

Halal Certification as a Tool for Women's Economic Empowerment in MSMEs

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ABSTRAK

Sertifikasi halal menawarkan berbagai manfaat, namun proses untuk memperolehnya sering menghadapi tantangan, terutama bagi UMKM yang dikelola oleh perempuan. Salah satu hambatan utama adalah biaya sertifikasi yang cukup tinggi. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan teknik studi kasus untuk memahami secara mendalam peran sertifikasi halal dalam pemberdayaan ekonomi perempuan di sektor UMKM. Data diperoleh melalui wawancara mendalam dengan pelaku UMKM perempuan yang telah bersertifikat halal dan observasi langsung di lapangan. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa komunitas atau jaringan perempuan memegang peran penting dalam mendukung proses sertifikasi halal melalui edukasi, kolaborasi, dan dukungan moral. Selain itu, sertifikasi halal terbukti tidak hanya sebagai label, tetapi juga sebagai strategi pemasaran yang efektif, meningkatkan daya saing produk dan membuka akses pasar yang lebih luas. Penelitian ini mencatat adanya peningkatan penjualan hingga 30% setelah memperoleh sertifikasi halal, mencerminkan potensi sertifikasi ini dalam mendukung pertumbuhan dan keberlanjutan usaha perempuan.

Keyword: Sertifikat Halal; Komunitas Perempuan; UMKM

ABSTRACT

Halal certification offers various benefits, but the process of obtaining it often faces challenges, especially for MSMEs managed by women. One of the main obstacles is the relatively high cost of certification. This study uses a qualitative approach with a case study technique to deeply understand the role of halal certification in empowering women's economy in the MSME sector. Data were obtained through in-depth interviews with female MSME actors who have been halal certified and direct observation in the field. The results of the study show that women's communities or networks play an important role in supporting the halal certification process through education, collaboration, and moral support. In addition, halal certification has proven to be not only a label, but also an effective marketing strategy, increasing product competitiveness and opening wider market access. This study noted an increase in sales of up to 30% after obtaining halal certification, reflecting the potential of this certification in supporting the growth and sustainability of women's businesses.

Keyword: Halal Certificate; Women's Community; MSMEs

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1. INTRODUCTION

In Indonesia, the Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) sector plays an important role in the national economy. According to data from the Ministry of Cooperatives and SMEs, MSMEs contribute around 60% to Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and absorb more than 97% of the workforce (Ministry of Cooperatives and SMEs, 2021). However, although the contribution of MSMEs is very significant, many MSME actors, especially women, still face various challenges, ranging from access to capital, marketing, to

understanding product quality standards. One solution that can be implemented to empower women in this sector is through halal certification.

Halal certification is becoming increasingly important, which is a country with the largest Muslim population in the world. According to data from the Halal Product Guarantee Agency (BPJPH), the number of products that have been halal certified continues to increase, reaching more than 10 million products in 2022 (BPJPH, 2022). This certification is not only a requirement for food and beverage products, but also includes non-food products such as cosmetics and medicines. Thus, MSMEs managed by women can utilize halal certification as a tool to increase competitiveness and market access. (Saepudin et al., n.d.)

Halal certification is not only a requirement to meet the needs of Muslim consumers, but also a tool to increase consumer confidence in products produced by MSMEs. According to data from the Halal Product Guarantee Agency (Halal Product Assurance Organizing Agency (BPJPH), 2022), there were more than 1.5 million MSMEs that had received halal certification in Indonesia. Of that number, around 60% are operated by women. This shows that halal certification has great potential in empowering women in the MSME sector.

However, despite the great potential, there are still many female MSMEs who do not understand the importance of halal certification. According to a survey conducted by the Institute for Research and Community Service, University of Indonesia, only around 30% of female MSMEs stated that they had halal certification for their products (Institute for Research and Community Service, 2023). This shows that there is a gap in knowledge and access to information that needs to be addressed so that women can be more empowered in utilizing halal certification as a tool to improve the quality and competitiveness of their products. (Komunitas, M., & Indonesia, n.d.)

