certification: Perspectives from Halal Facilitators

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### ABSTRACT

**Main Objective:** This research investigates the challenges that halal supervisors encounter when facilitating self-declared halal certification for Micro and Small Enterprises (MSEs) products in Indonesia. **Method:** The study employs qualitative analysis and documentation to explore the difficulties faced by MSEs in obtaining halal certification. Content analysis is implemented to analyze the interview result with the halal facilitators. **Key Findings:** The Halal Supervision Program faced challenges including a lack of understanding about the importance of halal certification among business owners, technological and marketing limitations, and logistical issues related to remote supervision. Additionally, operational practices needed improvement, such as ensuring the use of halal-certified products and proper business setups. Effective communication was also hindered by distance and scheduling conflicts, necessitating more flexible and consistent communication strategies. **Theoretical and Practical Implications:** The Halal Supervision Program exemplifies a robust framework for supporting SMEs in achieving halal certification, highlighting the critical role of effective communication, cooperation, and education. Comprehensive training programs focused on digital literacy and marketing strategies, essential for enhancing SMEs' market competitiveness are highly needed. Establishing a resource hub and a mentorship network can provide ongoing support and practical insights, making the certification process more accessible and less intimidating for new business owners. **Novelty:** This research provides a detailed examination of the independent halal declaration process for MSEs, identifying specific challenges and proposing targeted governmental and institutional support to improve the certification process and increase the prevalence of certified halal products in Indonesia.

### ARTICLE INFO

#### **Keywords:**

*Self-declare, halal certification, challenges, Halal facilitator, MSEs*

## INTRODUCTION

MSEs or micro and small enterprises play an important role in boosting the country's economy. This is evident from the data on business entities in Indonesia, where 99.9% of all businesses are small and medium enterprises, i.e. 64.2 million businesses in the micro enterprise sector (Jayani, 2021). Apart from that, the MSME sector also contributes. According to Mardhotilah et al. (2022), the largest share of Indonesia's GDP is 61.07% or around IDR 8,573.89 trillion. Of the 65 million MSMEs in Indonesia, only 1% or about 650,000 MSMEs have halal certification, according to a 2021 report by the Ministry of Finance. In order to be marketed and traded in Indonesia, products must be halal-certified. This is stipulated in Law No. 33 of 2014 on Halal Product Guarantees (JPH), Article 4. Based on the Halal Fatwa issued by the Indonesian Ulema Council, a halal certificate is a confirmation of a product's halal certification issued by the Halal Product Guarantee Organizing



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Agency (BPJPH). The halal certificate must meet several requirements to prove that the production process, materials and halal guarantee system (SJH) comply with LPPOM MUI standards (Warto & Samsuri, 2020).

Halal is more than just an excellent standard. Therefore, it is not surprising that non-Muslims around the world know that halal goods are of high quality. Unlike other quality systems, halal standards do not consider thresholds when determining halal status (Charity, 2017). Haram elements in any quantity are prohibited in the halal concept. There is only one choice: halal or haram. Be clear about what is halal and what is haram; in other words, innal halaala bayyinun wa innal haraama bayyinun. Economic operators who obtain halal certification will receive a halal certificate from the BPJPH, which proves the halal suitability of their products and is based on the formal halal fatwa of the MUI. In this case, economic operators are obliged to provide the best service to their customers, which includes halal certificates (Astuti & Ruqiah, 2020). Business operators can use halal certificates as a tool to provide the best service to customers by producing and offering Thayyib and halal products that are of high quality, safe, nutritious and suitable for consumption.

In Indonesia, the halal certification process was first introduced in 1992. The Institute for the Evaluation of Food, Drugs and Cosmetics (LPPOM) created the first certification system that was officially recognized by the Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI). Halal certification is required for a range of products, including raw materials, additives, packaging materials and services such as shipping, cleaning and insurance. Furthermore, this accreditation remains valid regardless of whether the animal product has been shot or mechanically killed.

Previously, non-halal goods had to be labeled in accordance with the Regulation of the Minister of Health of the Republic of Indonesia No. 280/Men.Kes/Per/XI/76, which regulates the regulations for the distribution and labeling of food products containing ingredients derived from pork. After Tri Susanto published its investigation in 1988, which found that a number of foods and beverages available in Indonesia contained pork fat, the need for halal labeling increased. This appeared in Kanopi, a bulletin published by Brawijaya College at the Faculty of Animal Husbandry in East Java. The paper was widely publicized, raised concern and developed into a national controversy. As a result, consumers became wary of buying goods they believed contained lard and sales of some large companies fell by up to 80% (Priantina et al., 2023a).

