

Empowerment of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises Through Free Halal Certification Assistance to Strengthen Economic Independence Synergy in Triharjo Village

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Abstract. Halal certification on business products is an aspect that is always considered by every consumer. Indonesia as a country with a majority Muslim population, always maintains that every product circulating in the community has been halal certified. However, in reality, there are still many products that have not been certified halal due to the lack of knowledge and information possessed by business actors. KKN MIT 18 Post 58 UIN Walisongo together with Walisongo Halal Center took proactive steps to provide socialization and assistance for MSME actors in Triharjo Village to obtain halal certification for their products. This program applies the Service-Learning method by showing the commitment and direct contribution of students in empowering sustainable solutions in the community. This program aims to expand the market reach of their products, encourage MSMEs to consistently provide quality halal products and enhance economic independence for the people of Triharjo Village in a sustainable manner.

Keywords: Economy, Halal Certification, MSMEs.

Abstrak. Sertifikasi halal pada produk usaha merupakan aspek yang selalu diperhatikan oleh setiap konsumen. Indonesia sebagai negara dengan mayoritas penduduk beragama Islam, selalu menjaga setiap produk yang beredar di masyarakat telah bersertifikat halal. Namun pada realitasnya, masih banyak produk yang belum bersertifikasi halal karena minimnya pengetahuan dan informasi yang dimiliki pelaku usaha. KKN MIT 18 Posko 58 UIN Walisongo bersama Walisongo Halal Center mengambil langkah proaktif untuk memberikan sosialisasi dan pendampingan bagi pelaku UMKM di Desa Triharjo agar memperoleh sertifikasi halal bagi produk mereka. Program ini menerapkan metode *Service Learning* dengan menunjukkan komitmen dan kontribusi langsung mahasiswa dalam pemberdayaan solusi berkelanjutan di masyarakat. Program ini bertujuan untuk memperluas jangkauan pasar penjualan produk, mendorong UMKM untuk konsisten menyediakan produk-produk halal yang berkualitas dan meningkatkan kemandirian ekonomi bagi masyarakat Desa Triharjo secara berkelanjutan.

Kata kunci: Ekonomi, Sertifikasi Halal, UMKM

1. INTRODUCTION

According to the State of the Global Islamic Economy Report 2023, Indonesia experienced an increase in the ranking of the Global Islamic Economic Indicators from the previous year, where in 2022, Indonesia occupied the fourth position, while in 2023, Indonesia managed to climb to the third position, leading the index of 81 countries as the country with the strongest economy below Malaysia, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates (Liaqat 2023:13). This economic improvement is supported by Islamic Investment and Economy, Halal Product Industry, Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises, and Islamic Finance Innovation (Liaqat 2023). Despite a decrease of 34.7% compared to last year, the Halal Industry is still a sector that has a significant influence on the Growth

of the Global Islamic Economy (Liaqat 2023). In addition, around 30 million Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises themselves are targeted by the Indonesia government in order to be able to access digital platform as an effort to develop MSMEs (Liaqat 2023). So that the potential for MSMEs to grow is more significant (Syafiah and Qodariyah 2022:247).

This is actually the result of the efforts of the Indonesia government through law No. 33/2014 concerning Halal Product Assurance (UU-JPH) where a product is required to have halal certification as an official guarantee from the government that the food or beverage product can be consumed by 87.2% of Indonesian people (Indonesia.go.id2023: Date Accessed: 01 September 2024). In addition, to Law No. 33/2024, Law No. 11/2020 on Job Creation also requires Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises to obtain halal certificates (M K Anam et al. 2023).

In the process, the halal certificate is an official endorsement issued by the Halal Product Assurance Agency (BPJPH) to ensure that the products produced by business actors are products that can be accounted for halal according to the fatwa of the Indonesia Ulema Council (MUI). This will involve detailed verification from raw materials, production processes, to sales, and ensuring consistent control to maintain halal standards. Initially, this certification was specifically applied to products whose halal status was still in doubt, with the aim of providing certainty to consumers. However, as time and considerations develop, according to Law No. 11/2020, Halal Certification applies to all business actors. This halal certainty will continuously increase consumer confidence, which in turn affects the number of purchases of these products (Pradana 2023:2).

In general, the term MSME refers to a business activity established by citizens, either individually or in the form of a business entity. This effort is part of the country's economic family that contributes to the GDP sector with a value of 61.97%, equivalent to Rp. 8,573.89 trillion. This business unit can touch 4.19 million in 2021, including 3.7 million units of Micro Enterprises, 354,884 units of small businesses, and 39,125 units of medium enterprises (Aliyah 2022:65).

