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Analysis of Business Actors' Understanding of *Halal* Certification Regulations in Kediri

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Abstract :

The global halal lifestyle trend has driven significant growth in halal certification among micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) in Indonesia, including through the free SEHATI program, as the global halal market reaches USD 2 trillion annually. However, a critical gap remains between the sharp rise in certificate ownership and business actors' substantive understanding of halal regulations. This study aims to analyze the extent to which halal-certified MSMEs in Kediri City understand halal certification regulations, including concepts of halal and haram, the Quranic basis and MUI fatwas, critical points of haram, identification of impure materials, and the role of LPPOM MUI. A qualitative descriptive approach was employed, using in-depth interviews, observation, and documentation. Informants were selected through snowball sampling, and data validity was ensured through source triangulation. The findings reveal an 82% increase in the number of halal certification assistants at IAIN Kediri, while the number of halal certificates issued reached 99%. Nevertheless, all informants possessed only a partial, symbolic understanding, primarily focused on halal labels rather than on systematic halal assurance. Most did not understand the critical points, post-certification obligations, or the function of LPPOM MUI. This study concludes that achieving an administrative certificate does not guarantee regulatory compliance; therefore, ongoing mentorship and post-certification supervision are urgently recommended.

Keywords: *Halal certification, business actors, understanding of halal certification, certification rules.*

Abstrak:

Tren gaya hidup halal global telah mendorong peningkatan signifikan sertifikasi halal pada usaha mikro, kecil, dan menengah (UMKM) di Indonesia, termasuk melalui program SEHATI gratis, dengan pasar halal dunia mencapai USD 2 triliun per tahun. Namun, terdapat kesenjangan kritis antara peningkatan kepemilikan sertifikat halal dan pemahaman substansial pelaku usaha terhadap regulasi halal. Penelitian ini bertujuan menganalisis sejauh mana UMKM tersertifikasi halal di Kota Kediri memahami regulasi sertifikasi halal, meliputi konsep halal haram, landasan Al-Qur'an dan fatwa MUI, titik kritis keharaman, identifikasi bahan najis, serta peran LPPOM MUI. Pendekatan deskriptif kualitatif digunakan melalui wawancara mendalam, observasi, dan dokumentasi, dengan informan dipilih secara snowball sampling serta validitas data melalui triangulasi sumber. Temuan menunjukkan peningkatan signifikan pada jumlah pendamping sertifikasi halal di IAIN Kediri sebesar 82%, sementara jumlah sertifikat halal yang berhasil diterbitkan mencapai 99%. Meskipun demikian, seluruh informan hanya memiliki pemahaman parsial dan simbolis, lebih berorientasi pada label halal daripada sistem jaminan halal yang berkelanjutan. Sebagian besar tidak memahami titik kritis, kewajiban pasca-sertifikasi, maupun fungsi LPPOM MUI. Penelitian ini menyimpulkan bahwa pencapaian sertifikat administratif tidak menjamin kepatuhan regulasi. Oleh karena itu, pendampingan berkelanjutan dan pengawasan pasca-sertifikasi sangat direkomendasikan.

Kata Kunci: *Sertifikasi halal, pelaku usaha, pemahaman sertifikasi halal, dan aturan sertifikasi.*

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Introduction

The development of the halal lifestyle has become a global phenomenon, driving the growth of the halal industry across sectors, particularly in food and beverages (Muhammad Syarofi & M. Fikri Syaifulloh, 2025). The global halal market shows that halal is not only a normative obligation for Muslims but also a strategic economic instrument (Halim et al., 2022). In Indonesia, strengthening the halal product assurance system is emphasized through Law Number 33 of 2014 on Halal Product Assurance, which requires halal certification for products in circulation (Johan & Plana-Casado, 2023). The implementation of this regulation is supported by various derivative policies and acceleration programs, such as SEHATI (Free Halal Certification), aimed at MSMEs in the food and beverage sector (Sunarta et al., 2025). However, the crucial social fact that remains underexamined is whether the dramatic increase in halal certificate ownership—particularly in regions like Kediri City—has been accompanied by a proportional improvement in business actors' substantive understanding of halal regulations, or whether Indonesia is witnessing a phenomenon of symbolic compliance that threatens the very purpose of halal product assurance.

