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HALAL COMPLIANCE IN ISLAMIC ECONOMIC LAW: A SHARIA QUALITY MANAGEMENT LENS

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ABSTRACT

Halal certification has been institutionalized in Indonesia as a legal obligation for business actors, including micro-enterprises, to ensure halal assurance and consumer protection. However, its implementation, particularly through the self-declare certification scheme, continues to encounter challenges at the local level. This study aims to analyze the perceptions and barriers experienced by micro-enterprises in fulfilling halal certification requirements from the perspective of Islamic Economic Law using a Sharia Quality Management approach. Employing a qualitative case study design, this research was conducted in Bungo Regency, Jambi Province, with data collected through in-depth interviews involving seven micro-enterprise actors in the food sector who were undergoing or had completed the self-declare certification process. The data were analyzed thematically by linking empirical findings to the principles of *muamalah*, *maqasid al-shari'ah*, and *raf' al-haraj*. The findings indicate a very high level of normative acceptance of mandatory halal certification as a religious and legal obligation; however, implementation remains constrained by structural barriers, including difficulties in verifying locally sourced raw materials, uncertainty in certification timelines extending up to approximately five months, limited digital accessibility due to rigid systems, and hidden costs in the form of time loss and administrative burdens. These conditions raise concerns regarding legal certainty, potential hardship, and inequality of access to legal compliance. This study concludes that the effectiveness of halal certification should be assessed not only through formal compliance but also through the quality of its implementation in ensuring justice, accessibility, and *maṣlahah* for micro-enterprises within the framework of Islamic Economic Law.

Keywords : *halal certification, micro-enterprises, Islamic Economic Law, Sharia Quality Management, muamalah.*

ABSTRAK

Sertifikasi halal telah dilembagakan di Indonesia sebagai kewajiban hukum bagi pelaku usaha, termasuk usaha mikro, untuk menjamin kepastian halal dan perlindungan konsumen. Namun, implementasinya, khususnya melalui skema sertifikasi halal *self-declare*, masih menghadapi berbagai tantangan di tingkat lokal. Penelitian ini bertujuan menganalisis persepsi serta hambatan yang dialami pelaku usaha mikro dalam memenuhi kewajiban sertifikasi halal dari perspektif Hukum Ekonomi Islam dengan pendekatan *Sharia Quality Management*. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan desain studi kasus di Kabupaten Bungo, Provinsi Jambi, melalui wawancara mendalam terhadap tujuh pelaku usaha mikro sektor pangan yang sedang atau telah mengikuti proses sertifikasi halal *self-declare*. Data dianalisis secara tematik dengan mengaitkan temuan empiris pada prinsip *muamalah*, *maqasid al-shari'ah*, dan *raf' al-haraj*. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan adanya penerimaan normatif yang sangat tinggi terhadap kewajiban sertifikasi halal sebagai bagian dari kepatuhan muamalah, namun implementasinya masih terhambat oleh faktor struktural, seperti kesulitan verifikasi bahan baku lokal, ketidakpastian durasi proses sertifikasi hingga sekitar lima bulan, keterbatasan akses digital akibat sistem yang tidak ramah pengguna, serta biaya tersembunyi berupa beban waktu dan administratif. Kondisi tersebut menimbulkan persoalan kepastian hukum, potensi kesulitan (*haraj*), dan ketimpangan akses terhadap pemenuhan kewajiban hukum. Penelitian ini menyimpulkan bahwa efektivitas sertifikasi halal tidak cukup diukur dari kepatuhan formal semata, melainkan dari kualitas implementasinya dalam menjamin keadilan, kemudahan, dan *maṣlahah* bagi usaha mikro dalam kerangka Hukum Ekonomi Islam.

Kata kunci: sertifikasi halal, usaha mikro, hukum ekonomi Islam, *Sharia Quality Management*, *muamalah*.

INTRODUCTION

The development of the global halal industry has increasingly positioned halal compliance not merely as a religious or ethical preference, but as a structured regulatory framework within Islamic Economic Law governing economic transactions (*muamalah*) (Agarwala et al., 2019; Wilson & Liu, 2011). In Islamic jurisprudence, economic activities are fundamentally permissible (*al-asl fī al-mu‘āmalāt al-ibāhah*), provided that they do not violate explicit prohibitions and uphold justice, transparency, and public benefit (*maslahah*) (El-Gamal, 2006; Kamali, 2008). Halal assurance, therefore, functions as a normative legal mechanism that regulates production and consumption in accordance with Islamic legal principles while safeguarding consumers' rights, particularly the protection of life (*hifz al-nafs*) and property (*hifz al-mal*).

