

# The Effectiveness of Islamic Religious Counselor Assistance on the Halal Certification Process for MSMEs in Pangkalpinang

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## ABSTRACT

*The influence of religion is significant in various dimensions of human existence, particularly in economic contexts. Religious teachings frequently provide a framework for believers, influencing their pursuit of a successful and fulfilling life. In this context, Islamic religious counselors possess significant potential to empower communities, especially by aiding small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in navigating the halal certification process. This study seeks to (1) determine the function of Islamic religious counselors in supporting MSMEs in Pangkalpinang during the halal certification process; (2) analyze the obstacles encountered in the assistance process; and (3) develop strategies to enhance the effectiveness of halal certification support for MSMEs. This research utilizes a qualitative methodology, specifically a case study approach, incorporating interviews with Islamic religious counselors in Pangkalpinang City. The findings indicate that Islamic religious counselors play a crucial role as facilitators, educators, and motivators within the halal certification process. Nonetheless, the effectiveness of the guidance encounters obstacles, including a limited number of counselors, varying levels of technical understanding among SMEs, and inadequate resource support. This study identifies the necessity for ongoing training for Islamic religious counselors, promotes enhanced collaboration across sectors (including local government, BPJPH, and halal certification support institutions), and advocates for comprehensive halal awareness and literacy campaigns targeted at SMEs. The proposed enhancements aim to streamline the halal certification process, thereby increasing accessibility and bolstering the competitiveness of sharia-based SMEs on both local and national scales.*



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## INTRODUCTION

Islamic Religious Counselors have a strategic role in guiding and directing Muslims in religious and social life. This role is not only limited to the spiritual aspect but also includes social and economic aspects. (Mas'amah, 2019) In the Circular of the Minister of Religion Number 2 of 2024 concerning the implementation of the duties of religious counselors and penghulu in supporting government priority programs and the Decree of the Director General of Islamic Community Guidance Number 637 of 2024 concerning the scope of activities of the functional positions of penghulu and Islamic religious counselors, the contents of which are the economic empowerment of the community. There are 363 Islamic Religious Counselors in the Bangka Belitung Islands, consisting of 41 PNS, 24 PPPK and 298 Non-PNS. Meanwhile, there are 59 Islamic Religious Counselors in Pangkalpinang, consisting of 14 PNS, 5 PPPK and 40 Non-PNS. The role of Islamic religious counselors in economic empowerment

involves various aspects that aim to improve the welfare of the community. Some important roles of Islamic religious instructors in the context of economic empowerment are, education and Islamic financial literacy, (Wulandari et al., 2022) mentoring micro and small businesses, Empowerment of zakat, infaq and shadaqah, (Mas'amah, 2019) coaching and capacity development, Islamic economic advocacy, (Kamaludin Imam, 2021) motivation and inspiration, the most important of which is the development of Halal products. (Afriyanti & Kurniawati, 2023) Islamic religious instructors can play a role in educating the public about the importance of halal products and assisting local producers in the halal certification process. Religious instructors provide an understanding of the concepts of halal and haram in Islam to producers and consumers. They explain the criteria for products that are considered halal, including materials, production processes, and distribution. Religious instructors can also assist producers in the process of obtaining halal certification. They help understand the requirements and procedures that must be followed to obtain certification from the authorized institution, namely BPJPH, this is important to ensure that the products produced are in accordance with sharia and can be accepted in the wider market.

Islamic religious instructors can become Halal Product Process Companions (PPPH) who are officially registered with BPJPH so that in carrying out their duties they are legal and in accordance with procedures. According to the Regulation of the Minister of Religion of the Republic of Indonesia Number 20 of 2021 concerning Halal Certification for Micro and Small Business Actors, the Halal Product Process (PPH) is a series of activities to ensure the halalness of Products including the provision of materials, processing, storage, packaging, distribution, sales, and presentation of Products. PPH assistance is an activity to assist MSME actors in meeting the requirements for product halal statements. PPH assistants are people who verify product halal statements in the self-declare process.

MSMEs are an abbreviation for Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises. This term is used to describe types of businesses based on the scale of size as seen from several criteria, such as the number of assets, turnover, and number of workers. MSMEs play an important role in the economy of many countries, including Indonesia, because they are the backbone of the economy and contribute greatly to job creation and the provision of goods and services. (Al Farisi et al., 2022) MSMEs in Bangka Belitung play an important role in the economy of the region. The Bangka Belitung Islands Province is famous for its wealth of natural resources, such as tin, pepper, and marine products, as well as its great tourism potential. MSMEs in Bangka Belitung utilize this potential in various sectors, including the creative industry, agribusiness, crafts, culinary, and tourism. The main sectors of MSMEs in Bangka Belitung include the agricultural sector, fisheries, creative industry and crafts, culinary and processed food, tourism and traditional crafts and arts. The number of MSMEs in the Bangka Belitung Islands is 67,876, while in Pangkalpinang City there are 14,428 Business Actors. Business Actors included in micro businesses are 12,294, small ones are 650, and medium ones are 411.

