



Assessing msme preparedness for compulsory halal certification: A case study of bogor regency, indonesia

Fathan Abdul Fattah ^{a,1,*}, Betania Kartika Muflih ^{b,2}, Mohammad Aizat Jamaludin ^{c,3}

^{a,b,c} International Institute for Halal Research and Training, International Islamic University Malaysia

¹f.fattah@live.iium.edu.my; ²betania@iium.edu.my; ³mohdaizat@iium.edu.my

*Corresponding Author

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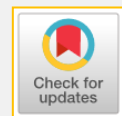
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ABSTRACT

The Indonesian Government Regulation No. 39 of 2021 mandates halal certification for all food and beverage products, including those produced by MSMEs. This study explores the readiness of MSMEs in Bogor Regency to comply with this regulation and identifies key challenges they face. Using a qualitative case study approach, data were collected through semi-structured interviews with MSME owners, government officials, and halal certification body representatives. The findings reveal low readiness among MSMEs, primarily due to limited knowledge, financial constraints, and infrastructural inadequacies. Although initiatives such as the self-declare scheme and digital platforms have improved accessibility, effectiveness remains hampered by a lack of awareness and technical support. The study highlights the importance of stakeholder collaboration and recommends enhancing training, simplifying procedures, and expanding financial and infrastructural support.

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Introduction

Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) play a critical role in Indonesia's economic development, particularly in regions like Bogor Regency where they significantly contribute to job creation, community welfare, and local economic resilience (Tambunan, 2008). According to BPS (2023), Bogor Regency houses approximately 372,070 MSMEs, representing the highest concentration in West Java. These businesses are especially dominant in the food and beverage sector, which is one of the primary focuses of halal regulation. Given its proximity to the capital and its vast economic potential, Bogor Regency presents a unique context for evaluating halal policy implementation at the grassroots level (Dwi Purnama Indah & Eva Putri Yuliana, 2023).

With the implementation of the mandatory halal certification policy under Government Regulation No. 39 of 2021, all food and beverage products, including those from MSMEs, must be certified halal before being marketed. Despite the importance of this regulation in ensuring product integrity and consumer protection in a Muslim-majority country, many MSMEs face substantial challenges in compliance. These include a lack of knowledge about the certification process, financial constraints, and insufficient infrastructure to meet halal standards (Akim et al., 2018). Research by Padjadjaran University found that 67% of MSME respondents lacked knowledge of the halal certification procedure, which represents a major obstacle in achieving the government's halal economy goals.

Although the government has introduced several support mechanisms—such as the self-declare scheme, financial incentives, and educational outreach—implementation remains inconsistent. Key challenges include digital illiteracy among MSME operators, limited access to official platforms like SiHalal, and an uneven distribution of certified raw material suppliers (Giyanti, 2022; Haleem, 2020). Additionally, the perception that halal certification is overly bureaucratic or relevant only to large-scale producers further discourages participation (Hashim, 2009).

This study seeks to assess MSME preparedness in Bogor Regency for mandatory halal certification, identify barriers to successful implementation, and evaluate the impact of governmental and institutional interventions. By focusing on this region and sector, the research aims to offer localized insights that may inform national halal policy development and implementation. This is particularly relevant given the extension of the certification deadline to October 2026, as announced by Vice President Ma'ruf Amin, which offers a critical window for improving MSME readiness and policy effectiveness (bpjph.halal.go.id, 2024)..

Method

This study utilizes a qualitative case study design anchored in a constructivist paradigm, which posits that knowledge is socially constructed through human experience and interaction (Muir, 2009). This approach facilitates a deeper understanding of the complex realities surrounding MSMEs' readiness for halal certification, taking into account the interplay of regulatory, economic, and institutional factors specific to Bogor Regency.

The research involved purposive sampling to identify participants who were directly involved with the halal certification process or policies. A total of 23 individuals were interviewed, including 20 MSME owners from the food and beverage sector, one government official involved in halal policy implementation, and two representatives from halal certification bodies (BPJPH and LPH). These participants were chosen for their active roles and firsthand experiences in navigating the halal certification system.

Data collection was conducted using semi-structured interviews, allowing for flexibility while ensuring that core themes such as readiness, perceived challenges, financial constraints, and interactions with support mechanisms were consistently explored. This was complemented by field observations of business premises and analysis of policy documents, halal certification guidelines, and institutional frameworks related to halal assurance (Tieman, 2012; Giyanti, 2022).

Thematic analysis was employed to interpret the data, with all transcripts processed using ATLAS.ti software. The software enabled systematic coding and the identification of key themes and patterns related to MSME engagement with the certification process. The major themes identified include knowledge and awareness gaps, infrastructure and resource readiness, regulatory adaptation, and the role of institutional collaboration. Ethical considerations were adhered to throughout the study, with informed consent obtained from all participants and confidentiality maintained in line with academic research standards (Hashim, 2009).

