

Multi-Actor Collaboration in the Implementation of Halal Certification Labeling for Micro and Small Enterprises Amidst Literacy and Service Infrastructure Challenges: A Case Study of Bogor Regency

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ABSTRACT

Halal certification is a strategic public policy instrument aimed at consumer protection and the fulfillment of the public's right to halal product assurance, particularly for Micro and Small Enterprises (MSEs). Nevertheless, its implementation continues to face structural and social challenges, including weak multi-actor collaboration, low levels of halal literacy (approximately 28–30%), and unequal access to halal certification service infrastructure. This study examines how multi-actor collaboration shapes the implementation of halal certification labeling for MSEs, with particular attention to the roles of halal literacy and public service infrastructure readiness. Employing a descriptive qualitative approach, data were collected through semi-structured interviews and policy document analysis and analyzed thematically using the collaborative governance framework of Ansell and Gash (2008). The findings indicate that low halal literacy weakens the initial conditions for collaboration, while limited service infrastructure constrains collaborative processes and delays policy outcomes. Theoretically, this study extends collaborative governance theory by demonstrating how social capacity (halal literacy) and infrastructural readiness function as critical determinants of starting conditions and collaborative processes in public service-oriented policies such as halal certification. Practically, the study recommends strengthening collaboration-based halal literacy programs, expanding equitable certification infrastructure, and integrating public service systems to enhance the effectiveness and sustainability of halal certification implementation for MSEs.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Halal certification is a public policy instrument that functions as consumer protection while fulfilling the public's right to assurance of product halalness (Indonesia, 2022). The state has a constitutional

obligation to ensure security, comfort, and legal certainty for society, including through halal product assurance regulations that govern certification processes, labeling, and supervision of products circulating in the market (Indonesia, 2022). In the context of Micro and Small Enterprises (MSEs), halal certification is also positioned as a strategy to enhance competitiveness and expand market access at both national and global levels (Statistics, 2023; Angelen, Yulianto, & Pramitasari, 2025).

As a form of policy affirmation, the government has launched free halal certification programs, such as the Free Halal Certification Program (SEHATI), aimed at increasing halal certificate ownership among MSEs (Halal, 2023). This program is designed through the involvement of multiple actors, including government institutions, halal facilitators, halal inspection bodies, and business actors. However, policy implementation continues to face challenges related to suboptimal multi-actor collaboration (Ansell & Gash, 2008). Differences in institutional capacity, role fragmentation, and weak coordination among stakeholders often hinder policy effectiveness, as explained in the collaborative governance perspective (Bryson et al., 2015; Laode et al., 2025).

Beyond institutional challenges, social factors also influence the implementation of halal certification. Various studies indicate that public halal literacy remains relatively low, ranging between 28–30 percent, resulting in limited understanding among communities and MSE actors that is often confined to halal symbols or labels rather than the halal certification system as a whole (Putri & Hati, 2021). This condition affects procedural awareness and active participation in the certification process (Setyaningsih & Marwansyah, 2019). In addition, halal certification service infrastructure remains uneven, particularly in rural and peripheral areas (Halal, 2024). Limited service access, geographical distance, and suboptimal public service capacity cause some MSEs to experience difficulties in accessing halal certification processes in a timely and efficient manner (Bank, 2020).

Nevertheless, studies that integrate multi-actor collaboration with levels of halal literacy and service infrastructure readiness in the implementation of halal certification remain limited (Ansell & Gash, 2008). Therefore, this study is important to fill this research gap by positioning halal certification as a complex and collaborative public policy issue. This study aims to analyze the challenges of multi-actor collaboration in the implementation of halal certification labeling in Micro and Small Enterprises (MSEs) in Bogor Regency, particularly in terms of coordination, roles, and interactions among stakeholders involved. Furthermore, this study aims to examine the role of public halal literacy in supporting the effectiveness of halal certification policies, particularly in increasing MSEs' understanding, participation, and compliance with the certification process. Furthermore, this study aims to identify various obstacles to halal certification service infrastructure as part of public services that affect accessibility, service quality, and public involvement in the implementation of halal certification.