In organizing Halal Product Assurance (JPH), BPJPH collaborates with related ministries and/or institutions, Halal Inspection Institutions (LPH), Halal Product Process Assistance Institutions (LP3H), Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI), and Halal Product Fatwa Committee. BPJPH also carries out international cooperation in Halal Product Assurance. (Hamka et al., 2023)

While domestically, BPJPH also carries out a number of collaborations to strengthen the implementation of JPH with collaboration between BPJPH and related stakeholders, ranging from Ministries/Institutions, local governments, BUMN, BUMD, universities, business associations, communities, community organizations (ormas), training institutions, halal centers/halal study centers, and so on. BPJPH also continues to expand its synergy with various stakeholders to strengthen the implementation of JPH.

BPJPH has made various strategic efforts and breakthroughs to accelerate halal product certification, while strengthening the halal ecosystem in Indonesia. The goal is to realize Indonesia's ideals to become the number 1 halal product production center in the world. The Halal Product Guarantee Agency (BPJPH) is a government agency responsible for ensuring that products circulating in Indonesia meet halal requirements. The obligation to halal certification is a mandate of Law Number 33 of 2014 concerning Halal Product Guarantee. This law is the legal basis that regulates the halal guarantee of products circulating and consumed in Indonesia. This law was born in response to the community's need for legal certainty regarding the halalness of products, especially for Muslims.

More than 20 thousand Islamic religious instructors from 34 provinces participated in the Halal Product Process Assistance (PPH) Training online. The training was held simultaneously, for three days, from 9 to 11 February 2023. Head of the Halal Product Guarantee Agency (BPJPH) Muhammad Aqil Irham said that the training for religious instructors was an effort to accelerate the achievement of one million Free Halal Certifications (SEHATI) in 2023.

The Sehati Program is an initiative of the Halal Product Guarantee Agency (BPJPH) which aims to facilitate Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) in obtaining halal certification for free. This program is a real manifestation of the government's efforts to encourage the growth of the halal industry in Indonesia and provide convenience for MSMEs in accessing a wider market.

The objectives of the SEHATI program include expanding the reach of halal certification by increasing the number of MSMEs that have halal certificates, facilitating MSME access by simplifying the halal certification process and reducing the cost burden for MSMEs, encouraging the growth of the halal industry by strengthening Indonesia's position as the world's halal product production center, and providing legal certainty by providing legal certainty to Muslim consumers about the halalness of the products they consume.

To be able to participate in the Sehati program, MSMEs must meet several requirements set by BPJPH. These requirements include, the submitted product is not included in the high-risk product category or uses materials whose halal status has not been confirmed, the product production process is relatively simple and easy to monitor, and must have a NIB issued by the OSS institution

## METHODS

This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach to describe the effectiveness of Islamic religious counselors in the halal certification process for MSMEs in Pangkalpinang (Rahman, 2024). The literature review approach, in which the researcher collects information from various sources such as books, magazines, newspapers, and other literature to build a theoretical foundation. In this qualitative descriptive study, the researcher refers to written sources such as scientific journals, reference books, literature, encyclopedias, scientific papers, scientific works, and other sources, both in written and digital form, that are relevant and related to the research object. The research object focuses on texts or writings that describe and explain the halal certification assistance provided by Islamic religious teachers.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

### 1. Islamic Religious Counselor

Islamic religious counselors are figures who have an important role in guiding and fostering Muslims. They are tasked with conveying religious messages, providing a correct understanding of Islamic teachings, and helping people practice Islamic values in their daily lives.

Duties and Roles of Islamic Religious Counselors: (Ilham, 2019)

- a. Education and Da'wah:
  - Providing Islamic religious education to the community through religious studies, lectures, and other religious activities.
  - Conveying Islamic moral and ethical messages that are relevant to everyday life.
- b. Worship Guidance:
  - Guiding the community in carrying out worship, such as prayer, fasting, zakat, and haji.
  - Explaining the procedures for worship according to Islamic teachings.
- c. Religious Consultation:
  - Providing consultation and advice related to religious matters, such as marriage, inheritance, and other Islamic laws.
  - Helping the community in solving life problems related to religion.
- d. Community Empowerment:
  - Play a role in empowering the people's economy, such as mentoring MSMEs and managing zakat, infaq, and shadaqah.
  - Encourage the community to be involved in beneficial social activities, such as mutual cooperation and other community activities.