In the context of women's economic empowerment, halal certification can also improve women's bargaining position in the market. With halal-certified products, women can not only attract more consumers but also expand their distribution and marketing networks. In the context of the global market, products that have halal certification tend to be more in demand. A study by Deloitte shows that the halal product market is expected to reach a value of USD 2.4 trillion by 2024. Thus, women MSME actors who obtain halal certification can take advantage of this opportunity to increase their family's income and welfare. An interesting case study is the "Kriuk Kriuk" snack business managed by a group of women in Bandung. After obtaining halal certification, their sales increased by 150% within one year, and they succeeded in penetrating the export market to several countries in Southeast Asia (Sari, 2023). This case shows that halal certification can be a significant driver of women's economic growth in the MSME sector.

In order to improve understanding and access to halal certification, support is needed from various parties, including the government, non-governmental organizations, and business associations. Training and socialization programs regarding halal certification must be improved so that female MSME actors can understand the procedures and benefits of the certification. With these steps, it is hoped that halal certification can become an effective economic empowerment tool for women in the MSME sector, which in turn will contribute to inclusive and sustainable national economic growth. However, it is important to remember that the halal certification process is not always easy. Many female entrepreneurs face difficulties in understanding the procedures and costs associated with the certification. Therefore, training and mentoring programs are needed to assist women in the halal certification process. For example, a program initiated by the Ministry of Cooperatives and SMEs, which provides free training for female MSMEs on how to obtain halal certification, has shown positive results. (Lestari, 2023b)

In addition, halal certification can also function as a product differentiation tool. In an increasingly competitive market, halal-certified products will stand out more than other non-certified products. This provides a competitive advantage for women MSMEs to attract more consumers, both local and international.

Although halal certification offers many benefits, there are a number of challenges faced by women MSMEs in the process. One of the main challenges is the lack of knowledge and understanding of the halal certification procedure. According to a survey conducted by the Indonesian MSME Association, around 70% of women MSMEs admitted that they did not know the steps required to obtain halal certification. This shows the need for better education regarding the importance and process of halal certification.

One real example is the small business "Bubur Ayam Ibu Siti", which was forced to postpone the halal certification process due to limited funds. Although their products have great market potential, without halal certification, they lose many customers. Therefore, a financial assistance program specifically aimed at women MSMEs can be an effective solution.

Halal certification opens up various opportunities for women SMEs to increase the competitiveness of their products. One significant opportunity is access to the international market. With the increasing demand for halal products in the global market, women SMEs with halal certification can reach consumers in countries with large Muslim populations, such as Malaysia and Saudi Arabia. According to the Global Islamic Economy Report, the halal product market in Southeast Asia is expected to grow by 10% annually.

In addition, halal certification can also help women SMEs in building partnerships with large companies. Many companies are looking for halal product suppliers to meet consumer demand. For example, multinational food companies such as Nestlé and Unilever have partnership programs with halal-certified SMEs to expand their product reach. This provides an opportunity for women SMEs to increase their production capacity and expand their distribution networks.

Another opportunity is increasing the selling value of the product. Products that are halal certified can often be sold at a higher price than products that are not certified. A study by Nielsen shows that consumers are willing to pay up to 20% more for products that have halal certification. Thus, women MSME actors can increase their income significantly.

In North Sumatra, the potential of MSMEs managed by women is enormous. According to data from the North Sumatra Cooperative and SME Service, around 30% of the total MSMEs in this province are managed by women (North Sumatra Cooperative and SME Service, 2021). However, many of them do not yet have halal certification, which can limit their access to larger markets. With support from the government and related institutions, women entrepreneurs can be encouraged to obtain halal certification, which in turn can increase their income and business sustainability.

Halal certification can also serve as an educational and training tool for women entrepreneurs. Through the certification process, they will gain knowledge about product quality and safety standards, as well as ways to improve efficiency in the production process. This is in line with the goal of women's economic empowerment, where the knowledge and skills gained can increase their capacity to run a business. In other words, halal certification not only provides economic benefits, but also empowers women socially and educationally.

However, challenges in obtaining halal certification remain. Many women entrepreneurs are still poorly informed about the process and benefits of halal certification. In addition, the costs associated with certification are also an obstacle for MSMEs, especially for those who are just starting out. Therefore, there needs to be a collaborative effort between the government, non-governmental organizations, and the private sector to provide better support and access for women in the halal certification process. Although the government has issued a policy to reduce certification costs for MSMEs, many women still feel that the costs are too high. In this context, there needs to be financial support or subsidies from the government or private institutions to help women obtain halal certification.