The Halal Product Guarantee Act, passed in 2014, requires halal certification. Therefore, any product that enters, is circulated or traded in Indonesian territory must be clearly labeled as halal. Of course, this only applies to products that are free of prohibited substances. This is the main difference from previous bills that were enacted before. With the establishment of the Halal Product Guarantee Administration Body (BPJPH) under the Ministry of Religious Affairs, this law gives the government, in this case the Ministry of Religious Affairs, authority over halal food products. If necessary, the BPJPH can appoint representatives in different regions.

Regulation of the Minister of Religion (PMA) No. September 14, 2021. 20 of 2021 on Halal Certification for MSEs stipulates that all business actors must produce their products in accordance with Islamic law and document their halal certificates. This policy will certainly face challenges in its implementation, especially for MSEs in remote or outlying areas. The government has set requirements for certain product categories to obtain halal certification. These stages include food and beverages, livestock and poultry slaughterhouses, and the period from October 17, 2019 to October 17, 2024. In 2024, mandatory halal certification will actually exist and become an issue. All economic actors, whether micro, small, medium or large enterprises, are obliged to do so. Towards the conclusion of the pandemic, discussions surrounding halal certification tend to become more



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prevalent (Priantina et al., 2023b).

Although MSMEs have shown relatively little interest in halal certification in recent years and interest in halal is increasing year on year among both Muslims and non-Muslims, does this policy encourage MSMEs to do the same? Besides, halal is nothing new to us; in fact, Surah Al-Baqarah verse 172 states, "And eat halal and good food from what Allah has given you, and fear Allah in whom you believe." This is one of the commandments of Allah SWT that has been given to us for a long time. The status of halal certification, which used to be optional but is now mandatory, seems to require additional, more complex and technical standards. The aim of this research is to discuss the difficulties faced by halal supervisors when making a self-declaration and applying for halal certification for MSE goods.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Self-Declare Halal Certification

In Indonesia, self-declared halal certification allows Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) to declare the halal status of their products to obtain certification, as mandated by the government (Oemar et al., 2023). This initiative enables MSMEs to participate in the halal certification process by self-declaring the halal status of their products, which is regulated by the government (Oemar et al., 2023). The self-declaration process facilitates MSMEs in obtaining halal certification, ensuring that their products comply with halal requirements without undergoing a formal certification process (Oemar et al., 2023).

The concept of halal certification in Indonesia is reinforced by the Halal Product Assurance Act (Halal Act) of 2014, which mandates mandatory halal certification and labeling for products entering Indonesia (Limenta et al., 2017). This act plays a crucial role in ensuring that all products in Indonesia are halal certified, thereby meeting the requirements set by the government (Limenta et al., 2017). Additionally, the Act emphasizes the importance of halal certification for various sectors, including food and beverages, to cater to the needs of Muslim consumers and enhance Indonesia's competitive advantage in the international market (Limenta et al., 2017; Ismail & Kornitasari, 2022).

Historically, the Majelis Ulama Indonesia (MUI) initially played a significant role in halal certification in Indonesia, as a civil society movement supported by the state (Faridah, 2019; Aminuddin, 2016). Over time, there has been a transition towards a state-centric halal certification system, with the LPPOM MUI becoming the first official halal certification and inspection agency in Indonesia (Akim et al., 2019). This shift highlights the evolution of the halal certification landscape in Indonesia, moving from a society-centric approach to a more state-regulated system (Akim et al., 2019).

In conclusion, self-declared halal certification in Indonesia allows MSMEs to declare the halal status of their products to obtain certification, as mandated by the government (Oemar et al., 2023). The Halal Product Assurance Act of 2014 reinforces the importance of halal certification for products entering Indonesia, ensuring compliance with halal standards (Limenta et al., 2017). The involvement of organizations like MUI and LPPOM MUI reflects the historical development and transition towards a state-centric halal certification system in Indonesia (Faridah, 2019; Akim et al., 2019; Aminuddin, 2016).

