

THE ROLE OF HALAL PRODUCT PROCESS FACILITATORS IN EXPANDING ACCESS TO HALAL CERTIFICATION SERVICES FOR MSMEs IN BANDUNG CITY

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ABSTRACT

Access to halal certification services for MSMEs in Bandung City remains constrained by limited procedural understanding, inadequate document readiness, low digital literacy, and weak process continuity, despite the availability of regulatory frameworks, service schemes, and the SIHALAL digital platform. This study aims to analyze the role of Halal Product Process Facilitators in expanding MSMEs' access to halal certification services in Bandung City. The study is grounded in empowerment theory, service access theory, and service quality theory. A qualitative approach with a case study design was employed, supported by document analysis and secondary data drawn from Bandung Open Data, official publications of BPJPH and the Ministry of Religious Affairs, halal certification regulations, and SIHALAL service documents. The findings show that facilitators function as information providers, administrative assistants, technical guides, digital service intermediaries, and process enablers throughout certification completion. These results indicate that the effectiveness of halal certification depends largely on the quality of facilitation in translating regulatory and digital requirements into accessible and manageable service processes for MSMEs.

Keywords: Halal Certification; MSMEs; Service Facilitation

INTRODUCTION

Halal certification is increasingly shifting from a mere marker of religious compliance toward an instrument of quality assurance, product safety, and business competitiveness in an increasingly competitive food market (Amer, 2024). Recent literature further shows that discussions of the halal supply chain have become more focused on integrity, logistics, traceability, blockchain, and sustainability, indicating that halal certification no longer stands as a single label, but rather as part of a broader supply chain governance framework (Changalima, 2025). Firm-level studies suggest that halal assurance systems help MSMEs retain customers, expand market share, strengthen reputation, and improve profitability when business actors perceive the benefits of implementation in tangible terms (Abd Rahman et al., 2017). A recent review of halal integrity in the context of Industry 4.0 emphasizes that paper-based certification and traceability systems are no longer adequate because they are vulnerable to inefficiency, limited traceability, and fraud risks, whereas digital integration enhances compliance accuracy and consumer trust (Arianty et al., 2025). These developments make service access an increasingly central issue, since the benefits of certification cannot be realized equitably without facilitation mechanisms capable of linking regulatory demands with the operational capacities of micro and small enterprises (Fathoni et al., 2025).

In Indonesia, the strengthening of halal certification policy has intensified the pressure on MSMEs to adapt, yet a range of studies continues to identify a substantial gap between policy design and the ability of business actors to complete the certification process in practice (Jamaluddin et al., 2022). Recent empirical evidence identifies three major barriers to expanding access to halal certification, namely financial constraints, regulatory complexity, and low levels of awareness among business actors regarding both the importance and the procedures of certification (Fathoni et al., 2025). Survey-based studies in Indonesia also show that halal literacy

and accessibility influence halal certificate ownership, while certificate ownership is associated with increased MSME income (Novari et al., 2024). Research on the SEHATI program and the self-declare scheme further indicates that micro-enterprises continue to face procedural complexity and limited understanding of the program and the SIHALAL system (Hidayati, 2024). Other field-based studies demonstrate that certification processes often begin to move forward only when facilitators assist business actors in preparing business legality documents, compiling halal product assurance documentation, uploading files to the digital system, verifying ingredients, and ensuring the feasibility of the application through to completion (Rakhmawati et al., 2025).

In Bandung City, these access issues become more specific because the base of micro-enterprises continues to expand, from 8,684 units in 2022 to 9,686 in 2023 and 10,916 in 2024. At the same time, Bandung's open data records only 918 entries of MSME halal certification facilitation for the 2017–2024 period, indicating that the expansion of the business base has not automatically been matched by an equivalent expansion of facilitation coverage. Findings from Bandung show that culinary MSMEs already possess very strong halal literacy and a high level of interest in applying for certification, yet other studies in the same city still identify digital and bureaucratic gaps between MSMEs located in central and peripheral areas, with facilitation emerging as a crucial differentiating factor. Research conducted in Lengkong District, Bandung City, also confirms that halal facilitators play an important role in strengthening MSME products, meaning that their function extends beyond administrative matters to shaping business readiness to enter more trustworthy markets. This article therefore focuses on the role of Halal Product Process Facilitators in expanding access to halal certification services for MSMEs in Bandung City, particularly in bridging digital procedures, document completeness, ingredient verification, and the capacity of business actors to complete the entire SIHALAL process.