Another challenge is access to adequate information and resources. Many women MSMEs live in remote areas and have difficulty obtaining information about halal certification. By utilizing technology, such as mobile applications or online platforms, information about halal certification can be disseminated more widely and efficiently.

Finally, social stigma can also be a barrier for women in accessing halal certification. In some communities, there are still traditional views that doubt women's ability to manage businesses. Therefore, it is important to conduct awareness campaigns that can change this view and encourage more women to get involved in MSMEs and get halal certification.

Halal certification can also contribute to community development. When women MSMEs succeed, they not only improve their own well-being, but also the welfare of the communities around them. The income earned can be used for children's education, health, and local infrastructure development. This creates a positive domino effect for the community as a whole.

Finally, halal certification can be a tool to strengthen cultural identity. Products that are halal certified often reflect local cultural values and traditions. By promoting halal products, women MSMEs not only strengthen their economy but also preserve their cultural heritage.

Women's economic empowerment in the Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) sector is an important issue in the context of inclusive economic development. One of the main challenges faced by women MSME actors is access to markets and product competitiveness. In this case, halal certification emerges as a strategic solution that can increase product competitiveness and open up wider market opportunities. Through this journal, it will be discussed how halal certification can function as a tool for women's economic empowerment in MSMEs, as well as the challenges and opportunities that exist.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

In this study, the approach used is a qualitative method with a case study technique. The qualitative method was chosen because the focus of this study is to understand in depth how halal certification can play a role in empowering women's economy in Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs). This study will involve in-depth interviews with female MSME owners who have obtained halal certification, as well as data collection through direct observation in the field. Case studies will be conducted on several MSMEs that have successfully implemented halal certification. For example, food and beverage MSMEs managed by women in certain areas, such as in Mandailing Natal Regency and Padangsidempuan City. According to data from the

Halal Product Guarantee Agency (BPJPH), in 2021, there was an increase in the number of MSMEs that obtained halal certification, which shows that more and more women are involved in this sector. This study aims to explore how halal certification not only increases product competitiveness but also improves the economic and social status of women.

Data collection will be carried out using a purposive sampling technique, where respondents are selected based on certain criteria, namely female MSME owners who have obtained halal certification. In this case, the expected number of respondents is around 6 people, to ensure variation in experiences and perspectives.

Table 1. Respondent Data

No.	UMKM (Initials)	Address
1.	KD	Mandailing Natal Regency
2.	OOA	Mandailing Natal Regency
3.	BP	Mandailing Natal Regency
4.	BSC	The city of Padangsidempuan
5.	APRI	The city of Padangsidempuan
6.	SBNL	The city of Padangsidempuan

The data obtained will be analyzed using thematic analysis, where the main themes will be identified from the interviews and observations conducted.

In addition, this study will also involve document analysis, such as annual reports of MSMEs and data from related government agencies that show the economic impact of halal certification. Relevant statistical data, such as the number of MSMEs that have obtained halal certification and their contribution to the local economy, will be collected from official sources such as the Central Statistics Agency (BPS) and the Ministry of Cooperatives and SMEs. Thus, this study is expected to provide a comprehensive picture of the benefits of halal certification for women's empowerment in the MSME sector.

In this context, it is important to consider the challenges faced by women in obtaining halal certification. Several studies have shown that there are still gaps in access to information and resources for women MSME owners. Therefore, this study will also try to identify these barriers and provide recommendations that can help improve women's access to halal certification. With this holistic approach, it is hoped that this study can provide significant contributions to the development of policies and programs for women's economic empowerment in Indonesia.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A. Halal Certification Concept

Halal certification is a process that ensures that products meet Islamic sharia standards. In Indonesia, halal certification is managed by the Halal Product Assurance Organizing Agency (BPJPH) which was established based on Law Number 33 of 2014 concerning Halal Product Assurance. According to data from BPJPH, the number of halal certifications issued continues to increase, with more than 1 million products having been certified in (Aprillia, 2023). This shows that public awareness of the importance of halal is increasing, especially among Muslim consumers.

Halal certification is not just a label, but also reflects the manufacturer's commitment to product quality and safety. Research by Sari et al. (2021) shows that halal-certified products often have greater appeal to consumers, which leads to increased sales. This is an excellent opportunity for Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) managed by women to increase their competitiveness in the market.