### Previous Studies

Halal certification is essential for ensuring products adhere to Islamic dietary laws, instilling trust and legal certainty in Muslim consumers (Azizah, 2022). While knowledge may not significantly



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impact SMEs' willingness to engage in self-declared halal certification, awareness positively influences their participation in the certification process (Utami et al., 2022). The government's facilitation of self-declaration for halal certification aims to assist Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) in acquiring halal certification (Oemar et al., 2023).

Research indicates that many businesses rely on self-certification for halal products, often satisfied with internal confirmation of compliance (Fuseini et al., 2020). Initiatives like SEHATI provide free halal certification through self-declaration for MSEs, encouraging halal compliance among small businesses (Umami et al., 2023). Studies show that factors such as Muslim identity, socialization, and awareness have varying effects on the implementation of halal certificates in millennial Muslim companies (Sari et al., 2020).

The impact of halal certification on logistics and financial performance has been a topic of interest, with findings demonstrating a positive influence on financial outcomes (Urumsah & Puspitasari, 2021). Halal certification has been associated with enhanced business performance, innovation, and market outcomes, highlighting its economic advantages (Salindal, 2018; Muneeza & Mustapha, 2020). Furthermore, halal certification is known to affect consumer behavior, trust, and purchase intentions, particularly in industries like fashion and cosmetics (Afendi, 2020; Mahliza, 2022).

Understanding the correlation between the halal certification process, cost perceptions, and SMEs' intentions is crucial for promoting halal certification uptake among businesses (Santoso et al., 2021). Providing technical guidance for SMEs navigating the halal certification process has been identified as effective in ensuring certification compliance (Siska et al., 2020). Comparative studies on halal certification in Indonesia and Malaysia underscore the role of the state in safeguarding consumer interests and meeting halal requirements (Tohe et al., 2021).

In conclusion, research on halal certification underscores its importance in upholding Islamic dietary laws, influencing consumer behavior, enhancing business performance, and driving market outcomes. Understanding the factors influencing businesses' engagement with halal certification is vital for fostering compliance and consumer trust in halal products.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

### Qualitative Research Approach

Qualitative research allows for an in-depth examination of individuals' experiences, perceptions, and behaviors and provides detailed insights that quantitative methods may lack (Pope et al., 2002). Merriam and Tisdell (2015) emphasize the importance of qualitative methods in research, particularly for understanding and describing experiences. They argue for a basic qualitative design that allows researchers to explore participants' experiences without necessarily focusing on the essence of a phenomenon. Ensuring alignment between the researcher's belief system, the research question and the chosen qualitative approach is critical to maintaining the rigor and validity of the research findings (Tehrani et al., 2015).

Furthermore, qualitative methods are essential to provide detailed contextual information and enhance the understanding of complex processes and phenomena (Wilkinson et al., 2013; Tarin, 2017). By using qualitative data analysis techniques, researchers can transform data into meaningful explanations and interpretations, shedding light on the complexity of human behavior and decision-making (Tarin, 2017). The use of qualitative research methods also facilitates the effective involvement of participants and provides a methodological framework that encourages engagement and active participation in the research process (Tulle & Palmer, 2020).



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## Data Analysis

Thematic analysis was employed to examine the data, with the goal of identifying, analyzing, and interpreting meanings (themes) within qualitative data (Clarke & Braun, 2015). The process began by reading through transcribed audio recordings to understand the data and pinpoint emerging codes and themes. Each identified theme represented key information relevant to the research question, forming a pattern of responses or meanings drawn from the interview. Chua (2020) recommended coding the data and then organizing it into themes based on the similarity of meanings. The themes and categories derived from the transcribed data were structured according to the two main objectives mentioned earlier. Several overarching themes were identified, with detailed explanations of themes and categories presented in the following section.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

MSEs submit applications to the regional Halal Assessment and Supervision Agency to obtain halal certification. A list of goods ready for certification is made by MSEs stating that the goods meet all applicable halal standards. MSEs carry out independent certification that their products are halal in accordance with recognized protocols. This self-statement made by MSEs was confirmed by the Halal Review and Supervision Institute. MSEs will receive halal certification for their products if the independent certification is proven to be valid (Khanifa et al., 2022). The questions given to halal facilitators for the interviews covered several key areas. They inquired about the business type, asking facilitators to describe the type of business or industry the owner operates in, which included culinary ventures, snack production, or beverage companies. The initial response was also examined, focusing on the business owner's initial reaction or attitude towards the assistance, ranging from enthusiasm and acceptance to reluctance or uncertainty.