Kasanah & Andari (2024) demonstrate that the implementation of the SEHATI program at the Office of Religious Affairs in Taman District, Madiun City, was accelerated through a flexible service business process, the strengthened role of religious counselors as P3H facilitators, collaboration with agencies related to micro and small enterprises, the involvement of madrasahs, and the public promotion of business actors who had obtained halal certificates. As a result, eight P3H facilitators were able to assist 773 micro and small business actors and support the issuance of 508 halal certificates, which was subsequently followed by improvements in packaging, increased consumer trust, wider marketing coverage, and higher business turnover. Tuhuteru & Iqbal (2024) found that knowledge, service quality, and halal awareness significantly affect MSMEs' readiness to undertake halal certification, with knowledge emerging as the most dominant factor and the model explaining 74% of the variance in readiness. Mulyani et al. (2025) further confirm that halal facilitator in Lengkong District, Bandung City, perform four main functions, namely consultation, halal literacy, technical assistance, and verification and validation, all of which contribute to improving product quality, halal understanding, and MSME competitiveness. Taken together, this body of research shows that recent literature has positioned halal certification as an issue of service delivery, readiness, and facilitation, yet has not fully centered its attention on service access at the city level.

These three previous studies share common ground with the present article in that they all treat halal certification for MSMEs not merely as an issue of formal compliance, but also as one related to service quality, business actors' readiness, and the importance of facilitation support throughout the certification process. All of these studies likewise emphasize that halal certification cannot operate effectively when business actors are left to navigate procedures independently without adequate informational, administrative, and technical assistance. The point of difference lies in the analytical focus of the earlier studies, which remains partial, whether



on the success of a specific program, the determinants of MSME readiness, or the role of facilitators in strengthening business products. This article takes a different position by placing service access at the center of the problem, so that the role of Halal Product Process Facilitators is analyzed not merely as administrative assistance, but as a bridging mechanism that enables MSMEs to genuinely enter, navigate, and complete the halal certification process. This distinction makes the article more directly oriented toward the public service mechanisms operating in practice, particularly in the context of Bandung City.

The originality of this study lies in its shift of focus from discussions that have largely emphasized programs, readiness, or facilitation in general toward a more specific analysis of how access to halal certification services is opened and operationalized through the role of facilitators. The first novelty lies in the empirical gap, because this study does not stop at the level of a subdistrict, a particular program, or general MSME factors, but instead examines Bandung City as a broader locus with more complex service dynamics. The second novelty lies in the practical-knowledge gap, as this study explains more concretely how facilitators bridge information needs, document completeness, ingredient verification, the use of digital systems, and the completion of procedures that often become points of weakness for MSMEs. This study also offers a more operational perspective by positioning facilitators as service actors rather than merely administrative support personnel. From this standpoint, the article provides a new contribution by showing that the expansion of halal certification for MSMEs is strongly determined by the capacity of the service system to deliver facilitation that is effective, targeted, and accessible.

The urgency of this study arises from the fact that the challenges of halal certification for MSMEs are no longer confined to regulatory aspects, but remain concentrated in financial constraints, procedural complexity, and low levels of awareness among business actors, all of which directly limit access to certification services. Fathoni et al. (2025) demonstrate that financial support, regulatory reform, and educational programs remain the most critical strategies for overcoming these barriers. At the same time, Tuhuteru & Iqbal (2024) show that service quality and knowledge significantly influence MSME readiness, while Novari et al. (2024) find that accessibility affects halal certificate ownership, which in turn is associated with increased MSME income. Although Mulyani et al. (2025) have highlighted the importance of halal facilitators at the subdistrict level in Bandung, the mechanisms through which service access is expanded at the city level remain insufficiently explained. This condition makes the present study necessary, as the expansion of halal certification should not remain merely an administrative target, but must evolve into a service that MSMEs can genuinely access and complete.