In the context of MSMEs, halal certification can serve as an effective differentiation tool. A study by (Firmansyah, 2022) revealed that MSMEs that have obtained halal certification are able to reach a wider market, including exports to countries with large Muslim populations, such as Malaysia and the Middle East. Thus, halal certification not only provides quality assurance but also opens up wider market opportunities for MSMEs.

Furthermore, halal certification can also increase consumer confidence. Data from the Indonesian (Survey Institute 2023) shows that 78% of Muslim consumers prefer halal-certified products over non-halal ones. This indicates that halal certification can be a key factor in building customer loyalty, which is very important for the sustainability of MSMEs.

Finally, it is important to note that the halal certification process does not only benefit the producers, but also has a positive impact on society as a whole. With the increasing number of halal-certified MSMEs, there will be an increase in employment and contribution to the local economy, which in turn can empower women as entrepreneurs.

B. The Role of MSMEs in Women's Economic Empowerment

MSMEs in Indonesia have a very important role in empowering women's economy. According to data from the Ministry of Cooperatives and SMEs, around 60% of MSME actors are women (Kemenkop UKM, 2022). This shows that women have a significant contribution in this sector, and their empowerment through MSMEs can have a positive impact on the national economy.

Women's economic empowerment through MSMEs can be seen from increased access to resources, training, and business networks. Research by (Puspitasari, 2021) found that women involved in halal-certified MSMEs tend to receive better training, both in terms of business management and product marketing. This provides them with the skills needed to manage their businesses more effectively and efficiently.

In addition, MSMEs managed by women often focus on local and traditional products, which can help preserve culture and increase the added value of products. A real example can be seen from handicraft businesses in Bali managed by women, where they have succeeded in obtaining halal certification for traditional food products, so they can reach a wider market (Asmoro & Saptomo, 2024). A study by Rahayu (2023) shows that women who have halal-certified MSME businesses feel more confident in doing business and participating in economic activities. The granting of halal certification provides legitimacy and recognition, which is important for improving

Women's position in society. Thus, women's economic empowerment through MSMEs not only improves individual welfare, but also contributes to strengthening the family and community economy. This empowerment becomes more significant when supported by government policies and related institutions that facilitate access to halal certification.

C. Challenges in Obtaining Halal Certification

Although halal certification offers many benefits, the process of obtaining it often faces various challenges, especially for MSMEs managed by women. One of the main challenges is the costs associated with the certification process. According to research by (Santoso 2021), the cost of halal certification can be a burden for small MSMEs, which often have limited capital.

In addition, a lack of understanding of certification procedures is also an obstacle. Data from the Indonesian MSME Association shows that many MSME actors, especially women, do not fully understand the benefits and process of halal certification (MSME Association, 2022). This indicates the need for more intensive education and socialization from the government and related institutions about the importance of halal certification.

Another challenge faced is the lack of technical support and skilled human resources in the certification process. Research by (Wulandari, 2023) found that many MSMEs do not have access to adequate training and technical guidance, making it difficult to meet the established standards.

Furthermore, there are also challenges in terms of regulation and bureaucracy that are often complicated and time-consuming. The long and complicated process can make MSMEs, especially women, feel frustrated and ultimately give up on their intention to obtain halal certification.

Therefore, collaboration between the government, private institutions, and communities is needed to create an ecosystem that supports MSMEs in obtaining halal certification. This includes providing clear information, training, and access to the resources needed to meet certification requirements.

D. Benefits of Halal Certification for Women-Owned MSMEs

Halal certification provides various benefits for MSMEs managed by women, both economically and socially. Economically, products that are halal certified tend to have a higher selling value. Research by Rahmawati (2022) shows that MSMEs that have halal certification can increase their income by up to 30% compared to those that are not certified.

In addition, halal certification also helps women MSMEs to expand their market reach. With halal certification, their products can be accepted in both domestic and international markets, including countries with large Muslim populations. A successful example can be seen from a processed food business in Central Java that succeeded in penetrating the export market after obtaining halal certification (Budi, 2023).

From a social perspective, halal certification can increase consumer trust. In a survey conducted by (Nielsen 2023), 65% of consumers stated that they were more confident in buying products from MSMEs that have halal certification. This shows that halal certification can be a tool to build a business's reputation and credibility.

Furthermore, halal certification also contributes to women's empowerment in terms of improving skills and knowledge. The process of obtaining certification often involves training and capacity building, which can improve women's ability to manage their businesses. Research by (Lestari, 2023) shows that women involved in the halal certification process feel more confident and are able to make better decisions in business.