The existence of MSMEs drive economic growth and regional development. This can happen because the more jobs there are, the more the potential for individuals to get prosperity also increases. Economic growth can be influenced by the increase in the population of the community which is directly proportional to output and output (Kiswandi, Fawwazky Raja Putra; Setiawan, Muhamad Cesario; Ghifari 2023:155).

MSMEs play a unique role in contributing to the community's economy. However, this progress is often not balanced by compliance with procedures set by the government,

such as the obligation to have a halal certificate. One of the main factors that causes the low ownership of halal certificates among MSME actors is the lack of education about the importance of halal certification in business products. Many business actors do not understand the benefits and procedures for applying for halal certificates, so they have difficulty complying with the policies that have been set.

The lack of information about regulations and support from the government is an obstacle for MSME actors in Triharjo Village to have a halal certificate for their business. Based on this background, this study formulates a problem on how to empower MSMEs in the Triharjo Village community through socialization of the importance of halal certification in business products, providing assistance to business actors to have halal certificates for free, and the effectiveness of halal certification assistance programs for the economic independence of the community in Triharjo Village.

This research aims to empower community MSMEs and provide assistance to business actors in Triharjo Village to have a halal certificate for free. This Free Halal Certification program is designed to establish collaboration between Walisongo Halal Center (WHC), as a partner of BPJPH, and business actors in Triharjo Village. Through intensive mentoring and targeted synergy, it is hoped that business actors can achieve stronger independence, as well as expand sustainable economic empowerment among MSMEs.

2. RESEARCH METHODS

Efforts to strengthen the synergy of economic independence in Triharjo Village are carried out by applying the Service-Learning as a method that places students as part of society to be responsible for community services and contribute to social problems that occur in society. This method encourages students to apply their knowledge as well as find solutions to societal problems (Bukidz 2023:1). Students are directed to form community programs that are able to meet public needs as a form of University-Community Partnership (Afandi et al. 2022:166).

The process of implementing free halal certification assistance activities for MSMEs in Triharjo Village is carried out using the Service-Learning method taken through three stages, namely:

- a. The preparation stage was carried out before the implementation of the empowerment and mentoring program, MIT KKN 18 Post 58 UIN Walisongo coordinated by distributing invitation letters to 25 MSME actors around the Triharjo Village area.

MSME actors are encouraged to bring their Identity Cards (KTP) and business products as a condition for registering for free halal certification. The preparation stage is also coordinated between KKN students, the committee, village officials and two halal certification assistants from the Walisongo Halal Center Semarang institution.

- b. The Socialization Stage is an interactive briefing and delivery of material to MSME actors in Triharjo Village related to the history of halal certification, halal certification procedures, legal basis for halal certification, and the benefits of halal certification (Mardiyah, Kunsah, and Azizah 2023:133). Socialization was carried out so that the public was willing to register their business products in order to obtain halal certification. This socialization was attended by 15 MSME actors in Triharjo Village from 3 regions, namely Kebonagung, Kebondalem, and Juwero.
- c. The Assistance Stage is the core stage in this activity by helping MSME actors in Triharjo Village get free halal certification organized by the Ministry of Religion. Assistance activities include registration of Business Identification Numbers (NIB), inspection of business products, input of materials and tools used in product manufacturing, data verification, and finalization of the issuance of halal certification on products.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Halal Certification in Indonesia

Since the beginning of the implementation of halal labeling in 1976, Indonesia has shown a commitment to guarantee halal products for consumers, especially for Muslims. The issuance of the Decree of the Minister of Health of the Republic of Indonesia Number 280/Men.Kes/Per/XI/76 provides a legal basis for producers to transparently include information about the ingredients used in their products, especially those containing pigs and their derivatives (Adinugraha et al. 2022:33). Food producers who produce using ingredients containing pork and its derivatives are required to provide a label of pork content in their food products, such as the following labels:



Picture 1 Warning Signs of Products Containing Pork
Source: Permenkes RI

This step not only raises awareness of the importance of halal labeling, but also serves as a forerunner for the development of more comprehensive and standardized halal certification. With the halal certification by the Indonesia Ulema Council (MUI) in 1989, Indonesia has further strengthened the halal network system that applies in the food sector. The labeling policy of food products in Indonesia shows a significant change in the government's approach to halal issues. The collaboration between the Minister of Health and the Association of Food and Beverage Entrepreneurs of All Indonesia (GAPMMI) in distributing the label to companies is a strategic first step to ensure consumer convenience in choosing products that are in accordance with religious values.