Results and Discussion

This section discusses the key findings from the fieldwork, focusing on four major themes identified through thematic analysis: MSME readiness, challenges faced in certification, the role of stakeholders, and the overall effectiveness of existing halal certification policies. These themes reflect not only the structural and institutional dimensions of halal certification but also the socio-cultural and operational contexts that affect MSME compliance and engagement.

The current halal certification framework has made notable strides in broadening accessibility, especially through the introduction of the self-declare scheme and the

digitization of certification procedures via platforms such as SiHalal. These innovations were intended to address long-standing issues of cost, complexity, and geographic inaccessibility (Nashihin et al., 2025). For instance, the self-declare scheme enables micro and small enterprises to bypass traditional audit-based certification, which is often seen as too resource-intensive. Meanwhile, digital platforms allow for a more efficient, transparent, and user-friendly registration process, aligning with broader efforts to modernize public services in Indonesia.

Despite these advances, the implementation and practical adoption of these innovations remain limited and uneven across the MSME landscape in Bogor Regency. Many business owners—particularly those operating informally or with limited technological exposure—struggle to access or understand these digital tools. Likewise, the lack of localized support mechanisms means that even when tools are available, they may not be accompanied by the necessary training, mentorship, or financial incentives required to ensure uptake and successful certification outcomes.

The findings from this study suggest that although regulatory progress has been made, several structural, informational, and operational barriers continue to hinder the full participation of MSMEs in the halal certification ecosystem. Bridging these gaps requires not only technical improvements and stakeholder coordination but also a rethinking of how halal certification is communicated, supported, and monitored—particularly in regions like Bogor that serve as vital economic hubs for MSMEs.

1) Readiness of MSMEs

The study found that the majority of Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) in Bogor Regency lack a comprehensive understanding of the halal certification process. This knowledge gap is especially pronounced among micro and informal enterprises, such as street food vendors and home-based producers, who often operate outside formal regulatory frameworks. Many of these businesses exhibit minimal awareness of the specific requirements, procedures, and benefits associated with halal certification, leading to widespread assumptions that such certification is either unnecessary or irrelevant for small-scale operations (Giyanti, 2022).

One of the root causes of this issue is the limited reach of targeted educational outreach programs. Without consistent and contextualized training initiatives, MSMEs are left uninformed about the critical role halal certification plays in enhancing consumer trust, market access, and business legitimacy. Moreover, the absence of tailored communication strategies has contributed to persistent misperceptions that only large-scale food producers need to engage with halal compliance mechanisms.

A significant barrier also lies in digital illiteracy, which hinders MSMEs' ability to interact with key technological platforms such as SiHalal—a government-provided system designed to facilitate online registration, document submission, and certification monitoring. SiHalal requires users to possess a valid Business Identification Number (NIB) and basic digital literacy skills. However, a large proportion of MSMEs, especially in rural or semi-urban areas, remain unfamiliar with such requirements or lack access to the tools and knowledge necessary to navigate these systems effectively (BPJPH, 2024). Consequently, many are unable to benefit from the simplified self-declaration procedures the platform offers.

Infrastructure challenges further exacerbate these difficulties. Many MSMEs operate from modest, often makeshift facilities that do not meet the physical requirements of halal certification. Issues such as inadequate storage, the absence of segregated processing equipment, and non-compliance with hygiene standards are common. Additionally, the use of uncertified raw materials sourced from traditional markets presents a serious challenge to meeting halal assurance standards, as these inputs may compromise the halal integrity of the final products (Tieman, 2012).

While the introduction of the self-declare scheme by the government was intended to lower the entry barrier to certification, uptake has been limited. This limited adoption is

largely due to low awareness, misinformation, and skepticism regarding the legitimacy and recognition of self-declared halal certificates. Some MSMEs view it as inferior to full audits conducted by recognized certification bodies, which diminishes the scheme's perceived value and effectiveness. Therefore, unless accompanied by robust socialization efforts and assurance from regulatory authorities, the scheme risks remaining underutilized despite its potential to support small businesses in entering the halal ecosystem.

2) Challenges Faced

Financial barriers remain one of the most persistent and significant obstacles for Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) seeking halal certification in Indonesia. A large proportion of these enterprises operate with very limited profit margins and lack the financial resilience to invest in necessary improvements, such as facility upgrades, hygiene enhancements, documentation compliance, and consultancy services. Even under the relatively simplified self-declare scheme, which is designed to ease the financial burden, many MSMEs find the costs prohibitive (Suhartini, 2020). The situation is further exacerbated by limited access to government financial aid programs. Either due to insufficient dissemination of information or the complexities of application procedures, MSMEs often miss out on subsidies or grants that could otherwise support their compliance efforts.