This study aims to analyze the role of Halal Product Process Facilitators in expanding access to halal certification services for MSMEs in Bandung City. It also seeks to identify the specific roles performed by facilitators in assisting business actors to understand procedures, prepare required documents, navigate digital systems, and complete the stages of the certification process. A further objective is to explain how these roles contribute to opening access to services that are more effective, more affordable, and more feasible for MSMEs to complete within the context of Bandung City.

METHOD

This study adopts a qualitative approach with a case study design, strengthened through document analysis and the use of secondary data to examine the role of Halal Product Process Facilitators in expanding access to halal certification services for MSMEs in Bandung City in a contextual manner (Bowen, 2009; Hyett et al., 2014). This approach is selected because the study emphasizes understanding the dynamics of facilitation, service workflows, administrative

constraints, and the support provided by facilitators in the practice of halal certification. Accordingly, the research is not intended to test relationships among variables, but to provide an in-depth interpretation of service processes as they occur within a real institutional setting (Johnston, 2014).

Data were collected through documentation techniques and the systematic review of secondary sources, including Open Data Kota Bandung, official publications from BPJPH and the Ministry of Religious Affairs, regulations related to halal certification, SIHALAL service information, and other documents relevant to MSME halal certification facilitation in Bandung City. The selection of data sources was conducted using purposive sampling, whereby materials were intentionally chosen based on their alignment with the research focus, the credibility of the issuing institution, the breadth and depth of information, data recency, and their relevance to issues of service access for MSMEs (Palinkas et al., 2015).

The collected data were then analyzed using a thematic-descriptive approach. This process involved selecting relevant documents, identifying and coding key information, organizing findings into substantive themes, and interpreting patterns of facilitator roles across different stages of halal certification services. The analysis was further supported by simple data presentations to ensure that the empirical interpretation of conditions in Bandung City remained structured, transparent, and analytically robust (Bowen, 2009; Braun & Clarke, 2006).

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Conditions of Access to Halal Certification Services for MSMEs in Bandung City

Bandung City has recorded a steady increase in the number of micro-enterprises, from 8,684 units in 2022 to 9,686 in 2023 and 10,916 in 2024, indicating a continuously expanding business base at the urban level. At the same time, Open Data Kota Bandung documents 918 entries of MSME halal certification facilitation for the 2017–2024 period, suggesting that halal certification has emerged as a tangible public service agenda at the local level. Service infrastructure is also in place through a one-stop online registration system at *ptsp.halal.go.id*, offering two service pathways: the regular scheme and the self-declare scheme for micro enterprises that meet criteria of simplicity, low risk, and halal-compliant inputs. BPJPH further supports this system by providing SIHALAL manuals for both schemes and by updating the SIHALAL platform in 2025 to accelerate registration and verification processes. This configuration indicates that Bandung possesses a large business base, an ongoing facilitation dataset, and established digital service infrastructure, yet the issue of actual access remains to be examined more closely.

These findings suggest that the primary challenge no longer lies in the absence of services, but in the capacity of those services to reach the actual capabilities of MSME actors. The growth of micro-enterprises increases the demand for services that are not only administratively available, but also understandable, navigable, and realistically completable. A service model centered on digital systems enhances procedural efficiency, yet simultaneously filters business actors based on their document readiness, digital literacy, and ability to follow procedural workflows accurately. As a result, service access becomes layered, with successful application outcomes depending on the alignment between business readiness and system comprehensibility. This pattern indicates that barriers to access in Bandung are more accurately understood as issues of service usability capacity rather than mere service availability.