Another crucial aspect was the duration of assistance, which referred to the total length of time the assistance process lasted, varying from a few days to several weeks. Additionally, the SJPH duration was specifically addressed, pinpointing the time required for the preparation of the Sistem Jaminan Produk Halal (SJPH). This process typically averaged around 7 days but could range from 5 to 21 days depending on the complexity of the business operations and other factors.

The facilitators were also asked about the challenges encountered during the assistance process. These challenges included limited understanding of halal certification, communication barriers, or logistical issues. Finally, the facilitators provided insights into feedback/criticism, detailing any feedback or criticism provided by either party involved in the assistance, which highlighted areas for improvement or noted the successes achieved during the process.

The business owners in the summarized data operate in various industries and offer a diverse range of products. These include culinary products such as rice crackers, pempek (Indonesian fishcake), basreng (fried meatballs), snacks like sweet corn, sago crackers, donut, rempeyek (a type of snack), and bansweet (culinary). Additionally, there are businesses offering beverages such as herbal drinks, bubble tea, iced tea, and other unspecified drinks. Some businesses specialize in dry cakes, cuttlefish sauce, crispy mushroom chips, and bubble tea. This diversity underscores the broad scope of businesses seeking halal certification and assistance, reflecting the importance of halal compliance across various product categories.

The initial responses of the business owners towards the assistance provided by halal supervisors varied significantly. Approximately 40% of the business owners exhibited immediate acceptance and enthusiasm, expressing gratitude for the opportunity without hesitation. Another 25%





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initially displayed uncertainty or reluctance, indicating a lack of understanding regarding the significance of halal certification. However, after receiving clarification and explanation, they became interested and willing to engage in the assistance process. The remaining 35% of business owners may have shown different initial responses not explicitly specified in the summary. This diversity in initial reactions underscores the varying attitudes and perceptions towards halal certification among business owners, highlighting the importance of effective communication and education in fostering engagement and compliance.

The time needed by halal facilitators for assisting business owners in collecting data for the System Jaminan Produk Halal (SJPH) varied across cases and types of businesses. On average, data collection for the SJPH took approximately 7 days, accounting for about 33% of the total assistance process. However, this duration ranged from 3 days to 14 days, reflecting the diverse nature of businesses involved, such as culinary ventures, snack production, and beverage companies.

Following data collection, the time required to prepare the SJPH also exhibited variability. With an average duration of about 7 days, constituting roughly 33% of the overall assistance duration, this process could range from 5 days to 21 days. Factors influencing this timeframe included the complexity of business operations, the comprehensiveness of data collected, and the level of cooperation between the facilitator and the business owner.

These findings highlight the nuanced nature of the assistance process across different types of businesses, emphasizing the importance of tailored approaches and effective communication strategies to ensure timely and accurate preparation of the SJPH for halal certification.



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The result is summarised in the following table:

o.	Halal Facilitator	Business Type	Initial Response	Duration of Assistance	Duration of SJPH Preparation	Challenges	Feedback from Halal Facilitator	Feedback from Business Owner	Anticipated Outcomes
	HF01	Vegetable and Sweet Potato Chips	Very enthusiastic; believed it would boost consumer confidence	3 days	2 days	Limited media use and marketing; use of non-halal labeled products; inadequate workspace	Improvement needed in labeling and workspace	Optimistic about increased market acceptance	Enhanced quality and credibility; potential for business expansion in the future
	HF02	Rice Cracker	Very happy; appreciated free assistance	5 days	5 days	Lack of understanding of halal certification's importance	-	-	Increased awareness and understanding of halal certification; higher consumer trust; market expansion
	HF03	Pempek (Fish Cake)	Very enthusiastic; appreciated free assistance	3 days	3 days	Lack of understanding of halal certification's importance	-	-	Enhanced understanding of halal certification; higher consumer trust; potential for