- e. Social Advocacy:
  - Become a communication bridge between the community and the government or religious institutions, especially in matters relating to the interests of Muslims.
  - Advocating for the values of justice, welfare, and harmony in society.
- f. Halal Certification Assistance:
  - Assist MSMEs in the halal certification process, ensuring that the products produced are in accordance with sharia principles.
  - Provide education about the importance of halal products and the process of obtaining such certification.
- g. Prevention and Handling of Deviations:
  - Convey the correct teachings of Islam to prevent and handle religious deviations, such as extremism, radicalism, and deviant sects.

To become an Islamic religious instructor, a person usually must have an adequate educational background in Islamic studies, such as a graduate of an Islamic boarding school, Islamic higher education, or other Islamic educational institutions. In addition, Islamic religious instructors are expected to have competence in: (Syafa'ah, 2014))

- Religious Knowledge: Deep understanding of Islamic teachings and sharia laws.
- Communication: The ability to communicate well, both verbally and in writing.
- Social and Cultural: Understanding the social and cultural context of the local community.
- Leadership and Management: The ability to lead and organize religious and social activities.

Islamic religious instructors play an important role in fostering the community, maintaining social harmony, and promoting Islamic values in everyday life. (Mukzizatin, 2020) They work with various parties, including the government, religious institutions, and the wider community, to build a religious, harmonious, and prosperous society.

- a. Ideal Qualities of Religious Instructors:
  - Strong Religious Knowledge: Having a deep understanding of the Qur'an, Hadith, and other Islamic sciences.
  - Communication Skills: Being able to convey religious messages clearly, interestingly, and easily understood by various groups.
  - Social Skills: Having the ability to interact well with various people and backgrounds.
  - Exemplary: Being a good example for the community in practicing Islamic teachings.
  - Creativity: Being able to develop innovative extension methods that are in accordance with the times.
- b. Challenges Faced by Religious Instructors (Kibtyah et al., 2023)
  - Technological Developments: The emergence of social media and unfiltered information can be a challenge in conveying the correct religious message.
  - Religious Pluralism: The diversity of religions and beliefs in society requires religious instructors to be wiser in preaching.
  - Modernization: Changes in the lifestyle of modern society can influence people's interest in religious activities.
  - Lack of Appreciation: Lack of appreciation and respect for the profession of religious instructors.
- c. The Role of Religious Instructors in the Indonesian Context (Dwiyono & Hapsari, 2024)
 

In Indonesia, Islamic religious instructors have a very strategic role in maintaining religious harmony and strengthening national values. They play an active role in building a tolerant society, respecting each other, and upholding the values of Pancasila.

In the context of halal certification, Islamic religious instructors can play a role as:

  - Educators: Providing an understanding of the importance of halal certification and the procedures for obtaining it.
  - Facilitators: Facilitating the halal certification process for MSMEs.
  - Motivators: Motivating business actors to obtain halal certification.

## 2. MSMEs

### a. Definition of MSMEs

MSMEs are types of businesses owned by individuals or business entities that have a certain business scale. The criteria for determining whether a business is an MSME are based on several factors, (Mariska, 2023) such as:

- Number of assets: The total value of assets owned by the business.
- Turnover: Total income obtained from the sale of products or services in a certain period.
- Number of workers: The number of employees working in the business.

Government regulations regarding MSMEs in Indonesia provide more specific limitations regarding these criteria.

### b. The Role of MSMEs in the Indonesian Economy (Sofyan, 2017)

- Labor Absorption: MSMEs are one of the sectors that absorb the most labor, especially in the regions.
- Innovation: Many new product and service innovations come from MSMEs.
- Economic Growth: The contribution of MSMEs to national economic growth is very significant.
- Community Welfare: MSMEs help improve community welfare, especially in rural areas.

### c. Challenges Faced by MSMEs (Niode, 2019)

- Access to Capital: The difficulty of gaining access to capital is one of the main challenges for MSMEs.
- Technology: Many MSMEs still use inadequate technology.
- Marketing: MSMEs often have difficulty marketing their products.
- Licensing: The complicated and time-consuming licensing process is often an obstacle for MSMEs.

### d. Government Programs to Support MSMEs (Lee, 2023)

The Indonesian government has launched various programs to support the growth of MSMEs, including:

- People's Business Credit (KUR): A program to provide low-interest credit to MSMEs.
- Mekaar: An ultra-micro financing program for women entrepreneurs.
- Lapak UMKM: A digital platform to help MSMEs market their products.