Previous research has identified a persistent gap between certificate ownership and regulatory understanding among business actors, yet no study has systematically measured this disparity amid the rapid acceleration of halal certification programs. Aslam Mei Nur Widigdo & Abdi Triyanto (2024) found that MSMEs' understanding of halal certification obligations remains low due to limited information and assistance. Voak et al. (2023) show that halal implementation requires a detailed understanding of production processes, storage, transportation, and contamination prevention, and that many companies fail to meet these standards due to limited technical knowledge of halal requirements. Syed Abdul Jalil et al. (2025) found that halal awareness is high, but readiness and understanding of certification procedures (audits, documentation, and standards) remain low among small business actors. Maulana et al. (2024) show that many MSMEs lack adequate legal awareness and understanding of halal, and that knowledge and understanding are key factors in halal certification registration. Sari & Sulistyowati (2023) also emphasize that business actors often do not fully understand the technical aspects of halal audits. However, existing literature has predominantly focused on pre-certification barriers rather than post-certification understanding. The novelty of this study lies in its examination of the understanding gap among business actors who have already obtained halal certificates, specifically in Kediri City, where the Halal Center of IAIN Kediri recorded an 82% increase in halal assistants (from 100 to 564) and a 99% increase in certificate issuance (from 33 to 3,578 certificates) within one year. This context provides a unique natural laboratory to examine whether quantitative achievements in certification have translated into qualitative improvements in regulatory understanding.

This study aims to analyze the extent to which halal-certified business actors in Kediri City understand halal certification regulations, thereby identifying the gap between quantitative certification achievements and the quality of substantive understanding at the MSME level. Specifically, this research seeks to answer the

following three main questions derived from the key indicators in halal certification regulations examined in the findings: (1) To what extent do halal-certified MSME owners understand the fundamental concepts of halal and haram? Do they interpret halal merely as a label on packaging, or do they understand it as a comprehensive assurance system covering ingredients, production processes, hygiene, and contamination control? (2) How well do business actors comprehend the Qur'anic basis and MUI fatwas underlying halal certification regulations? Are they able to explain specific verses, hadiths, or technical regulations such as Law Number 33 of 2014 and MUI halal standards (HAS 23000)? (3) What is the level of understanding among MSMEs regarding the identification of critical points of haram in materials and production processes? Do business actors understand the concept of critical control points, including additives, fermentation media, solvents, and the risk of cross-contamination, and is there any routine post-certification supervision to evaluate these critical points? By answering these three questions, this study aims to move beyond the superficial measurement of certificate ownership to assess the depth of regulatory understanding essential for sustainable halal compliance.

This research makes several original contributions to the halal certification literature and policy development. Theoretically, this study contributes to the emerging field of halal literacy by introducing the distinction between "symbolic compliance" (label-oriented understanding) and "substantive understanding" (system-oriented halal assurance) in halal certification among MSMEs (Pratikto et al., 2023). This distinction extends previous findings that halal certification increases consumer trust and product competitiveness by demonstrating that certificate ownership alone does not guarantee regulatory comprehension. Methodologically, this research employs a qualitative descriptive approach with snowball sampling (Fatimah et al., 2024a), specifically designed to uncover hidden gaps between administrative compliance and practical understanding, and can be replicated in other regions with similar halal acceleration programs (Shokhikhah et al., 2023). Practically, the findings provide actionable recommendations for the Halal Product Assurance Organizing Agency (BPJPH), the Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI), and halal certification assistants regarding the urgent need for post-certification supervision, continuous mentoring, and strengthened halal literacy programs, as emphasized by Juliana et al. (2024) who stated that business actors in Indonesia have a low level of legal awareness in registering for halal certification. For policymakers, this study evaluates the effectiveness of the SEHATI free certification program in Kediri City using empirical evidence, offering insights to improve halal certification policies and ensure that quantitative targets do not compromise the quality of halal assurance (Anto et al., 2025; Kasanah & Andari, 2024). Finally, for MSMEs, this research identifies specific knowledge gaps that need to be addressed through targeted educational interventions, thereby supporting the development of a more robust and sustainable halal industry ecosystem in Indonesia.

Method

This research is qualitative and descriptive (Villamin et al., 2025). The goal is to obtain detailed findings that clearly narrate what happened at the research site (Eche-Ugwu et al., 2025) . To collect data, the researcher conducted in-depth interviews using a predetermined, naturally flowing interview guide, allowing for detailed information from the informants (Prayogo et al., 2025). The informants were selected using the snowball sampling method (Fatimah et al., 2024b). The first informant was randomly

selected from a halal-certified food MSME in Kediri City known to the researcher. The informants were then asked for information until a satisfactory answer was obtained. In addition to interviews, data were collected through observation (W. R. Sari & Sulistyowati, 2023) to directly observe the food processing carried out by the informants. Furthermore, documentation was also used for data collection (Hasanah et al., 2025).