Initially, haram labeling was considered more practical and efficient, because a small part of the product contained pork. However, as time goes by and public awareness of the importance of halal increases. In 1985 there was a transition from the label "CONTAINS PIG" to the label "HALAL". With the issuance of the Joint Decree of the Minister of Health and the Minister of Religion No.42/Men.Kes/SKB/VIII/1985 and No. 68 of 1985 concerning the Inclusion of Halal Writings on Food Labels (Nahlah et al. 2023:6). The inclusion of the composition of ingredients and the way a product is processed is reported to the Ministry of Health and supervised by the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Religion (Moh Khoirul Anam, Saifuddin, and Wulandari 2023:3568).

The policy synchronization between the Ministry of Religious Affairs, the Ministry of Health, and the Indonesia Ulema Council (MUI) which began with the signing of the Cooperation Charter on June 21, 1996 shows significant efforts in ensuring the halalness of food products in Indonesia (Son 2023:5). Through Decree Number 924/Menkes/SK/VIII/1996, changes to the procedure for granting halal labeling were made to increase accountability and transparency in the halal certification process. Although initially the halal label was given based on unilateral information from the company, this has invited various challenges and criticisms related to its effectiveness in ensuring the halalness of products circulating in the community.

The implementation of Government Regulation Number 69 of 1999 concerning Food Labels and Advertisements shows the government's commitment to ensuring the safety and halal of food products circulating in the community (Qomaro 2023:57). Food labels are brief food information that is listed on product packaging in the form of images, writing, or a combination of both. The appointment of the Indonesia Ulema Council (MUI) as a halal certification body provides certainty that the certification inspection and processing process is carried out professionally and in accordance with the guidelines that have been set.



Picture 2 Halal Logo of the Indonesia Ulema Council
Source: Indonesia Ulema Council

Regulations related to halal products in Indonesia continue to experience significant development, covering various sectors such as food, cosmetics, medicines, fashion, and halal tourism. This change reflects the government's commitment to ensuring that every product circulating in the community is in accordance with sharia rules. With the issuance of Law (UU) No. 33 of 2014 concerning Halal Product Assurance on October 17, 2014, halal certification which was previously optional is now an obligation (Rongiyati 2024:12). This regulation not only provides a strong legal basis in the regulation of halal products in Indonesia.

The halal assurance process in Indonesia shows significant development through collaboration between Islamic institutions, such as the Indonesia Ulema Council (MUI) and the government, represented by the Halal Product Assurance Agency (BPJPH). Since MUI started halal certification in 1989, this system has undergone a transformation by folding the Halal Supervisory Agency (LPH) and various other initiatives to ensure that products circulating in the market are in accordance with sharia principles. The synergy between MUI and BPJPH creates a more comprehensive framework with the aim of increasing consumer confidence in halal products in Indonesia.

In order to accelerate the development of the halal industry, BPJPH supports the establishment of the Halal Product Process Assistance Agency (LP3H) which plays an important role in providing guidance and assistance to business actors. One of the clear examples of this effort is the Walisongo Halal Center Institution as an active institution in the implementation of the Halal Product Assurance Law No. 33 of 2014, LP3H not only provides training, but also opens opportunities for individuals to become Halal Product Process Assistants (PPH).



Picture 3 Logo Walisongo Halal Center

Source: Walisongo Halal Center

Walisongo Halal Center carries out its vision and mission as a center of excellence for professional halal studies, focusing on the development of halal studies in various sectors, advancing the halal industry through food products, beverages, cosmetics, medicines, as well as slaughtering and distribution services. This effort reflects WHC's dedication to supporting sustainable and relevant halal progress in the global arena. Walisongo Halal Center through LP3H has taken significant steps in supporting business actors by offering halal certification through *a free self-declaration* scheme with certain conditions.

Free Halal Certification Assistance for MSMEs in Triharjo Village

The Halal Product Assurance Agency (BPJPH) of the Ministry of Religion has targeted October 17, 2024 as the deadline for the first staging of halal certification obligations for all food, beverage, raw materials, food additives, food and beverage product auxiliary materials, as well as services and results of slaughtering animals for consumption (Hidayatullah 2020:255). The Halal Product Assurance Agency (BPJPH) targets 1 million free halal certifications for all MSME actors in Indonesia. This effort is carried out to accelerate the examination and issuance of certification for each MSME actor (Wahab et al. 2024).