### e. Examples of MSMEs in Indonesia. Examples of MSMEs are very diverse, ranging from culinary businesses, handicrafts, to services. Some examples of MSMEs that are popular in Indonesia include:

- Culinary: Food stalls, small restaurants, snack producers.
- Handicrafts: Batik, weaving, wood carving.
- Services: Repair services, salons, workshops.

## 3. Sertifikasi Halal

The Halal Product Assurance Organizing Agency (BPJPH) is the youngest echelon I unit under the Ministry of Religious Affairs (Kemenag) of the Republic of Indonesia. BPJPH was established in October 2017 based on the mandate of Law Number 33 of 2014 concerning Halal Product Assurance (JPH) which was ratified by the President of the Republic of Indonesia Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono on October 17, 2014. The law states that BPJPH must be established no later than 3 (three) years from the time the JPH Law is enacted.

In accordance with Presidential Regulation Number 83 of 2015 concerning the Ministry of Religious Affairs, BPJPH is led by a Head of Agency. The existence of BPJPH is also regulated in the Regulation of the Minister of Religious Affairs (PMA) Number 42 of 2016 concerning the Organization and Work Procedures of the Ministry of Religious Affairs. The PMA regulates the duties and functions of all fields in BPJPH. Decree of the Minister of Religious Affairs (KMA) No. 270 of 2016 concerning the Ministry of Religious Affairs Business Process Map is also one of the regulations governing BPJPH.

Based on Law 33 of 2014, in the implementation of JPH, BPJPH has the authority to: a. formulate and determine JPH policies; b. determine norms, standards, procedures, and criteria for JPH; c. issue and revoke Halal Certificates and Halal Labels on Products; d. register Halal Certificates on foreign Products; e. conduct socialization, education, and publication of Halal Products; f. accredit LPH; g. register Halal Auditors; h. supervise JPH; i. provide guidance to Halal Auditors; and j. cooperate with domestic and foreign institutions in the field of JPH implementation.

BPJPH halal certification is an official sign of recognition given by the Halal Product Guarantee Organizing Agency (BPJPH) to products that have met the halal requirements and provisions in accordance with Islamic law. (Wafa & Tanuri, 2022) This certificate is proof that a product is safe for consumption by Muslims because it has gone through an assessment and audit process by a competent institution.

a. The Importance of Halal Certification (Agustina et al., 2019)

- Legal Certainty: Halal certification provides legal certainty for producers and consumers.
- Consumer Protection: Ensures that products consumed by Muslim consumers have met halal standards.
- Increased Competitiveness: Halal-certified products have higher competitiveness, both in the domestic and international markets.
- Fulfillment of Religious Obligations: For Muslims, consuming halal products is a religious obligation.

b. Halal Certification Process (Wahyuni et al., 2022)

The halal certification process is carried out by BPJPH by involving various parties, such as:

- Certification Application: Business actors submit halal certification applications online through the Halal Certification Information System (SIS Halal).
- Document Verification: BPJPH verifies the documents submitted by business actors.
- Field Inspection: The halal auditor team from the Halal Inspection Institution (LPH) conducts direct inspections at the production location to ensure that the production process complies with halal requirements.
- Decision Making: BPJPH will issue a halal certificate if the submitted product meets all requirements.

c. Benefits of Halal Certification for MSMEs (Mashuri et al., 2022)

- Increase Sales: Muslim consumers prefer products that have been halal certified.
- Expand the Market: Halal-certified products can penetrate a wider market, both domestically and abroad.
- Improve Product Image: Halal certification is proof that the products produced are of high quality and meet the established standards.
- Get Government Support: Halal-certified MSMEs can get various supports from the government, such as access to capital and ease of licensing.

d. Requirements for Obtaining Halal Certification

- Halal Products: Proposed products must meet halal requirements in accordance with the fatwa of the Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI).
- Halal Production Process: The production process must be carried out in a clean and hygienic manner, and must not use haram materials.
- Complete Documentation: Business actors must complete all required documents, such as a list of raw materials, product formulas, and production procedures.

e. Challenges in Implementing Halal Certification

- Certification Costs: Halal certification costs are still an obstacle for some MSMEs.
- Lack of Understanding: Many business actors still do not understand the importance of halal certification and the procedures for obtaining it.
- Infrastructure: Limited infrastructure in some areas can hinder the halal certification process.

The Halal Product Assurance Organizing Agency (BPJPH) is an institution under the Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia that is responsible for organizing halal product assurance in Indonesia. One of the programs managed by BPJPH is free halal certification for business actors, especially MSMEs. This program aims to facilitate business actors to more easily

obtain halal certification, which in turn can increase the competitiveness of their products in the market.