Empirical studies reinforce this interpretation. Tuhuteru & Iqbal (2024) demonstrate that knowledge, service quality, and halal awareness significantly influence MSME readiness to undertake halal certification, with knowledge identified as the most dominant factor. Hidayati

(2024) finds that procedural complexity and limited awareness of both the certification program and the SIHALAL system continue to hinder micro-enterprises in obtaining halal certification. Kasanah & Andari (2024) show that certification processes are more effectively accelerated when service business processes are made more flexible and the role of Halal Product Process Facilitators is mainstreamed within program implementation. Arianty et al. (2025) further emphasize that the most pressing challenges within the halal ecosystem include procedural complexity, limited business awareness, low digital readiness, and regulatory constraints. Mulyani et al. (2025) corroborate these findings through a case in Lengkong District, Bandung City, demonstrating that halal facilitators operate through consultation, halal literacy, technical assistance, and verification-validation processes to strengthen MSME product readiness.

The existence of services does not automatically translate into effective access. The core issue arises when business actors must translate general information into detailed administrative, technical, and digital steps. This complexity means that halal certification cannot be understood merely as a matter of compliance, but as a service process that requires the ability to interpret requirements, prepare supporting evidence, and maintain data consistency from the initial stage of application. The gap between available services and services that can actually be completed widens when MSMEs face constraints in time, administrative experience, and digital skills. This condition indicates that the primary need at the access level is not simply additional information, but facilitation that can transform service potential into a process that can be practically executed.

The access conditions in Bandung City thus reveal four interrelated nodes of challenge: information readability, document readiness, the ability to use digital systems, and process continuity until completion. These four nodes suggest that service success is determined not only by policy design, but by the system's ability to provide appropriate support at the most critical points of constraint. Facilitation becomes essential because it operates directly in the space between formal procedures and the practical capacities of business actors. In this context, the presence of facilitators is not merely administrative, but decisive in enabling MSMEs to move from the stage of awareness to the stages of application and completion. This mapping provides the analytical foundation for examining more precisely how Halal Product Process Facilitators operate in supporting halal certification processes for MSMEs in Bandung City.

The Role of Halal Product Process Facilitators in Halal Certification Assistance

Regulatory documents indicate that assistance in the halal product process is a mandatory component of halal certification for micro enterprises under the self-declare scheme, where business actors are required to select a Halal Product Process Facilitator (PPH Facilitator) at the time of submitting their application. Normatively, PPH Facilitators are responsible for conducting verification and validation of the business actor's halal declaration, covering the examination of ingredients, composition, halal process documentation, process schemes, and field verification before submitting recommendations to BPJPH. The SIHALAL digital system is positioned as the primary application channel, while BPJPH provides official manuals for both regular and self-declare schemes, meaning that facilitation operates in direct connection with digital procedures and electronic data completeness. In the Bandung context, a study in Lengkong District shows that halal facilitators perform four main functions consultation, halal literacy, technical assistance, and verification-validation implemented through counseling, literacy activities, facilitation, and verification processes.

These document findings suggest that the role of facilitators in Bandung operates within a broader space than mere formal verification, requiring their function to be understood as an integrated service process. The facilitator's role functions on two interconnected levels: the

translation of rules and the translation of action. Facilitators do not simply explain what MSMEs must fulfill, but also transform abstract requirements into sequential, actionable steps. This function gives facilitation an educational, administrative, technical, and digital dimension simultaneously. As such, facilitation should not be regarded as a supplementary service, but as a core mechanism that renders halal certification procedures operational at the level of business actors. This interpretation is consistently supported by prior empirical studies.