The obligation of free halal certification for micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) has been regulated in Article 4A of Law Number 11 of 2002 concerning Job Creation (Shokhikhah et al. 2023:548). The next free halal certification will be fostered by BPJPH through halal certification *self-declare* or an independent statement on the halalness of a business product. Based on the Decree of the Head of BPJPH Number 150 of 2022 and the Decree of the Head of BPJPH Number 22 of 2023, the submission of halal certificates with the scheme *self-declare cannot* be done by all business actors. Submission of halal certification with a scheme *self-declare* must meet the following requirements: (Lutfika, Amalia, and Mardiah 2023:1–3).

- a. The type of product/product group that is certified halal does not contain elements of slaughtered animals, unless it comes from a producer or slaughterhouse/poultry slaughterhouse that has been certified halal
- b. The proposed product is in the form of goods and is not risky
- c. The proposed products do not use hazardous materials and only use ingredients that have been confirmed to be halal. Proven by a halal certificate or included in the list of ingredients according to KMA Number 1360 concerning Ingredients Exempted from Halal Certified Obligations
- d. The production process is simple and ensured to be free from unclean contamination and non-halal ingredients
- e. Production equipment using simple technology or done manually and/or semi-automatically (home business, not factory business)
- f. The product preservation process is carried out simply and does not use a combination of preservation methods

Business actors must meet all requirements and follow the entire series of halal certification registration processes, with direction from official Halal Product Process (PPH) assistants or those who have participated in training. The following is data on MSMEs that meet the requirements to provide free halal certification assistance in Triharjo Village:

Table 1. List of MSMEs in Free Halal Certification Assistance
in Triharjo Village

No.	Business Actors	Name and Type of Business
1.	Kholifah R	Iced Tea, Grill, Pickles, Seblak, Chicken Noodles
2.	Nuryono	Iced Tea, Shop
3.	Elis Masruroh	Grocery store
4.	Mahsuh/Erlan Sutoyo	Bakpia and Satya Kebab
5.	Muh Sudarsono	Crispy Banana
6.	Mukhori	Crispy and Corndog Tofu
7.	Agus S	Anonymous
8.	Madiono	Cireng Isi
9.	Nur Khamidah	Cilok
10.	Fitri Erina N	Kenzo Donat
11.	Anggi	Sempolan and Cilor
12.	Khusnul Khotimah	Q-la Kebab
13.	Yayan Ardiana	Cilok Vein Kendal
14.	Mi'ati	Kaka Shop

Source: Personal Documents (2024)

Based on the table above, there are 15 types of MSMEs that are willing to provide free halal certification assistance on products owned by each MSME. In this PPH assistance, MIT KKN 18 Post 58 UIN Walisongo students collaborated with the Walisongo Halal Center UIN Walisongo Semarang. PPH assistance to MSMEs in Triharjo Village is carried out with several steps as follows:

- a. PPH assistants provide socialization to business actors to increase insight and education, so as to avoid fear such as fear if their business products are taxed (Malahayati and Faizah 2023:429). It was conveyed by Rifi Maria Fitri Permonoputri., S.H as the Halal Product Process Companion (PPH) of the Walisongo Halal Center that in conducting socialization, it is necessary to convey several things including the benefits of halal certification for the community, inviting business actors to register for halal certificates, halal certification regulations that have been regulated by the government, and the delivery of free halal certification quotas that are very limited (Permonoputri, 2024).



Picture 4 Socialization of Halal Certification in Triharjo Village
Source: Personal Documents (2024)

- b. PPH Companions will assist business actors in registering for Business Identification Numbers (NIB) through the official website of <https://ui-login.oss.go.id/register>
- c. Business actors who already have a NIB will be assisted in the process of registering business products online on the ptsp.halal.go.id website. In this step, business actors will be accompanied to create an account, prepare halal certification application data, and choose a PPH companion. Business actors will be asked to complete the application data with the PPH companion. Furthermore, business actors submit applications for halal certification with a statement from business actors through SIHALAL.
- d. PPH companions will also take photos with business actors and products registered with halal certification. This photo must be done as one of the required documents that will be uploaded on the SIHALAL website.



Picture 5 Documentation of PPH Companions with Business Actors and Products
Source: Personal Documents (2024)

- e. The PPH companion will verify and validate the statements of business actors. Verification and validation include product type, trademark, material and product composition. If the results of the verification and validation are in accordance with the halal standard of the product, then the PPH companion will provide recommendations to BPJPH (Lutfika et al. 2023).

- f. BPJPH will verify documents automatically on the SIHALAL website and issue a Document Receipt Letter (STTD).
- g. The submission has been completed, then it is the authority of the Halal Fatwa Committee to decide on the halalness of a product and the authority of BPJPH to issue a halal certificate.