#### 4. Features and Provisions of BPJPH Free Halal Certification (Putri Aprillia et al., n.d.)

##### a. Main Target:

This program is usually intended for micro and small businesses that have financial limitations in the halal certification process.

##### b. Submission Procedure:

- Registration: Business actors must register their products to obtain halal certification through a system provided by BPJPH, such as the Halal Information System (SIHALAL).
- Documentation: Business actors need to complete the required documents, including information on raw materials, production processes, and other supporting data.
- Verification Process: BPJPH, together with the Halal Inspection Institution (LPH) and the Fatwa Commission of the Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI), will verify and inspect the submitted products.
- Product Testing: If necessary, laboratory testing can be conducted to ensure the halalness of the product.
- Certification Decision: Based on the results of the verification and testing, BPJPH will issue a halal certificate if the product meets the requirements.

##### c. Approval Criteria:

Products must meet all halal requirements set by BPJPH and MUI, including raw materials, production processes, and product handling.

##### d. Benefits for Business Actors:

- Obtain a halal certificate at no cost, which can increase consumer confidence in the product.
- Open up greater opportunities for market access, both domestically and internationally.

##### e. Certificate Validity Period:

The halal certificate issued has a certain validity period and must be renewed in accordance with applicable provisions.

#### 5. Benefits of Free Halal Certification

##### a. Encourage Sharia Compliance:

Help business actors comply with sharia principles in the production and distribution of products.

##### b. Increasing Consumer Trust:

Halal-certified products are more trusted by Muslim consumers, who are the majority in Indonesia.

##### c. Government Support:

This program is a form of government support in empowering MSMEs and encouraging quality halal products in Indonesia.

##### d. Increasing Market Access:

Halal certification makes it easier for products to enter markets that prioritize halal products, both domestically and abroad.

This free halal certification program is part of BPJPH's efforts to expand the reach of halal certification in Indonesia, facilitate MSMEs in obtaining certification, and increase the competitiveness of Indonesian halal products in the global market

## CONCLUSION

Islamic religious instructors have a significant role in assisting MSMEs in Pangkalpinang in the process of obtaining halal certification. Through this study, several important points can be concluded regarding the role, effectiveness, and obstacles faced by Islamic religious instructors in carrying out their duties. Islamic religious instructors not only act as facilitators in the halal certification process, but also as agents of change who play a role in increasing MSME actors' awareness of the importance of product halalness. The instructors provide guidance starting from a basic understanding of halalness,

to the procedures for submitting certification. This shows that Islamic religious instructors are an important component in the economic ecosystem that prioritizes sharia principles.

The effectiveness of the assistance carried out by Islamic religious instructors can be considered quite high in terms of increasing the knowledge and awareness of MSME actors. Many MSME actors who previously did not understand the importance of halal certification are now starting to realize and are trying to fulfill it. However, this effectiveness varies depending on several factors such as the level of education and experience of MSME actors, the availability of time and resources for instructors, and support from other parties such as local governments and certification institutions.

The main obstacles faced by Islamic religious instructors include the limited number of instructors compared to the number of MSMEs that need to be assisted. In addition, there are also obstacles in terms of technical knowledge about halal certification procedures among MSME actors, which sometimes makes the mentoring process less effective. Extension workers also face challenges in terms of funding and resources, which limit their ability to reach all MSMEs that need assistance.

To increase the effectiveness of mentoring, it is necessary to increase the capacity of Islamic religious instructors through continuous training and professional development. In addition, closer collaboration between various parties, including the government, certification institutions, and religious instructors, is very important to create synergy in accelerating the halal certification process among MSMEs.

The role of Islamic religious instructors in assisting with halal certification not only has an impact on the halalness of MSME products but also contributes significantly to the development of the sharia economy in Pangkalpinang. With the increasing number of MSMEs that are halal certified, the competitiveness of local products increases, opening up wider market opportunities, especially among consumers who prioritize halal products.

The impact of this assistance is not only economic, but also social and religious. Halal certification is not only about compliance with the rules but also reflects the commitment of business actors to run their businesses in accordance with Islamic values. This strengthens the integrity of MSMEs as part of a community that upholds sharia principles. Overall, despite the challenges and limitations, Islamic religious instructors in Pangkalpinang have succeeded in carrying out their role well in assisting MSMEs to obtain halal certification. However, efforts to improve and strengthen this assistance must continue to be made so that halal certification can be more easily accessed by MSMEs, which will ultimately contribute to strengthening the local economy and improving community welfare.

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