2. METHODS

This study employs a qualitative descriptive-analytical approach to explore the dynamics of multi-actor collaboration in the implementation of halal certification labeling for Micro and Small Enterprises (MSEs) in Bogor Regency. The research location was purposively selected due to its active involvement in halal certification programs for MSEs. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews with 12 informants, consisting of representatives from the Halal Product Assurance Organizing Agency (BPJPH), halal process facilitators from LP3H/P3H institutions, MSE actors who were participating in or had completed the halal certification process, and community representatives as policy beneficiaries. Informants were selected using purposive sampling based on their direct involvement, experience, and knowledge of the halal certification process. Each interview lasted between 45 and 90 minutes, allowing for in-depth exploration of perceptions, experiences, and collaborative interactions. In addition to interviews, policy documents and official reports related to halal certification were analyzed to support data triangulation. Data analysis was conducted using thematic analysis, involving systematic coding, categorization, and theme development, which were then mapped onto the collaborative governance dimensions of starting conditions, institutional design, facilitative leadership, and collaborative processes as proposed by Ansell and Gash (2008). Ethical considerations were strictly observed throughout the

research process, including obtaining informed consent from all informants, ensuring voluntary participation, and maintaining anonymity by using coded identifiers to protect participants' identities.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Findings

1. Initial Conditions of Halal Certification Implementation

The findings indicate that the initial conditions for implementing halal certification labeling for Micro and Small Enterprises (MSEs) remain constrained by limited understanding among the public and business actors regarding the halal certification system (Halal, 2023). Most MSE informants perceived halal merely as the presence of a label on products, without comprehending certification procedures, administrative requirements, or the associated legal implications. This condition reflects low halal literacy, which has become a barrier from the early stages of policy implementation.

One MSE actor stated, *"So far, we only know that halal means having a label; we did not realize that the process is lengthy and regulated"* (MSE-01). This finding aligns with official BPJPH documents indicating that halal literacy remains a major challenge in accelerating halal certification, particularly within the MSE sector. Low halal literacy weakens the starting conditions in the collaborative governance framework, as it creates a gap in understanding between the government and the policy's target groups.

2. Institutional and Coordination Challenges

This study finds that institutional and coordination challenges among actors remain dominant issues in the implementation of halal certification (Ansell & Gash, 2008). The involvement of multiple actors—such as BPJPH, LP3H/P3H, halal facilitators, and MSEs—has not been fully supported by clear role and responsibility allocation. This situation potentially leads to overlapping authority and confusion at the implementation level.

A facilitator informant noted, *"In practice, miscommunication often occurs; MSEs are confused about whom to contact first, while our authority is also limited"* (P3H-02). This condition indicates that the institutional design of collaboration has not fully facilitated effective and coordinated cooperation. Furthermore, inconsistencies between central-level policies and local-level implementation weaken the effectiveness of multi-actor collaboration.

3. A Collaboration Process That Remains Non-Participatory

The findings also reveal that the collaborative process in halal certification implementation remains largely top-down and insufficiently participatory. Communication forums among actors tend to be formal and administrative, offering limited space for MSEs and communities to express their needs and constraints.

A community informant stated, *"We mostly just receive information and are rarely involved in discussions or program evaluations"* (M-01). This condition suggests that key elements of the collaborative process, such as face-to-face dialogue, trust-building, and shared learning, have not functioned optimally. As a result, collective commitment among actors in implementing halal certification policy has not been strongly or sustainably established.

4. Service Infrastructure Gaps

The study highlights significant gaps in halal certification service infrastructure, particularly in terms of accessibility and service capacity (Halal, 2024). MSEs in certain areas experience difficulties accessing certification services due to limited facilities, geographical distance, and insufficient supporting resources. These infrastructure constraints prolong certification processing times and reduce MSEs' interest in participating in halal certification programs.

Official BPJPH documents indicate that halal certification services are not yet evenly distributed, leaving some regions dependent on limited-capacity services. These findings confirm that weaknesses

in service infrastructure affect not only technical service delivery but also hinder inter-actor collaboration, as interaction and coordination become less intensive and sustainable.

Discussion

The findings demonstrate that the implementation of halal certification labeling for Micro and Small Enterprises (MSEs) is a public policy process strongly influenced by the quality of multi-actor collaboration. Empirical evidence shows that low halal literacy and limited service infrastructure significantly weaken collaborative effectiveness, as conceptualized in the collaborative governance framework of Ansell and Gash (2008).