The Qur'an explicitly commands Muslims to consume lawful and good products, as stated in Surah al-Baqarah (2:168):

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ كُلُوا مِمَّا فِي الْأَرْضِ حَلَالًا طَيِّبًا وَلَا تَتَّبِعُوا خُطُوَاتِ الشَّيْطَانِ إِنَّهُ لَكُمْ عَدُوٌّ مُّبِينٌ (البقرة : ١٦٨)
O people, eat from what is lawful and good on earth, and do not follow the footsteps of Satan, for he is your sworn enemy (QS al-Baqarah: 168)

This principle is further reinforced in Surah al-Mā'idah (5:88),

وَكُلُوا مِمَّا رَزَقَكُمُ اللَّهُ حَلَالًا طَيِّبًا وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ الَّذِي أَنْتُمْ بِهِ مُؤْمِنُونَ (المائدة : ٨٨)
Eat of the lawful and good things that Allah has provided for you, and fear Allah in Whom you believe. (QS al-Maidah: 88)

which links halal consumption with obedience to divine law. In the context of economic transactions, the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) emphasized the centrality of lawful earnings, stating: "Indeed, Allah is pure and accepts only what is pure" (Muslim, 1955). These foundational texts establish halal compliance as a binding legal–normative obligation in Islamic economic life rather than a voluntary ethical choice, positioning halal assurance as an integral component of lawful *muamalah*.

In Indonesia, halal compliance has been institutionalized through mandatory halal certification, positioning halal assurance as a positive legal obligation for business actors, including micro-enterprises. From the perspective of Islamic legal theory, this policy reflects the role of the state as *wali al-amr*, endowed with the authority to regulate public affairs and enforce compliance to achieve collective benefit (*maslahah ‘āmmah*) (Hallaq, 2009; Hassan et al., 2022; Kamali, 1998). The introduction of the self-declare certification scheme aims to

facilitate access for micro and small enterprises by simplifying administrative requirements. However, empirical studies demonstrate that the implementation of mandatory halal certification frequently encounters structural and bureaucratic challenges, particularly at the local level, where institutional capacity and procedural clarity remain uneven (M. I. Khan et al., 2022; Oemar et al., 2023). At the scholarly level, halal studies have expanded rapidly over the past decade, including systematic mappings of halal research themes, regulatory compliance mechanisms, and implementation challenges across sectors and regions (M. I. Khan et al., 2022).

These challenges become more evident in regions with strong religious traditions and localized economic practices, such as Bungo Regency, Jambi Province. In such contexts, halal practices have historically been embedded in social trust, religious values, and customary norms, where food products are presumed halal based on communal religious identity rather than formal legal certification (Amelia et al., 2025). When halal certification is imposed as a formal legal requirement, tensions may arise between lived religious practices and state-administered legal mechanisms. From an Islamic Economic Law perspective, this situation raises concerns regarding substantive justice and proportionality in access to legal compliance, particularly for economically vulnerable micro-enterprises operating within informal or semi-formal market structures.

Classical and contemporary Islamic scholars emphasize that legal obligations must not impose excessive hardship (*haraj*). The principle of *raf' al-haraj*—derived from the Qur'anic assertion that “*Allah intends for you ease and does not intend for you hardship*” (Qur'an 2:185)—serves as a fundamental guideline in the formulation and application of Islamic law. Al-Shāṭibī argues that the objectives of Shari'ah (*maqasid al-shari'ah*) are realized only when legal rulings preserve ease, justice, and benefit while preventing harm (Al-Shatibi, 2003). Accordingly, when halal certification procedures generate prolonged uncertainty, administrative burdens, or hidden costs for micro-enterprises, such conditions warrant critical examination from a legal–normative standpoint within Islamic Economic Law.

Previous studies have consistently shown that religiosity and halal awareness strongly influence positive attitudes toward halal certification (Agarwala et al., 2019; Dinh et al., 2022). Nevertheless, much of the existing literature concentrates on economic outcomes, consumer behavior, or policy effectiveness, while paying limited attention to halal certification as a legal instrument that must uphold justice, proportionality, and accessibility in its enforcement (Rahayu et al., 2023). Moreover, studies examining district-level or rural contexts remain

scarce, leaving a gap in understanding how Islamic Economic Law operates within localized socio-legal environments characterized by informal economic practices. From a *maqasid al-shari'ah* perspective, this gap is critical, as legal instruments are required not only to ensure compliance but also to deliver *maṣlaḥah* through proportionate and accessible governance mechanisms (Dusuki & Bouheraoua, 2011).