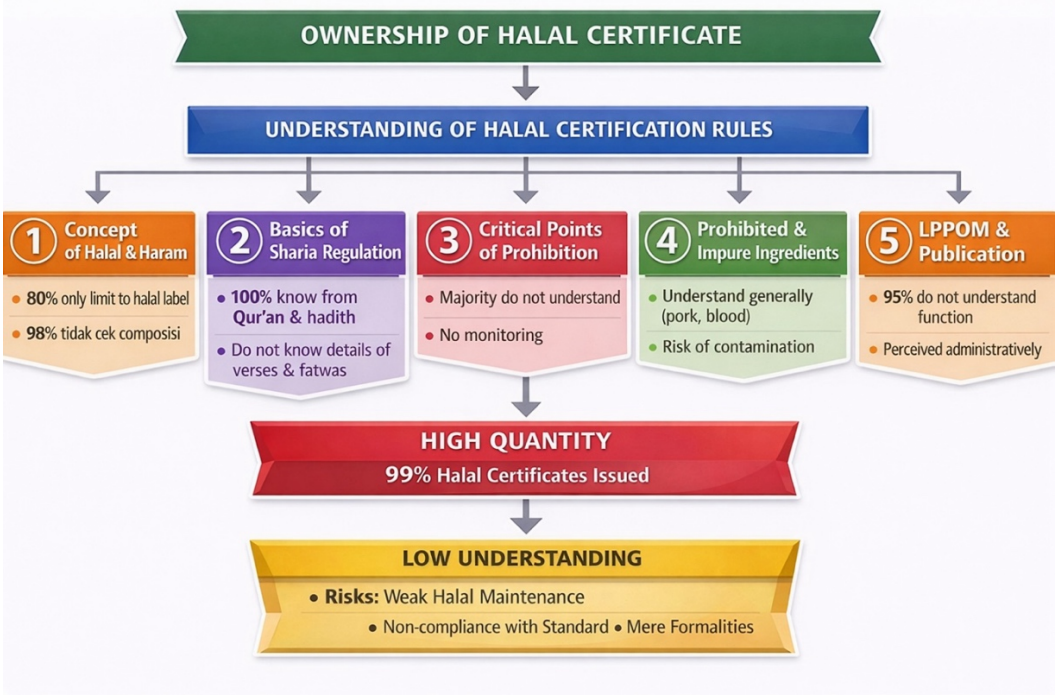
The collected data were analyzed using data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification methods. In the data reduction stage, the researcher selected, categorized, and simplified interview transcripts, observation notes, and documentation, aligning with the research focus on understanding halal certification. The categorized data were then systematically presented in narrative form and supported by tables and figures to facilitate interpretation. Finally, conclusions were drawn by identifying recurring patterns, relationships, and meanings from the collected data, and were continuously verified throughout the research process to ensure consistency and validity. The validity of the data in this study was ensured through source triangulation (Fatimah et al., 2024b), which involved cross-checking the results of interviews with MSME employees, neighbors, and consumers in Kediri City.

Results and Discussion

Result

The results of the study indicate that business actors' understanding of halal certification regulations remains partial and incomplete, despite all informants holding halal certificates. These findings are analysed against five main indicators in halal certification regulations, namely: (1) understanding the concepts of halal and haram, (2) the basis of the Qur'an and MUI fatwas, (3) identification of critical points of haramity in materials and production processes, (4) identification of haram and impure materials, and (5) understanding of the publication and role of LPPOM MUI.

Figure 1. Data on Understanding of Halal Certification Regulations in Kediri City



Note: Field data, data processed 2026.

1. **Understanding the Concepts of Halal and Haram**

The findings indicate that business actors generally possess only a basic, symbolic understanding of halal and haram. Although all informants stated that they understood halal and haram in general terms, their understanding remained limited to the presence of halal labels on product packaging rather than a comprehensive halal assurance system covering ingredients, production processes, hygiene, and contamination control. This conclusion is supported by several findings: (1) 80% of informants interpreted halal solely on the basis of halal labels attached to raw material packaging; (2) 98% of informants admitted that they did not recheck the detailed composition of ingredients once a halal logo was displayed on the packaging; and (3) informants considered ingredients sourced from their own gardens halal merely because they were legally owned and non-intoxicating, without considering production standards, processing procedures, or potential contamination risks.