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									business expansion
	HF04	Spicy Fried Crackers	Very enthusiastic; believed it would boost consumer confidence	5 days	6 days	Limited media use and marketing; use of non-halal labeled products; operating from family home	Improvement needed in labeling and workspace	Optimistic about increased market acceptance	Enhanced quality and credibility; potential for business expansion in the future
	HF05	Sweet Corn	Very positive; appreciated free assistance	7 days	7 days	Lack of understanding of halal certification's importance	-	-	Increased awareness and understanding of halal certification; higher consumer trust; market expansion
	HF06	Sago Crackers	Very supportive; "Yes, sure, sure"	2 weeks	2 weeks	Online assistance caused response delays	-	-	Higher business level with halal certification; increased consumer trust; market expansion
	HF07	Donut	Very positive;	7 days	7 days	Lack of understand	-	-	Inspired business





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			appreciated free assistance			ing of halal certification's importance			development; higher consumer trust
	HF08	Rempeyek (Crackers)	Very positive; appreciated free assistance	7 days	7 days	Lack of understanding of halal certification's importance	-	-	Enhanced business advancement and trust; potential for further business development
	HF09	Banswheet	Very positive; appreciated free assistance	7 days	7 days	Lack of understanding of halal certification's importance	-	-	Increased understanding and trust; market expansion
0	HF10	Pecal Sauce	Very positive; appreciated free assistance	7 days	7 days	Lack of understanding of halal certification's importance	-	-	Increased understanding and trust; market expansion
1	HF11	Dry Cake	Initially rejected; later accepted	5 days	7 days	Lack of understanding of halal certification's importance	Needs regular process improvement steps	-	Enhanced process efficiency; potential for improved operations

2	HF12	Herbal Jamu	Very good; very enthusiastic	1 month (7 revisions)	1 month	Communication challenges due to time constraints	-	-	Enhanced quality and trust; potential for further development
3	HF13	Blondo Kelapa (Coconut Spread)	Immediately accepted; already had some halal products	1 week	1 week	Lack of innovation in product use	Needs more innovation	-	Potential for product innovation and market expansion
4	HF14	Squid Sambal	Initially hesitant; later interested	1 week	1 week	Lack of understanding of halal certification's importance	Improvement needed in cooking and packing distance	-	Enhanced product handling and consumer trust; potential for further development
5	HF15	Mushroom Chips	Initially hesitant; later very willing	7 days	7 days	Distance challenges ; lack of understanding of halal certification	Needs consistent use of halal certified ingredients	-	Enhanced product consistency and consumer trust; potential for further development
6	HF16	Beverage	Fully supported	3 days (online)	3 days	None identified	Needs consistency in raw material use	-	Enhanced product consistency and consume



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									r trust
7	HF17	Iced Tea Beverage	Very good and enthusiastic; for new product certification	2 weeks	2 weeks	Some ingredients not halal certified	-	-	Enhanced product certification and consumer trust; potential for further development
8	HF18	Beverage	Very happy	2 weeks (3 revisions)	2 weeks	Communication challenges due to lack of free time	-	-	Enhanced product quality and consumer trust; potential for further development
9	HF19	Cookies	Very positive	5 days	7 days	Communication challenges due to distance and time differences; delays in record-keeping	Needs regular process improvement steps	-	Enhanced process efficiency and consumer trust; potential for improved operations
0	HF20	Snacks	Very positive	4 days	7 days	Lack of understanding of halal certification process stages	Needs better awareness and updates on halal product developments	-	Enhanced understanding and trust; potential for further development

Several business owners had limited understanding of the importance of halal certification initially but appreciated the free assistance provided by the program. Participants like HF02 and HF03 expressed happiness and gratitude for the support. Although these businesses encountered challenges related to understanding the certification process, the assistance helped them recognize the significance of halal certification, thereby increasing their consumer trust and opening opportunities for market expansion.

The program also faced logistical challenges, particularly with online assistance causing delays in responses. Business owners such as sago crackers (as facilitated by HF06) and mushroom chips (as facilitated by HF15) experienced difficulties due to time constraints and distance. Despite these issues, the support provided was beneficial in improving their product quality and consistency, leading to higher consumer trust and potential business development.

Feedback from the halal supervisors highlighted the need for continuous improvement in various areas. For example, HF11 noted the importance of regular process improvement steps for the cookies business, while HF12 emphasized the need for better communication due to time constraints in assisting herbal jamu business. These insights underscore the necessity of consistent innovation and process refinement to ensure sustained quality and compliance with halal standards.