To address this gap, this study adopts a Sharia Quality Management perspective as its analytical lens. Sharia Quality Management integrates conventional quality management principles with Islamic legal and ethical values, emphasizing fairness, transparency, accountability, and *maṣlaḥah* in institutional practices (Beekun & Badawi, 2005; Dusuki & Bouheraoua, 2011; Oemar et al., 2023). This approach enables halal certification to be evaluated not only in terms of procedural compliance, but also in relation to the quality, justice, and inclusiveness of its implementation in fulfilling the objectives of Islamic law.

Accordingly, this research aims to analyze the perceptions and barriers experienced by micro-enterprises in navigating halal compliance through the self-declare certification scheme in Bungo Regency. Specifically, it addresses two research questions: (1) how do micro-enterprise actors perceive halal certification as an obligation under Islamic Economic Law, and (2) what structural barriers hinder halal compliance, and how do these barriers affect the quality of *muamalah* compliance from a Sharia Quality Management perspective. By employing a qualitative case study approach, this research contributes to the discourse on Islamic Economic Law by illuminating the intersection between legal norms, administrative practice, and justice in contemporary halal governance.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed a qualitative research approach with a case study design to examine halal compliance as a legal obligation within the framework of Islamic Economic Law. A qualitative case study was considered appropriate to explore how normative principles of *muamalah*—such as justice, ease (*raf' al-haraj*), and public benefit (*maslahah*)—are experienced and implemented in the practical context of halal certification at the micro-enterprise level (N. I. Khan, 2022). This approach allows for an in-depth understanding of the interaction between Islamic legal norms, state-administered certification mechanisms, and the lived experiences of business actors.

The research was conducted in Bungo Regency, Jambi Province, Indonesia, a district characterized by strong religious values and a significant number of micro-enterprises

engaged in traditional food processing. The research subjects consisted of seven (7) micro and small enterprise actors producing processed food products that require halal assurance. These participants were selected because they were either undergoing or had completed the halal certification process through the *self-declare* scheme, making them directly relevant to the objectives of this study.

Participants were selected using purposive sampling, with the following inclusion criteria: 1) micro-enterprise actors involved in food production that requires halal certification; 2) enterprises domiciled within the administrative area of Bungo Regency; and 3) business actors who had interacted with the halal certification system through the *self-declare* mechanism.

The number of participants was deemed sufficient to achieve **data saturation**, as similar patterns of perceptions and barriers repeatedly emerged across interviews (N. I. Khan, 2022)

Data were collected through in-depth semi-structured interviews, enabling participants to articulate their perceptions of halal certification both as a religious obligation and as a formal requirement of Islamic Economic Law. The semi-structured format allowed flexibility in probing participants' experiences related to administrative procedures, digital system navigation, and perceived burdens in fulfilling halal compliance. Interviews were conducted face-to-face to build rapport and ensure the depth and authenticity of responses. Audio recordings and field notes were used to ensure data accuracy and completeness.

The collected data were analyzed using **thematic analysis**, following the stages outlined by Braun and Clarke (Majumdar, 2022; Nolan-Cody et al., 2024). These stages included: 1) familiarization with the data through repeated reading of interview transcripts; 2) initial coding to identify key issues related to halal obligation, administrative barriers, and compliance experiences; 3) theme development by clustering codes into broader categories such as systemic barriers and perceptions of legal compliance; 4) review and refinement of themes to ensure coherence and consistency with the empirical data; and 5) interpretation of themes within the normative framework of Islamic Economic Law and Sharia Quality Management, particularly in relation to principles of *muamalah*, *maslahah*, and *raf' al-baraj*.

To ensure the credibility of the findings, **member checking** was conducted by confirming interview summaries and interpretations with the participants. Ethical considerations were addressed by obtaining informed consent from all participants and ensuring confidentiality and anonymity throughout the research process. The study strictly

preserved the originality of participants' responses without manipulation, thereby maintaining the integrity and trustworthiness of the empirical data.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

High Acceptance of Mandatory Halal Certification as Compliance with Mu'āmalah, Yet Constrained in Its Implementation

The findings indicate that all participants demonstrate a very high level of acceptance toward mandatory halal certification. Regardless of differences in educational background and age, micro-enterprise actors in Bungo Regency perceive halal certification as an integral part of their religious obligation as well as a means of safeguarding consumer trust. From the perspective of Islamic Economic Law, this attitude reflects a strong internalization of normative compliance with the principle of *halalan tayyiban* within everyday muamalah practices.