These findings demonstrate that halal awareness among MSMEs remains administrative and symbolic rather than procedural and substantive. Business actors tend to view halal certification as a formal label rather than a sustainable halal assurance obligation regulated under Law Number 33 of 2014 concerning Halal Product Assurance. The data are important because they reveal the urgent need to strengthen halal literacy programs, particularly regarding ingredient verification, critical control points, hygiene standards, and sustainable halal assurance practices in MSME production processes. Figure 1 reinforces these findings by illustrating the dominance of label-oriented understanding among business actors, despite the rapid increase in the number of halal certificates.

2. **Basis for the Quran and MUI Fatwas**

The study found that business actors generally understand that halal regulations stem from Islamic teachings; however, their understanding remains normative and confined to general religious knowledge. This conclusion is supported by several findings: (1) 100% of informants recognised that halal and haram provisions are based on the Qur'an and Hadith; (2) most informants were unable to explain specific Qur'anic verses, Hadiths, or MUI fatwas related to halal certification; and (3) informants lacked understanding of the technical implementation of halal regulations under Law Number 33 of 2014 concerning Halal Product Assurance and MUI halal standards (HAS 23000). QS Al-Māidah verse 3 states: "Forbidden to you are carrion, blood, pork, and animals slaughtered in the name of anything other than Allah."

This verse emphasizes not only the prohibition of haram substances but also the importance of proper processing and handling procedures. These principles are further implemented through Law Number 33 of 2014 concerning Halal Product Assurance and are strengthened by MUI regulations, including Fatwa MUI Number 4 of 2003 concerning Halal Fatwa Standardization and the HAS 23000 guidelines issued by LPPOM MUI. These regulations require halal compliance throughout the production chain, including ingredients, processing, storage, packaging, and distribution. The findings indicate a gap between religious awareness and practical understanding of halal governance among MSMEs. Therefore, the data emphasise the importance of strengthening legal literacy, understanding of MUI regulations, and technical education regarding halal assurance systems. Figure 1 further shows that although normative awareness among business actors is relatively high, their detailed understanding of halal regulations and implementation mechanisms remains limited.

3. Identification of Critical Points of Haram

The findings reveal that most business actors do not understand the concept of critical control points in halal production processes, thereby posing a risk of non-compliance with halal standards. This conclusion is supported by several findings: (1) the majority of informants did not understand the meaning of critical points related to haram ingredients and production processes; (2) business actors generally relied solely on halal labels without investigating additives, solvents, or contamination risks; and (3) informants reported that there was no routine post-certification supervision or monitoring by halal assistants of halal compliance practices. These findings indicate that halal certification is still perceived as a one-off administrative process rather than a continuous halal assurance obligation. The data are important because they highlight the urgent need for periodic supervision, technical mentoring, and strengthened halal assurance systems among MSMEs to ensure sustainable compliance. Figure 1 supports this conclusion by showing a weak understanding of critical control points despite the rapid increase in halal certificate ownership.

Figure 1 shows that the rise in halal certificate ownership among MSMEs in Kediri City has not been matched by a proportional improvement in business actors' understanding of halal certification regulations. Most business actors still view halal in symbolic and administrative terms, focusing mainly on halal labels rather than on the broader halal assurance system, which encompasses ingredient verification, hygiene, contamination control, production processes, storage, packaging, and distribution. Although business actors generally recognize that halal regulations derive from the Qur'an and Hadith, their understanding remains normative and limited, particularly regarding technical implementation, MUI standards, halal audits, and critical control points in production processes. The findings also reveal that many MSMEs continue to rely solely on halal labels without adequately understanding the potential risks posed by additives, solvents, and contamination during production. The absence of routine post-certification supervision and mentoring further undermines the sustainability of halal compliance practices. Overall, these findings indicate that halal certification among MSMEs is still perceived as a formal administrative requirement rather than a continuous halal assurance obligation, highlighting the urgent need for stronger halal literacy programs, technical assistance, and sustainable supervision systems.

Discussion

The obligation to maintain halal compliance throughout the production chain is explicitly regulated by Law Number 33 of 2014 on Halal Product Assurance (BPK, 2014). This study shows that MSMEs in Kediri City generally possess normative awareness of halal obligations; however, their understanding of halal certification regulations remains partial, and procedural implementation remains weak. Most business actors interpret halal certification merely as ownership of a halal label rather than as a sustainable halal assurance system that includes ingredient verification, production processes, hygiene, storage, and distribution. The findings indicate weaknesses in understanding critical control points, halal audit procedures, the identification of haram and impure materials, and the institutional role of LPPOM MUI. Although the number of halal certificates has increased significantly through the SEHATI program, this quantitative achievement has not been accompanied by a proportional increase in substantive halal literacy among business actors.