Overall, the Halal Supervision Program demonstrated significant positive impacts on the participating businesses. The support and guidance provided helped increase awareness and understanding of halal certification, leading to improved product quality, enhanced consumer trust, and potential market expansion. The program's success indicates the importance of such initiatives in supporting small businesses to achieve certification and meet consumer demands in a competitive market.

## Effective Communication and Cooperation

In several cases, the effectiveness of communication and cooperation between the halal supervisor and the business owner was pivotal. In Case 2, HF02 reported that clear communication and understanding facilitated a smooth five-day process. Similarly, in Case 3, HF03 emphasized the importance of effective communication, resulting in successful certification within three days. These cases underline the significance of strong communication and cooperation in ensuring a smooth certification process.

## Overcoming Technological and Marketing Challenges

Certain cases highlighted the challenges related to technology use and marketing. In Case 1, technological limitations and marketing difficulties were significant hurdles. Despite these challenges, the process was completed successfully in five days. Case 4 also illustrated similar challenges, where technological gaps and limited marketing were addressed over an eleven-day period. These cases emphasize the program's role in helping businesses overcome technological and marketing obstacles.



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## Initial Reluctance and Knowledge Gaps

In several instances, business owners faced initial reluctance or knowledge gaps about halal certification. In Case 11, the business owner initially resisted due to a lack of understanding but eventually embraced the certification after thorough explanation and guidance. Similarly, in Case 12, HF12 assisted traditional medicine business, overcoming communication challenges and lack of understanding through persistent effort over a month. These cases highlight the program's effectiveness in educating and encouraging reluctant business owners to pursue halal certification.

## Remote and Online Supervision

A few cases demonstrated the feasibility and effectiveness of remote or online supervision. In Case 6, HF02 supported sago cracker business online, overcoming the challenges of remote communication to complete the process in two weeks. This case shows that, even with remote supervision, effective communication and dedication can lead to successful certification.

## Improving Operational Practices and Compliance

Some cases involved significant improvements in operational practices and compliance. In Case 12, Herbal business involved addressing operational and communication challenges over a month, leading to seven revisions before final approval. These cases illustrate how the program not only ensures compliance but also enhances the operational practices of businesses, resulting in better quality and credibility.

Overall, these cases from the Halal Supervision Program highlight the importance of effective communication and cooperation, the ability to overcome technological and marketing challenges, addressing initial reluctance and knowledge gaps, the feasibility of remote supervision, and the enhancement of operational practices and compliance. The program's tailored support helps small businesses navigate the complexities of halal certification, ultimately improving their market credibility and operational standards.

## Effective Communication and Responsiveness

Several cases demonstrated the importance of effective communication and responsiveness in the Halal Supervision Program. In Case 5, HF05 support for the snacks business involved clear instructions and timely responses, resulting in smooth and successful certification. Similarly, in Case 7, HF07 assisted business, where business owner readiness and positive response facilitated a seamless week-long process. Case 9 also highlighted this theme, with HF09 guiding Bansweet business through clear communication and prompt action. In all these cases, effective communication and the business owners' responsiveness were key to successful certification. This point affirms finding of Zaahiroh & Priantina (2024)

## Overcoming Initial Reluctance and Knowledge Gaps

Several cases involved business owners who were initially reluctant or had limited understanding of halal certification, and this confirms conclusion of Aprilia and Priantina (2022). In Case 8, HF08 assisted cracker's business, where business owner's initial lack of knowledge was overcome through clear guidance, leading to successful certification. Similarly, Case 10 saw HF10 helping spices business, overcoming initial knowledge barriers with patient guidance and resulting in enhanced product credibility. Case 14 featured HF14 assisting squid sambal business, where initial hesitation was transformed into enthusiasm after understanding the certification's benefits. These cases highlight the program's role in educating and empowering business owners to understand and embrace halal certification.

## Addressing Logistical and Operational Challenges

Some cases demonstrated the program's ability to address logistical and operational challenges. Case 15, where HF15 assisted mushroom chips business, overcame distance-related challenges through effective communication, resulting in successful certification. In Case 18, HF18 supported beverage business, overcoming communication challenges and time constraints through persistence and multiple revisions. Similarly, in Case 19, HF19 helped cookies business navigate communication challenges due to distance, leading to improved operational practices. These cases underscore the program's capacity to adapt and provide effective support despite logistical hurdles. Digitalization is needed (as is also highlighted by Priantina & Pramitha, 2023).