In addition to financial constraints, knowledge gaps and entrenched misconceptions continue to hinder MSME participation in halal certification schemes. Research indicates that many MSMEs still perceive halal certification as a regulatory burden meant only for medium to large-scale enterprises engaged in export-oriented or mass production activities (Hashim, 2009). This misunderstanding discourages micro and informal businesses—such as food stalls, home-based producers, and local eateries—from pursuing certification, despite their significant role in Indonesia's halal value chain. Moreover, the lack of awareness regarding the broader benefits of halal certification—such as increased consumer trust, enhanced brand reputation, and expanded access to domestic and international markets—contributes to a general reluctance to engage with the process.

The bureaucratic complexity associated with halal certification processes further compounds the problem. MSMEs are required to engage with multiple institutions, including the Halal Product Assurance Agency (BPJPH), the Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI), and various Lembaga Pemeriksa Halal (LPH), each with its own set of procedures and documentation requirements. This institutional fragmentation often results in overlapping mandates, procedural ambiguity, and delays in processing applications. For MSMEs that lack dedicated administrative staff or familiarity with regulatory compliance, navigating this multifaceted system can be both confusing and intimidating (Giyanti, 2022). As a result, many MSMEs abandon the process midway or avoid initiating it altogether.

These interconnected challenges highlight the urgent need for a more accessible and supportive institutional framework. Establishing decentralized and regionally adapted technical assistance programs would allow MSMEs to receive hands-on guidance and capacity-building support. One particularly promising solution is the creation of integrated halal support centers at the regional or district level. These centers could serve as one-stop hubs, offering services such as application assistance, training workshops, access to certified suppliers, and mentoring from experienced halal professionals. Such infrastructure would not only reduce barriers to entry but also foster a more inclusive halal ecosystem aligned with Indonesia's national halal vision.

3) Role of Stakeholders

The role of stakeholders is central to enabling and sustaining MSME participation in the halal certification process. At the core of Indonesia's halal assurance infrastructure are several key institutions: the Ministry of Religious Affairs through the Halal Product Assurance Organizing Body (BPJPH), the Indonesian Ulema Council (Majelis Ulama Indonesia/MUI), and

Lembaga Pemeriksa Halal (LPH). Together, these entities form the institutional backbone responsible for shaping halal policy, setting standards, providing technical guidelines, and monitoring the compliance of certified businesses (Tieman, 2012). Their coordination and synergy are vital in creating a transparent, accessible, and trustworthy halal certification ecosystem.

Despite their strategic importance, findings from the field suggest that stakeholder support remains uneven across different regions. Implementation of halal certification policies is often fragmented, with significant variation in the level of engagement and resources allocated by local institutions. MSMEs in semi-urban and rural areas are particularly disadvantaged, as they frequently lack access to the necessary technical guidance, infrastructure, or administrative support. This regional disparity undermines the consistency and quality of service delivery, posing a serious challenge to the national objective of inclusive and equitable halal assurance (Haleem, 2020).

One noteworthy initiative aimed at closing this gap is the deployment of halal facilitators—formally referred to as Pendamping Proses Produk Halal (PPPH). These trained individuals are assigned to guide MSMEs through the certification process, assisting with document preparation, regulatory compliance, and communication with authorities. Their presence has been instrumental in building trust, simplifying complex procedures, and enhancing understanding among business owners. However, the current number of facilitators is grossly insufficient to meet demand, particularly in densely populated areas such as Bogor Regency, where thousands of MSMEs operate across diverse sectors (BPJPH, 2024).

Addressing these challenges requires a more integrated and proactive approach to stakeholder collaboration. Enhanced coordination between government institutions, certification bodies, industry associations, and academic institutions is essential to streamline processes and amplify outreach. Joint initiatives—such as nationwide awareness campaigns, standardized training modules, and the development of localized support frameworks—could significantly strengthen MSME engagement. Moreover, empowering local governments and community-based organizations to act as intermediaries could ensure that halal certification services are more contextually relevant and accessible at the grassroots level.

Ultimately, a sustainable and inclusive halal certification system depends not only on regulatory strength but also on the collective commitment of all stakeholders to reduce barriers, harmonize efforts, and extend meaningful support to MSMEs across Indonesia's diverse socio-economic landscape.