The validity period of the halal certificate for previous business actors was 2 years. However, after the issuance of Government Regulation No. 39/2021 which took effect from February 2, 2021, the validity period of halal certificates was changed to life. This change also has an impact on business actors who have registered their businesses before 2021. They do not need to re-register, as certificates that have been registered before this regulation remain valid forever (Utomo, Masa Berlaku Sertifikat Halal bagi Pelaku Usaha Mikro, Kecil dan Menengah, 2024).

The Effectiveness of Free Halal Certification Assistance for the Independence of MSMEs in Triharjo Village

The involvement of residents in independent businesses in Triharjo Village has had a positive impact, especially on improving the local economy. In recent years after the Covid-19 Global Pandemic case, residents have shown quite good development. Although the economic scope is still at the stage of independent production with limited market reach. The community's efforts to take the initiative to establish local businesses and encourage the economy have produced positive effects, marked by the opening of wider new jobs and increasing the income of the surrounding community (Akrori, 2024).

This micro business is the main solution to overcome the problems of the community in the agricultural sector, which often faces challenges such as the high cost of non-subsidized fertilizers, the limitation of subsidized fertilizers and fluctuations in weather and market prices. Although the obstacles faced by business actors in the village face new challenges, one of them is business legalization, starting from Business Identification Number (NIB) and Halal Certification.

The effectiveness of the program in general can be seen in five indicators (Ita rosita 2021:262). First, program understanding is an important indicator in assessing program effectiveness. The halal certification program can be said to be successful if MSME participants in Triharjo Village understand the certification process, the benefits obtained, and the support available. Therefore, the first step taken is to conduct socialization first by collaborating with Walisongo Halal Center as a BPJPH partner. A deep understanding of

how halal certification can improve product quality and the legality of their business through socialization with BPJPH partners shows that this program has succeeded in conveying information effectively.

Second, the accuracy of the target shows how well this program reaches the right business actors. The halal certification program will be considered effective if it successfully targets MSMEs that have great potential to benefit from certification, especially those who do not have certification but need support to improve product quality. By reaching relevant targets, this program can have a significant impact on MSMEs in need. In fact, the effectiveness of the program was increasingly seen when one of BPJPH's partners, the Walisongo Halal Center (WHC), completed the Halal Product Process (PPH). Some business actors are increasingly making requests for PPH data collection.

Third, timeliness is an important factor in assessing program effectiveness. The certification process must be carried out according to the set schedule to avoid delays that may affect the benefits perceived by the participants. Programs that successfully demonstrate timeliness in implementation will ensure that MSMEs can obtain certification without significant delays, thereby increasing efficiency and participant satisfaction.

Fourth, the achievement of program goals is the main indicator of success. The halal certification program is said to be effective if it succeeds in achieving its goal, which is to increase the number of MSMEs that have halal certification and help them improve product quality. The achievement of this goal can be seen from the number of certifications issued and the positive impact felt by MSMEs, such as increased sales and market access. In addition, the legality of their business is also increasingly guaranteed under legal protection with the PPH program. It is stated that business actors who have halal certificates will later get various conveniences. Among them, it is simplified in the requirements for applying for business credit, the ease of developing a business or opening a branch, and access to government and private programs. In addition, for business actors who do not have a Business Identification Number (NIB), they will also be registered by the PPH assistant (Utomo, Keuntungan Memiliki Sertifikat Halal, 2024).

Finally, real change as a result of the program is an important indicator in assessing effectiveness. If the halal certification program results in significant changes, such as improving product quality, expanding the market, or increasing income for MSMEs, then this indicates that the program has had a real positive impact. These changes reflect the program's success in creating sustainable benefits for participants.

4. CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

The halal assurance process in Indonesia shows significant development through collaboration between Islamic institutions, such as the Indonesia Ulema Council (MUI) and the government, represented by the Halal Product Assurance Agency (BPJPH). In order to accelerate the development of the halal industry, BPJPH supports the establishment of the Halal Product Process Assistance Agency (LP3H) which plays an important role in providing guidance and assistance to business actors., one of the real examples of this effort is the Walisongo Halal Center Institution as an active institution in the implementation of the Halal Product Assurance Law No. 33 of 2014.

KKN UIN Walisongo Post 58 in collaboration with the Walisongo Halal Center institution UIN Walisongo Semarang, PPH assistance to MSMEs in Triharjo Village is carried out in several stages starting with socialization until the submission of halal certification is completed. If the halal certification program results in significant changes, such as improving product quality, expanding the market, or increasing income for MSMEs, then this indicates that the program has had a real positive impact. This change reflects the success of the program in creating sustainable benefits for participants and is an important indicator in assessing the effectiveness of halal certification assistance for MSME actors in Triharjo Village.

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