Normatively, this finding is consistent with the Qur'anic injunction to ensure lawful and wholesome consumption (Qur'an 2:168) and the Prophetic tradition emphasizing that Allah accepts only what is pure and lawful (Muslim, 1955). From the standpoint of *maqashid al-shari'ah*, such high acceptance signifies an orientation toward the protection of *hifz al-naf* and *hifz al-mal*, which underpin the legal legitimacy of halal certification as an instrument within Islamic economic governance.

These empirical findings reinforce previous studies showing that religiosity and halal awareness are dominant factors shaping positive attitudes toward halal certification (Agarwala et al., 2019; Dinh et al., 2022). However, this study adds an important dimension by demonstrating that strong normative acceptance does not automatically translate into ease of implementation. Accordingly, the primary issue of halal certification at the micro-enterprise level does not lie in resistance to Islamic legal principles, but rather in the gap between muamalah commitment and procedural realities.

Beyond its normative and religious dimensions, halal certification has also been shown to enhance SME performance and market credibility through increased consumer trust and perceived product legitimacy (Amer, 2024; Amin et al., 2014). This helps explain why micro-enterprises in Bungo Regency perceive halal certification not only as a form of religious compliance, but also as a strategic instrument for sustaining business reputation and market acceptance. Nevertheless, when such perceived benefits are not accompanied by

accessible and proportionate implementation mechanisms, the normative objectives of halal certification as an instrument of Islamic Economic Law risk being undermined in practice.

Barriers to Identifying Local Raw Materials as a Problem of Legal Certainty in Muamalah

Despite the strong acceptance of halal obligations, participants experienced significant difficulties in identifying the halal status of locally sourced raw materials, particularly those obtained from traditional markets. Many raw materials were either not listed or difficult to verify within the halal certification system, thereby obstructing the smooth progression of the application process.

Within the framework of Islamic Economic Law, this condition generates legal uncertainty that may lead to *gharar* in the fulfillment of muamalah obligations. Halal certification is intended to function as a mechanism of legal certainty that affirms the halal status of products, rather than prolonging ambiguity. When the certification system fails to accommodate the realities of local supply chains, the normative function of halal certification as a legal instrument becomes suboptimal (Kamali, 2008).

Several studies have likewise identified limited raw material databases, weak supply chain integration, and complex administrative requirements as major barriers to halal certification for MSMEs (Rahayu et al., 2023). The findings from Bungo Regency reinforce this argument by demonstrating that issues of legal certainty are not merely technical in nature, but also have substantive implications for the quality of muamalah compliance as envisioned by Islamic Economic Law.

Uncertain Verification Duration of up to Five Months as a Test of the Principle of Raf' al-Haraj and Equity of Access

Another salient finding concerns the uncertainty of the halal certification verification period, which in several cases extended up to approximately five months. This condition created significant time burdens and uncertainty for micro-enterprise actors whose business sustainability depends heavily on smooth production and marketing cycles.

From the perspective of *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah*, the implementation of legal obligations must not result in excessive hardship (*haraj*). The principle of *raf' al-haraj*, rooted in the Qur'anic injunction that “Allah intends for you ease and does not intend for you hardship” (Qur'an 2:185), affirms that Islamic law is designed to facilitate compliance rather than

impose undue difficulty. Al-Shatibi emphasizes that legal rulings lose their substantive justice when their application obstructs the realization of public benefit (*maslahah*) (Al-Shatibi, 2003).

Empirical studies have likewise demonstrated that procedural uncertainty and prolonged certification timelines can significantly reduce the effectiveness of halal policies, particularly for micro-enterprises with limited financial and operational capacity (Oemar et al., 2023). Accordingly, the findings from Bungo Regency indicate a serious challenge in ensuring equitable access to halal compliance. When verification processes lack temporal certainty, halal certification risks shifting from a facilitative legal instrument into a source of structural burden, thereby contradicting the normative objectives of Islamic Economic Law.

Barriers to Data Input Accuracy and Digital Literacy as Inequality in Access to Legal Compliance

The next barrier relates to data input accuracy and limited digital literacy. The findings indicate that technical difficulties are not only experienced by participants with lower educational backgrounds, but also by those with higher levels of education. This suggests that the core problem lies in the rigidity and lack of user-friendliness of the digital certification system, rather than in individual capacity.

Within the framework of Islamic legal justice, access to the fulfillment of legal obligations must not be discriminatory or limited to groups with specific technical competencies. The principle of *al-'adl* requires that legal mechanisms provide equal opportunities for all legal subjects. In digital governance, service quality is closely linked to clarity, responsiveness, and user support—factors that shape citizens' experiences in online public services (Sadat et al., 2025). Studies on digital inequality in public services further demonstrate that complex digital systems can widen gaps in access to legal and administrative services (Huang & Gil-Garcia, 2025).