4) Policy Effectiveness

The Indonesian government has undertaken several notable initiatives to improve access to halal certification, particularly for micro and small enterprises. Among the most impactful measures are the introduction of the self-declare scheme and the digitization of certification procedures via platforms such as SiHalal. The self-declare mechanism allows eligible MSMEs to certify their products without undergoing the costly auditing process, thereby significantly lowering financial entry barriers (BPJPH, 2024). This policy move was strategically designed to accelerate halal compliance in alignment with Indonesia's vision of becoming a global halal hub. However, the success of such initiatives is highly dependent on the quality of their implementation, the robustness of outreach strategies, and the sustainability of post-certification support.

Despite these innovations, numerous MSMEs continue to face practical difficulties in accessing and utilizing the digital infrastructure provided. Digital illiteracy and limited internet connectivity, especially in semi-urban and rural regions, hinder full participation in the SiHalal system. The platform itself, although conceptually progressive, has been critiqued for its technical limitations, including poor user interface design and the lack of intuitive navigation. For MSMEs unfamiliar with digital bureaucracy, these shortcomings become significant deterrents (Giyanti, 2022). Consequently, the gap between policy intent and on-

the-ground implementation remains wide, leaving many MSMEs unable to benefit from the systems designed to support them.

Recognizing these persistent challenges, the Indonesian government extended the mandatory halal certification deadline to October 2026. This policy adjustment, announced by Vice President Ma'ruf Amin, serves as an institutional acknowledgment of the systemic obstacles that continue to affect MSMEs. The extension offers additional time for businesses to adapt and comply; however, it also signals the need for intensified efforts from regulatory bodies to bolster support systems. Without parallel improvements in outreach, training, and financial assistance, the extended timeline may merely postpone rather than solve the underlying issues (Jingga, 2024).

To ensure that halal certification policies are both equitable and effective, a holistic and inclusive approach is essential. First, financial support schemes must be expanded and tailored to different segments of MSMEs, including informal enterprises and home-based producers. Second, the government must invest in improving the functionality and user-friendliness of digital platforms like SiHalal, ensuring accessibility even for those with minimal digital literacy. Third, monitoring mechanisms must be strengthened to ensure sustained compliance after certification is granted. Finally, establishing a transparent feedback loop—where MSMEs can report issues, track the status of their applications, and receive responsive support—would significantly enhance trust and long-term engagement in the certification ecosystem.

Conclusion

The findings of this study reveal that while recent policy interventions have made notable strides in expanding access to halal certification—particularly through the introduction of the self-declare scheme and the digitization of registration systems—Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) in Bogor Regency continue to face significant readiness gaps. These include financial limitations, insufficient infrastructural capacity, and a lack of basic understanding of halal certification procedures. Such deficiencies are more acute in semi-urban and rural areas, highlighting a critical need for more inclusive, regionally responsive, and sustained support systems tailored to the diverse conditions faced by MSMEs.

A key insight that emerged from this research is that halal certification should not be viewed merely as a compliance requirement but rather as a strategic enabler of growth. In Indonesia—home to the world's largest Muslim population and a rapidly expanding halal industry—halal certification offers MSMEs a valuable opportunity to enhance product credibility, gain consumer trust, and access broader markets. Unfortunately, this potential remains underutilized, primarily due to ongoing structural challenges, knowledge gaps, and perceptual barriers that discourage engagement with the certification process.

To bridge these gaps, stronger collaboration among key stakeholders—including the Halal Product Assurance Organizing Body (BPJPH), the Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI), Lembaga Pemeriksa Halal (LPH), and academic institutions—is essential. Such partnerships can play a transformative role in creating standardized training curricula, ensuring uniform policy implementation, and fostering data-driven approaches to certification. Educational institutions, in particular, are well-positioned to act as intermediaries by providing MSMEs with outreach, mentorship, and capacity-building programs grounded in local context and research-based insight.

Furthermore, the study underscores the urgency of localizing halal policy implementation. While national frameworks have laid the groundwork for widespread certification access, regional disparities in digital literacy, access to certified inputs, and institutional assistance require more tailored interventions. The establishment of halal support centers at the municipal or regency level—staffed by trained facilitators and

supported by financial, technical, and digital infrastructure—could significantly enhance readiness and participation among MSMEs. Such centers would also provide an avenue for feedback collection, application assistance, and post-certification monitoring, which are essential for iterative policy improvement.

In conclusion, enabling MSMEs in Bogor Regency—and across Indonesia—to meaningfully participate in halal certification is vital for inclusive and equitable economic development. The successful integration of MSMEs into the halal ecosystem requires a multi-pronged approach involving regulatory adaptability, localized institutional support, sustained education, and accessible financing. Without such coordinated and proactive efforts, there is a real risk that smaller enterprises will be left behind, thus undermining the broader goals of Indonesia's halal assurance framework and its vision of becoming a global halal hub.

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