Tuhuteru & Iqbal (2024) demonstrate that knowledge is the most dominant factor influencing MSME readiness for halal certification, accompanied by significant effects of service quality and halal awareness. Hidayati (2024) finds that micro-enterprises continue to face procedural complexity and limited awareness of certification programs and the SIHALAL system, making facilitation crucial for enabling the process to reach completion. Kasanah & Andari (2024) show that strengthening the role of P3H within a flexible service model enabled facilitators to assist 773 MSMEs and produce 508 halal certificates, while also improving product packaging, increasing consumer trust, and expanding market reach. Mulyani et al. (2025) confirm that halal facilitators in Lengkong District perform four key roles consultation, halal literacy, technical assistance, and verification-validation with direct contributions to MSME education, motivation, and product strengthening. Rakhmawati et al. (2025) further demonstrate that halal certification processes can proceed to submission at BPJPH when halal assurance processes are completed comprehensively and business actors remain cooperative, reinforcing the importance of facilitation in maintaining process consistency throughout.

These findings indicate that facilitators work most effectively when assistance is delivered as a continuous sequence from the information stage to the completion stage. Initial education helps build understanding of the meaning of halal certification and the logic of its procedures, while administrative assistance closes the gaps in legal compliance and document completeness that often hinder submission. Technical guidance then ensures that ingredients, production processes, and halal product assurance documents remain consistent with the required standards. Support in using SIHALAL subsequently reduces the digital frictions that frequently cause business actors to stop before the process reaches verification and recommendation stages. This pattern of work suggests that effective facilitation not only resolves document-related issues, but also strengthens MSMEs' readiness, accuracy, and confidence to persist until the service process is completed.

Ultimately, the significance of the facilitator's role does not lie in the number of mentoring interactions, but in the capacity to transform complex procedures into a service pathway that MSMEs can realistically follow. This position places facilitators as strategic intermediaries connecting halal regulations, digital systems, administrative requirements, and the actual conditions of business actors in the field. The effectiveness of facilitation is also evident when facilitators are able to maintain process continuity, minimize data errors, and encourage business actors to remain responsive to revisions and corrections. Such performance shows that empowerment in halal certification takes place through assistance that is practical, gradual, and directly targeted at the most critical points of constraint. The next key question, therefore, is whether this series of roles genuinely expands access to halal certification services for MSMEs in Bandung City.

The formulation of a standard operating procedure or facilitation workflow is therefore relevant for demonstrating that the expansion of access to halal certification services takes place through stages that are systematic, purposeful, and interconnected. The clarity of these stages also shows that service effectiveness is determined not only by the availability of regulations and digital platforms, but also by the quality of facilitation provided to MSMEs. On this basis, the

following facilitator SOP mechanism is presented to concisely map the process of halal certification assistance for MSMEs.

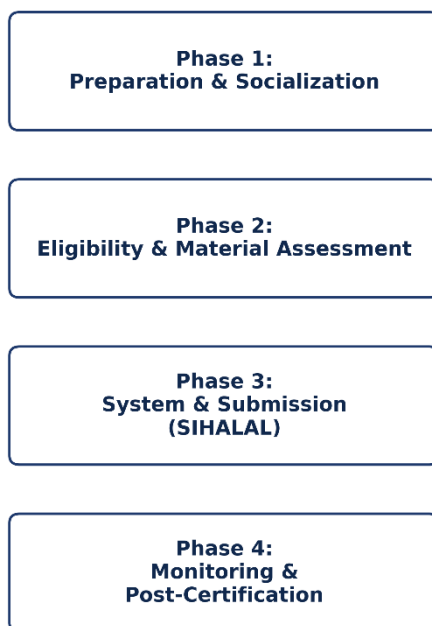


Figure 1. Flowchart of Halal Certification Facilitation Phases for MSMEs

The first phase, Preparation and Socialization, situates facilitation at the initial stage of introduction and readiness mapping for business actors. The process begins with MSME Identification to establish the business profile, product type, and basic characteristics of the MSMEs to be assisted. This is followed by Scheme Classification, which determines whether the business actor is more suited to the self-declare pathway or the regular scheme based on product and business conditions. Facilitators then conduct Program Socialization and Process Explanation to ensure that business actors understand the benefits of halal certification, the application workflow, and the stages involved. This phase is critical as it builds foundational understanding and reduces potential errors before administrative processes begin.