Meanwhile, halal certification is increasingly socially significant in Indonesia as

part of the expanding global halal lifestyle and the rapid development of the halal economy (Fawa'id et al., 2025; Hassani & Moghavvemi, 2020). Beyond fulfilling religious obligations, halal certification serves as a mechanism for consumer protection by ensuring product transparency, trust, and safety (Fawa'id et al., 2025; Karyani et al., 2024). Furthermore, halal certification enhances economic competitiveness by strengthening market access, improving business reputation, and increasing the competitiveness of Indonesian products in domestic and international halal markets (Aini & Gob, 2025). The rapid growth of MSMEs in Kediri City and the expansion of halal certification programs reflect rising public demand for halal products and halal assurance systems. However, limited understanding among business actors poses risks of contamination, misuse of halal labels, and non-compliance with halal standards (Kurniawati et al., 2024; Kurniawati & Cakravastia, 2023; Putri et al., 2024; Rusydiana et al., 2023). Therefore, strengthening halal literacy is essential not only for religious compliance but also for sustaining consumer confidence and strengthening Indonesia's halal industry ecosystem (Fianto et al., 2025; Nur Azizah et al., 2025; Rakhmawati et al., 2025a). This social urgency is reinforced by the implementation of mandatory halal certification under Law Number 33 of 2014 (BPK, 2014).

The findings confirm that halal awareness should be understood as a multidimensional concept encompassing religious, hygienic, safety, and quality dimensions. Halal certification is not merely an administrative process but a continuous halal assurance system that requires implementation, monitoring, and evaluation (Alam et al., 2025; Hidayati et al., 2024a; Noordin et al., 2014). The normative basis for the obligation to maintain product halalness is found in the Qur'an:

حُرِّمَتْ عَلَيْكُمُ الْمَيْتَةُ وَالدَّمُ وَلَحْمُ الْخِنْزِيرِ وَمَا أُهِلَّ لِغَيْرِ اللَّهِ بِهِ

(Ḥurrimat 'alaikum al-maitatu wa ad-damu wa laḥmu al-khinzīri wa mā uhilla li-ghairillāhi bihī)

"Forbidden to you are dead animals, blood, the flesh of swine, and that which has been dedicated to other than Allah." (QS. Al-Māidah: 3) (Quran.com, 2026)

This verse emphasizes not only the prohibition of haram substances but also the importance of proper processing and handling procedures (Pujiastuti et al., 2024). Therefore, the concept of halal in modern regulations extends beyond ingredients to encompass the supervision of the entire production chain, from upstream to downstream, including processing, storage, packaging, and distribution (ROJAK et al., 2025). This finding supports the argument that halal awareness among MSMEs remains symbolic rather than substantive, as business actors tend to focus on halal labels while neglecting production governance and contamination control. This principle is also emphasized in Fatwa MUI Number 4 of 2003 concerning the Standardization of Halal Fatwas (Ahmadiyah et al., 2021; Mahmudah, 2023) and reinforced by the HAS 23000 halal assurance guidelines issued by LPPOM MUI (Purwanto et al., 2020).

The study offers several important insights into business actors' understanding of halal certification regulations. First, most informants understood halal primarily through halal labels on packaging and rarely rechecked ingredient compositions (Maison et al., 2018, 2018). Second, although all respondents recognized that halal regulations originate in the Qur'an and Hadith, most were unable to explain specific verses, fatwas, or technical halal standards (Akbar et al., 2023). Third, business actors lacked understanding of critical issues related to haram ingredients and production processes, particularly additives, contamination risks, and production facilities. Fourth, understanding of impure materials and hygiene standards remained limited

because production and washing areas were often not separated (Hidayati et al., 2024b; Lahuri et al., 2025). Finally, most informants did not understand the institutional role and function of LPPOM MUI beyond its association with halal certification assistance (Bahari et al., 2024; Rakhmawati et al., 2025b). These findings indicate that halal certification among MSMEs is still perceived as a one-off administrative process rather than an ongoing halal compliance obligation.