From the starting conditions perspective, low public halal literacy contributes to weak initial collaboration conditions. Ansell and Gash (2008) emphasize that successful collaboration depends heavily on shared understanding, trust, and capacity among actors from the outset. The findings indicate that limited halal literacy creates a knowledge gap between government actors and MSEs, as communities tend to interpret halal solely as a label rather than a comprehensive certification system. This condition weakens active participation and inhibits the development of dialogue and mutual learning, consistent with prior studies showing that low policy literacy directly affects public participation and compliance in policy implementation (Nuraini, Yulianto, & Pramitasari, 2025).

Beyond literacy, this study underscores the critical role of service infrastructure in shaping the quality of collaborative processes. Limited halal certification infrastructure constrains the collaborative process, particularly in terms of face-to-face interaction, sustained communication, and the formation of shared commitment. Ansell and Gash (2008) argue that collaboration requires spaces and mechanisms enabling intensive and equitable interaction among actors. However, limited service access, geographical barriers, and uneven service capacity cause interactions to be sporadic and predominantly administrative. These findings reinforce previous research suggesting that disparities in public service infrastructure weaken cross-actor collaboration in policy implementation.

Compared with earlier studies, this research reinforces the view that multi-actor collaboration in public policy is often constrained by structural and social factors rather than regulatory aspects alone. However, this study adds value by positioning halal literacy and service infrastructure as key variables influencing starting conditions and the collaborative process within halal certification policy. Consequently, this research extends the application of collaborative governance theory to halal certification as a public service issue that is both technical and social in nature.

The scholarly contribution of this article lies in integrating multi-actor collaboration analysis with dimensions of public halal literacy and service infrastructure readiness. This approach not only enriches public administration literature on collaborative policy implementation but also offers a new perspective on halal certification as a public policy that requires simultaneous institutional synergy and community empowerment.

This study has several limitations that should be acknowledged. First, as a qualitative case study conducted in Bogor Regency, the findings are context-specific and may not be directly generalizable to other regions with different institutional capacities, political dynamics, or levels of halal ecosystem development. Second, the study relies primarily on interview data and document analysis, which may reflect the subjective perspectives of informants and institutional narratives. Although data triangulation was applied, the absence of quantitative indicators—such as certification processing time, budget allocation data, or participation rates—limits the ability to assess policy effectiveness in measurable terms. Third, this research does not explicitly examine political incentives, inter-agency power relations, or detailed budget structures, which may also shape collaborative governance outcomes. Future research could address these limitations by adopting a mixed-methods approach, expanding comparative cases across regions, and incorporating political economy and fiscal perspectives to provide a more comprehensive understanding of halal certification policy implementation.

4. CONCLUSION

This study aimed to analyze how multi-actor collaboration influences the implementation of halal certification labeling for Micro and Small Enterprises (MSEs), with particular attention to the roles of halal literacy and service infrastructure readiness. The findings demonstrate that these research objectives have been addressed. Empirically, the study shows that the quality of multi-actor collaboration strongly shapes policy implementation outcomes. Low levels of public halal literacy weaken the initial conditions for collaboration, resulting in limited and predominantly administrative participation by MSE actors and communities. At the same time, constraints in halal certification service infrastructure restrict access, slow inter-actor interaction, and reduce the effectiveness of institutional coordination. These conditions prevent collaboration from becoming participatory and sustainable, thereby hindering the optimal achievement of halal certification policy objectives. Overall, the findings confirm that the success of halal certification policy implementation depends not only on regulatory frameworks, but also on the social and structural capacities that support collaborative governance.

Based on these conclusions, the study proposes several policy directions to strengthen halal certification implementation. Strengthening halal literacy should be pursued through collaborative initiatives involving government institutions, facilitation agencies, MSE actors, and community groups, ensuring that public understanding extends beyond halal labeling to encompass the full certification system. In addition, the equitable distribution of halal certification service infrastructure particularly in rural and peripheral areas should be prioritized to ensure inclusive access and effective service delivery. Furthermore, improving cross-actor communication forums and integrating digital halal service systems are essential to enhance coordination, transparency, and the long-term sustainability of multi-actor collaboration in halal certification policy implementation for MSEs.

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