The second phase, Eligibility and Material Assessment, aims to ensure that business actors meet basic requirements prior to submission. Legality Verification is conducted to examine business legality, such as the Business Identification Number (NIB) and other essential documents. This is followed by Inventory of Materials and Production Process, which records raw materials, additives, and the production workflow used by MSMEs. The Material Halal Verification stage ensures that all materials comply with halal requirements or are supported by adequate evidence. This phase concludes with Supporting Document Preparation, where all required documents are compiled systematically to ensure that the submission process proceeds in an orderly and compliant manner.

The third phase, System and Submission (SIHALAL), highlights that halal certification depends not only on document completeness but also on the ability to navigate digital service systems. SIHALAL Assistance reflects the facilitator’s role in guiding business actors in data entry, document uploading, and system use. The Final Review Before Submission ensures the completeness and consistency of data prior to official submission. The Submission stage marks the formal entry of the application into the certification system. This phase demonstrates that facilitators act as a critical bridge between administrative readiness and the operationalization of digital service mechanisms.

The fourth phase, Monitoring and Post-Certification, emphasizes that facilitation does not end after submission. Monitoring ensures that the application status is tracked and the process follows the expected workflow. Corrective Follow-Up addresses revisions or deficiencies that require immediate adjustment. Decision Tracking allows business actors to follow the progress of certification decisions until completion, while Post-Certification Education ensures that business actors understand the importance of maintaining consistency in materials and processes after certification is granted. The entire workflow concludes with Evaluation, which assesses the effectiveness of facilitation and provides a basis for improving future halal certification services.

Overall, the findings indicate that expanding access to halal certification services for MSMEs in Bandung City is not solely determined by the availability of regulations, service schemes, or digital systems, but by the capacity to translate these elements into actionable steps that can be understood and implemented by business actors. Persistent challenges related to information accessibility, document readiness, digital literacy, and process continuity position Halal Product Process Facilitators as key actors operating at the most critical points within the service chain. Their role extends beyond administrative functions to include education, eligibility assessment, technical assistance, digital system support, and process monitoring until certification decisions are completed. This sequence of roles demonstrates that facilitation serves as an empowerment mechanism, strengthening MSMEs' capacity to understand procedures, meet requirements, and persist through relatively complex service processes. Ultimately, the effectiveness of halal certification depends on the extent to which service systems are able to deliver structured, responsive, and user-oriented facilitation aligned with the real needs of MSMEs.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that Halal Product Process Facilitators play a critical role in expanding access to halal certification services for MSMEs in Bandung City through functions of education, administrative assistance, technical verification, support in using the SIHALAL system, and continuous guidance until certification decisions are issued. The findings demonstrate that the main barrier to access does not lie in the absence of services, but in the ability of MSMEs to understand, navigate, and complete certification procedures effectively. These results confirm that the research objectives have been achieved, as the study successfully explains the condition of service access, analyzes how facilitators operate within the assistance process, and clarifies their contribution to improving the effectiveness of halal certification services. At the same time, the study offers a novel contribution by positioning facilitators not merely as administrative support, but as empowerment actors who bridge regulatory frameworks, digital systems, and the actual capacities of business actors at the city level. Based on these findings, practitioners and relevant stakeholders should strengthen facilitator capacity, expand SIHALAL literacy, simplify technical guidelines for MSMEs, and develop more integrated coordination among BPJPH, the Ministry of Religious Affairs, local governments, and field-level facilitation units. Policymakers should also ensure that the expansion of halal certification is not assessed solely in terms of the number of certificates issued, but in terms of the quality of service access and the successful completion of facilitation processes. This study is limited by its reliance on a qualitative approach based on document analysis and secondary data, which does not fully capture the lived experiences of business actors and facilitators. Future research is therefore recommended to incorporate field interviews, multi-case comparative studies across regions, or mixed-method approaches in order to assess facilitation effectiveness, measure user experience, and deepen

understanding of the most responsive policy models for halal certification facilitation for MSMEs.

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