The results of this study align with research by Jamaluddin et al., which found that business actors are not responsive to regulations on halal certificates and digital services (Jamaluddin et al., 2022). Aditya & Hammam (2024) reported that most MSMEs in Kwanyar Sub District have sufficient knowledge of halal certificates (Aditya & Hammam, 2024). (Akim et al., 2018) found that MSMEs' understanding of halal certification obligations remains relatively low due to a lack of information and assistance. (Voak et al., 2023a) showed that halal implementation requires a detailed understanding of production processes, storage, transportation, and contamination prevention. Many companies fail to meet standards due to limited technical knowledge of halal requirements. (Syed Abdul Jalil et al., 2025) found that halal awareness levels are quite high, but readiness and understanding of certification procedures (audits, documentation, and standards) remain low among small business actors. (Maulana et al., 2024b) showed that many MSMEs lack adequate legal awareness and understanding of halal. Knowledge and understanding are key factors in obtaining halal certification. (Kusuma et al., 2020) and (Sulistyo et al., 2019) also emphasized that business actors often do not fully understand the technical aspects of halal audits. Anzellyta & Fittria (2022) stated that business actors in Indonesia have a low level of legal awareness regarding halal certification registration. Many business actors are unaware of the obligation to obtain halal certification. Some business actors are aware of halal certification but have not yet achieved compliance or carried out the mandate of the Halal Product Guarantee Act (Anzellyta & Fittria, 2022).

The findings imply the need for stronger post-certification supervision, continuous mentoring, and systematic halal literacy programs for MSMEs. Halal certification assistance should not focus solely on administrative registration but also on strengthening business actors' understanding of halal assurance systems, hygiene standards, ingredient verification, and contamination control (Othman & Md Nawi, 2025). Government institutions, halal centers, BPJPH, and halal assistants should provide regular training, monitoring, and evaluation to ensure sustainable compliance after certification is issued (Zhang et al., 2026). In Kediri City, where the number of halal-certified MSMEs continues to increase significantly through halal acceleration programs, strengthening a substantive understanding of halal certification regulations is increasingly important to ensure that certification ownership is accompanied by proper halal implementation practices. In addition, educational materials on halal regulations, critical control points, and the role of LPPOM MUI should be simplified and disseminated more effectively to MSMEs (Oemar et al., 2023). For MSMEs in Kediri, these educational and mentoring programs are essential to improve business actors' technical understanding of halal governance, prevent formalistic certification practices, and strengthen the sustainability of the local halal industry ecosystem. These efforts are important to ensure that halal certification serves not merely as a formal label but as a comprehensive system that guarantees product halalness, consumer trust, and sustainable halal governance in Indonesia.

Conclusion

This study concludes that the dramatic increase in halal certificate ownership among Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) in Kediri City—achieved through the free SEHATI program—has not been accompanied by a proportional improvement in business actors' substantive understanding of halal certification regulations. While all informants held halal certificates, their comprehension remained partial, symbolic, and label-oriented rather than systemic and procedural. The majority viewed halal solely as a packaging label, failed to identify critical points of haram in production processes, neglected post-certification obligations, and demonstrated limited understanding of technical regulations such as Law Number 33 of 2014, MUI fatwas, and the institutional role of LPPOM MUI. Thus, administrative compliance in obtaining certificates does not guarantee regulatory compliance or sustainable halal assurance.

Theoretically, this study introduces a crucial distinction between "symbolic compliance" (label-oriented understanding) and "substantive understanding" (system-oriented halal assurance) in the context of MSME halal certification. This distinction extends previous halal literacy literature by demonstrating that certificate ownership alone is an insufficient proxy for genuine regulatory comprehension. Methodologically, this research employs a qualitative descriptive approach with snowball sampling and source triangulation, offering a replicable model to uncover hidden gaps between quantitative certification achievements and qualitative understanding in other regions with similar halal acceleration programs. Practically, the findings provide actionable recommendations for BPJPH, MUI, and halal assistants to prioritize post-certification supervision, continuous mentoring, and strengthened halal literacy programs over mere administrative target achievement.

This study is limited to halal-certified MSMEs in Kediri City and focuses specifically on business actors' understanding of five regulatory indicators. Consequently, the findings cannot be generalized to uncertified businesses, other regions with different halal ecosystems, or larger enterprises with more structured halal assurance systems. Future research should involve a wider geographical area, compare certified and uncertified MSMEs, and employ quantitative or mixed-methods approaches to examine factors influencing halal literacy, such as education level, business duration, access to information, and the intensity of mentoring. Additionally, longitudinal studies are urgently needed to evaluate whether post-certification supervision programs actually improve substantive understanding over time, and to assess the real impact of limited understanding on actual halal compliance practices and contamination risks in production processes.

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