Thus, halal certification not only provides economic benefits, but also contributes to women's social empowerment in the context of MSMEs. This emphasizes the importance of support to increase women's access to halal certification as a strategic step in economic empowerment.

E. Government Policy and Support

The Indonesian government has issued various policies to support halal certification for MSMEs, especially those managed by women. One significant step is through the implementation of the Halal Product Guarantee Law which requires all food and beverage products to be halal certified. This policy is expected to increase awareness and encourage MSMEs to obtain halal certification.

In addition, the government also provides various training and mentoring programs to assist MSMEs in the certification process. These programs often involve collaboration with private institutions and non-governmental organizations that have experience in the field of halal certification. According to data from the Ministry of Trade, more than 500 MSMEs have received support in the halal certification process through this program (Ministry of Trade, 2023).

Financial support is also a major focus of the government. Through the People's Business Credit (KUR) program, the government provides easier access to financing for MSMEs, including for halal certification costs. This is very important considering that many MSMEs, especially women, face capital constraints in running their businesses.

Furthermore, the government is also trying to increase international cooperation in terms of halal certification. By establishing partnerships with other countries, Indonesia can strengthen the position of halal products in the global market. This is an opportunity for women's MSMEs to penetrate the international market with halal-certified products. (Nasirudin et al., 2023)

Finally, it is important to continue to raise awareness of the importance of halal certification among the public. The government needs to hold an educational campaign targeting MSME actors, especially women, so that they understand the benefits and process of halal certification. With strong support from the government, it is hoped that women's MSMEs can more easily obtain halal certification and contribute to overall economic empowerment.

Through in-depth interviews, all respondents stated that halal certification plays an important role in increasing MSME income. By increasing consumer trust, opening up new market access, and encouraging innovation, halal certification is not only beneficial for regulatory compliance, but also as an effective business strategy. Therefore, it is important for MSMEs to consider halal certification as part of their business development plan. This is in accordance with research by (Mardani et al. 2022) showing that MSMEs with halal certification experienced an increase in income of up to 30% in the first year after certification compared to those without certification.

Overall, respondents indicated that halal certification can serve as an effective marketing tool and contribute to changes in consumption patterns. With increasing awareness and preference for halal products, businesses need to consider halal certification as part of their business strategy to meet growing market demand. This is in line with research findings showing that halal certification has a positive impact on consumer purchasing decisions. According to a study by (Noor et al. 2023), around 75% of respondents stated that they were more likely to purchase halal-certified products after learning about their benefits.

From the results of the overall respondent's answers, halal certification has a significant influence on the position of women in the business world. By obtaining halal certification, women not only increase the competitiveness of their products but also strengthen their position in business networks and access to resources. This is in line with (Aminah's research 2021) which revealed that people are more likely to support halal-certified products, which has a positive impact on the reputation of women entrepreneurs in the market.

Based on the answers of all respondents, the role of women's communities or networks is very important in supporting the halal certification process for MSMEs. Through education, collaboration, and moral support, they help entrepreneurs overcome challenges and take advantage of existing opportunities. This supports the research findings from the analysis by Prasetyo (2023) highlighting that women's networks not only help in the certification process, but also in marketing halal products, which increases the competitiveness of MSMEs in the market. (Ireland, J. and Rajabzadeh, n.d.)

From the survey/research results, halal certification is not just a label, but also a strong marketing strategy that can support business growth. With increasing consumer awareness and demand for halal products, companies that adopt this certification can gain a competitive advantage in an increasingly competitive market. This is consistent with research by (Iskandar, 2024) reporting an increase in sales of up to 30% after obtaining halal certification. Companies that use halal certification in marketing campaigns.

4. CONCLUSION

The role of women's communities or networks is very important in supporting the halal certification process for MSMEs. Through education, collaboration, and moral support, they help entrepreneurs overcome challenges and take advantage of existing opportunities. This supports the research findings from the analysis

of women's networks not only helping in the certification process, but also in marketing halal products, which increases the competitiveness of MSMEs in the market.

From the results of the survey/research, halal certification is not just a label, but also a strong marketing strategy that can support business growth. With increasing consumer awareness and demand for halal products, companies that adopt this certification can gain a competitive advantage in an increasingly competitive market. increased sales of up to 30% after obtaining halal certification.

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