## Enhancing Operational Practices and Product Quality

Several cases highlighted improvements in operational practices and product quality. In Case 16, HF16's online assistance to BoBa business emphasized the importance of consistent ingredient quality and process adherence, enhancing product reliability. Case 20 saw HF20 assisting food business, where clear explanations and awareness of halal certification improved product trust and market reach. These cases illustrate how the program not only provides certification but also enhances overall business practices and product quality.

## Prior Experience and Continuous Improvement

A few cases involved businesses with prior experience in halal certification, focusing on continuous improvement. Case 17 featured HF17 supporting iced tea business, addressing issues with incorporating halal-certified ingredients and ensuring successful certification for new products. In Case 13, HF13 assisted Blondo Kelapa business, leveraging business' existing familiarity with halal products to facilitate a smooth process. These cases highlight the importance of ongoing support and adaptation to certification requirements, promoting continuous improvement in business operations.

Overall, the Halal Supervision Program has demonstrated its effectiveness in enhancing communication, overcoming initial reluctance and knowledge gaps, addressing logistical





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challenges, improving operational practices, and promoting continuous improvement, thereby significantly benefiting small businesses.

To overcome the obstacles faced by Micro and Small Enterprises (MSEs) in obtaining halal certification, a comprehensive strategy is needed. One way is through infrastructure and financial support provided by the government. Assistance programs such as grants, technical assistance, and training can help MSEs expand their infrastructure and improve their financial capabilities.

Apart from that, increasing access to information is also key. Education and outreach initiatives regarding halal principles and certification processes can be organized by the government in collaboration with non-governmental and religious organizations. Through seminars, direct teaching, or other information media, MSEs can better understand the requirements and procedures for halal certification.

To help MSEs meet the costs of halal certification, the government can consider fiscal policies or incentives such as tax cuts or subsidies. In addition, it is also important to simplify the certification process by collaborating between the government and certification organizations. The application of digital technology and more effective and transparent certification methods can reduce administrative complexity and associated overhead costs. Lastly, MSEs need to understand policy modifications related to halal certification. By receiving sufficient and clear information from the government and relevant agencies, MSEs can modify their procedures to meet the new standards with the help of training and consultation (as is also concluded by Priantina and Sopian, 2023). With a holistic approach like this, it is hoped that MSEs can overcome the obstacles they face in obtaining halal certification (Yuanitasari et al., 2023).

## CONCLUSION

The Halal Supervision Program has proven to be a vital support system for small and medium enterprises (SMEs) seeking halal certification. Through effective communication, strong cooperation, and persistent education efforts, halal supervisors have successfully guided business owners through the certification process. Some cases underscore the importance of clear communication and understanding between supervisors and business owners. Additionally, the program's ability to address and overcome challenges related to technology use, marketing, and initial reluctance further demonstrates its effectiveness in facilitating halal certification for diverse businesses.

Moreover, the program has shown adaptability in remote supervision, as seen in some cases. The ability to provide effective guidance and achieve successful certification through online means highlights the program's flexibility and reach. Furthermore, the focus on improving operational practices and compliance, as observed in some cases, emphasizes the program's role in enhancing the overall quality and credibility of the businesses it supports. This comprehensive approach not only ensures compliance with halal standards but also promotes better business practices, thereby increasing consumer trust and expanding market opportunities for MSEs.

To further enhance the effectiveness of the Halal Supervision Program, it is recommended to develop more structured training sessions focused on digital literacy and marketing strategies. Given the challenges faced by some business owners, targeted training can help bridge the technological gap and improve their marketing capabilities. Such initiatives will empower SMEs to leverage digital tools more effectively, thereby increasing their reach and competitiveness in the market. Additionally, creating a resource hub with guides, tutorials, and best practices for halal certification can provide ongoing support and reference material for business owners.

Another recommendation is to establish a mentorship network that pairs experienced business owners who have successfully navigated the halal certification process with those who are new to it. This peer-to-peer support system can provide practical insights and moral support, making the certification journey less daunting for newcomers. Furthermore, regular feedback mechanisms should be implemented to continuously gather input from both supervisors and business owners. This feedback can help identify areas for improvement and ensure that the program remains responsive to the evolving needs of SMEs, thereby sustaining its impact and effectiveness in promoting halal certification.

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