Accordingly, barriers related to digital literacy in halal certification should not be understood merely as technical issues, but as matters concerning the quality of legal governance. From a Sharia Quality Management perspective, the quality of halal services must be assessed based on the ease, clarity, and inclusiveness of the process, rather than solely on the fulfillment of formal procedural requirements.

“Hidden Costs” in Free Certification as a Problem of *Maslahah* and Policy Ethics

Although halal certification under the self-declare scheme is formally provided at no monetary cost, participants reported the existence of “hidden costs” in the form of lost productive time, heavy administrative workloads, and psychological stress throughout the application process. For micro-enterprises, these indirect costs exert a tangible impact on business continuity and operational resilience.

From the perspective of Islamic Economic Law, public policy must be oriented toward *maslahah* and must not generate harm (*mafsadah*), particularly for economically vulnerable groups. When a policy designed to facilitate compliance instead produces implicit burdens, a critical evaluation of its implementation quality becomes necessary (Dusuki & Abdullah, 2007; Kamali, 2008). In this context, the ethical dimension of halal governance extends beyond the absence of formal fees to include the overall burden experienced by legal subjects.

Prior studies have also highlighted that administrative complexity and insufficient institutional assistance can diminish the intended benefits of halal certification policies for MSMEs, even when such policies are framed as facilitative programs (Rahayu et al., 2023). The findings in Bungo Regency reinforce this argument by demonstrating that the success of halal certification should not be measured solely by the absence of formal charges, but by the extent to which the policy genuinely delivers *maṣlahah* and justice in practice.

Table 1. Summary of Empirical Findings and Sharia–Legal Interpretation

Main Theme	Key Empirical Findings	Implications in Islamic Economic Law
Acceptance of halal certification	All participants accept mandatory halal certification	Strong muamalah compliance
Identification of raw materials	Local raw materials are difficult to verify	Legal uncertainty (<i>gharar</i>)
Verification duration	Up to ±5 months with no clear timeline	Potential <i>ḥaraj</i> and inequality of access
Digital literacy	Barriers across different educational levels	Inequality in access to legal compliance
Hidden costs	Loss of productive time and administrative burden	Issues of <i>maṣlahah</i> and policy justice

Source: Field data, Bungo Regency.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that halal compliance among micro-enterprises in Bungo Regency is characterized by a strong normative commitment grounded in religious values and principles of *muamalah*. All participants demonstrated a high level of acceptance toward mandatory halal certification, viewing it as an integral obligation within Islamic Economic Law rather than a mere administrative requirement. This finding affirms that resistance to halal certification at the grassroots level does not stem from theological disagreement, but from challenges embedded in the implementation process.

Despite this strong acceptance, the study reveals persistent structural barriers that hinder effective halal compliance through the *self-declare* certification scheme. These barriers include difficulties in verifying locally sourced raw materials, prolonged and uncertain verification periods that may extend up to five months, rigid digital system requirements, and hidden costs in the form of lost productive time and administrative burdens. From the perspective of Islamic Economic Law, such conditions raise concerns regarding legal certainty, justice, and proportionality in the enforcement of halal obligations.

When examined through the lens of *maqāṣid al-shari'ah*, the implementation of halal certification in its current form risks contradicting the principles of *raf' al-ḥaraj* and *maṣlaḥah*. Legal mechanisms intended to facilitate compliance should not impose excessive hardship or indirectly marginalize economically vulnerable groups. Instead, halal governance must ensure that the realization of legal obligations aligns with the protection of public welfare and equitable access to justice.

By applying a Sharia Quality Management perspective, this study highlights the importance of evaluating halal certification not only in terms of formal compliance outcomes, but also in terms of the quality of legal and administrative processes experienced by business actors. Quality in halal governance should be reflected in clarity of procedures, certainty of timelines, user-centered digital systems, and adequate human support mechanisms, particularly for micro-enterprises operating in district-level contexts.

This research contributes to the discourse on Islamic Economic Law by providing empirical evidence from a localized setting that illustrates the gap between normative legal ideals and practical implementation. While the findings are limited to a small sample and a specific geographic context, they underscore the need for policy adjustments that strengthen system design, integrate local supply chains into halal databases, and enhance technical assistance at the regional level. Future research is encouraged to expand the scope of analysis

across regions and employ mixed-method approaches to further assess the effectiveness of halal certification mechanisms in fulfilling the objectives of Islamic Economic Law.

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