



email: [jdmhi@walisongo.ac.id](mailto:jdmhi@walisongo.ac.id)

**Journal of Digital Marketing and Halal Industry**

ISSN: 2716-4810 (print) ISSN: 2716-4802 (online)

## Difficulties Experience of Halal Product Process Assistant During Halal Certification Process

**Windy Rizkaprilisa\*<sup>1</sup>, Ratih Paramastuti<sup>2</sup>, Novia Anggraeni<sup>3</sup>, Silvia Nurvita<sup>4</sup>, Martina Widhi Hapsari<sup>5</sup>, Paulus Damar Murti<sup>6</sup>**

<sup>1</sup>Universitas Sugeng Hartono, Indonesia

<sup>2</sup>Universitas Diponegoro, Indonesia

<sup>3,4,5</sup>Universitas Nasional Karangturi Semarang

<sup>6</sup>Department Biotechnology and Bioindustry Sciences, National Cheng Kung University, Taiwan, Province of China

### ARTICLE INFO



#### Article history:

Received 4 June 2024

Accepted 1 October 2024

Published 30 October 2024

#### Keywords:

Proses Produk Halal (PPH)  
Asistant; Halal Certificates;  
Halal Certification Process;  
Bussines Actor; Halal  
Product;

### ABSTRACT

The increase in the issuance of halal certificates will continue to occur every year. Not all business actors understand the halal certification process, so a Proses Produk Halal (PPH) assistant is needed to educate and guide them. PPH assistant experience many obstacles when assisting business actors in registering the halal status of their products. This study aims to analyze the difficulties faced by PPH assistants and formulate ways to overcome these difficulties. Methods of this research use descriptive research that aims to systematically describe or explain a phenomenon that is currently occurring with factual data. The result of this research are most respondents have been PPH assistants for less than 1 year (57%). Business actors apply for halal certification for their products after the products are marketed (47%) and when they are required to be halal certified (53%). The reason business actors apply for halal certification is to follow government regulations (50%). The biggest difficulty experienced by PPH assistants is that business actors need to learn the importance of halal certification for their products (53%). They think that halal certification is a halal product without registering halal (63%). 80% of business actors do not know how to register for halal certification. PPH assistants feel that many business actors do not know how to access the "Si Halal" website (67%). These difficulties result in PPH assistants having different times in the halal certification process, namely more than 3 months (77%), 1-3 months (17%), and less than 1 month (7%).

\* Corresponding author. [miasari@gmail.com](mailto:miasari@gmail.com)

## Introduction

The halal lifestyle trend is increasing in the world. Awareness of the importance of halal products is growing along with the rise of global halal tourism. Halal products are not only limited to food and drinks but also include medicines, cosmetics, chemical, biological, genetically engineered products, consumer goods, and services such as slaughtering, processing, storing, packaging, distributing, selling, and serving. Indonesia is the largest Muslim country, with a Muslim population reaching 86.7% of the total population. The number of Muslim residents in Indonesia was 231 million in 2021.

Based on Government Regulation No. 39 of 2021, the Sistem Jaminan Produk Halal (SJPH) is a system that is integrated, prepared, implemented, and maintained to regulate materials, halal production processes, products, resources, and procedures to preserve the continuity of the proses produk halal (PPH). Halal certification is issued by the Badan Penyelenggara Jaminan Produk Halal (BPJPH) based on a written fatwa issued by the Majelis Ulama Indonesia (MUI). The number of halal certification issuances for micro and small-scale businesses in Indonesia in 2021 reached 7,497 small and medium-sized enterprises, and in 2022, it increased to 8,076 (Halal et al. Center, 2021). Indonesia is the second largest consumer in the halal food sector and the fourth largest globally in the halal cosmetics sector (Limanseto, 2022). The increase in the issuance of halal certificates will continue to occur every year because more

and more new small and medium-sized enterprises are emerging in rural and urban areas. However, not all business actors understand the halal certification process, so a Proses Produk Halal (PPH) assistant is needed to educate and guide them about halal certificates.

A number of countries in South-East Asia (ASEAN) that care about the halalness of their products, have their own public government institutions and official standards for providing halal certification for every product circulating in their country. Brunei has the Brunei Islamic Religious Council (MUIB), Indonesia has the Halal Product Assurance Organizing Agency (BPJPH), Malaysia has the Malaysian Islamic Progress Agency (JAKIM), Singapore has the Singapore Islamic Religious Council (MUIS), the Philippines has the Islamic Dawa Council of the Philippines; Halal Development Institute of the Philippines; Mindanao Halal Authority; Muslim Mindanao Halal Certification Board; Halal International Chamber of Commerce, Vietnam has the Halal Certification Agency (HCA Vietnam), Thailand has the Central Committee (The Islamic of Thailand/CICOT), Cambodia has the Highest Council for Islamic Religious Affairs of Cambodia, and Myanmar has the Myanmar Halal Certification Committee (MHCC). Only Laos does not have halal committee (Yuanitasari, Agus & Heru, 2023). The public government institutions who helping for halal certification application tasked with providing education and guiding business actors in applying for halal certification for their products. Many of them face problems both when providing

education and when guiding them to apply for halal certificates. The Department of Islamic Development Malaysia (JAKIM) faces various challenges in promoting halal certification among both Muslim and non-Muslim entrepreneurs, where many of them are still not interested in having a halal certificate, even though by having it their products can be guaranteed to be halal and hygienic, they can import their products abroad and as a benchmark their products are safe for consumers to consume without any doubt (Saiman & Yusma, 2022).

Likewise in Indonesia, A PPH assistant is a worker/person from a government agency or business entity who partners with an Islamic social/religious organization that is a legal entity and a university whose task is to verify and validate halal statements by business actors before forwarding them to the fatwa committee for establishing a halal certificate for a product (PP No.30 of 2021). PPH assistants can assist in obtaining PPH assistant certificates. The role of PPH assistants is to assist business actors in registering the halal status of their products. However, PPH assistant experience many obstacles when assisting business actors in registering the halal status of their products, including business actors not knowing the importance of halal certificates for their products because they feel that their products are definitely halal, not knowing how to register them, not knowing how to access or understand the registration application/website, and experiencing complications in the registration process such as returning applications, and other reasons.

This research aims to analyze the challenges

faced by PPH assistants and formulate ways to resolve these difficulties.

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## **Literature Review**

In Malaysia, some Muslim entrepreneurs feel that applying for halal certificates is a complicated procedure so they use consultants. However, using consultants actually makes it difficult for them to get halal certificates, the costs are expensive, and the application process must go through various complicated bureaucracies that affect the application time (Saiman & Yusma, 2022). Unlike in Indonesia, we have PPH whom is a worker/person certified to help business actors register their products' halal status and verify and validate halal statements before forwarding them to the fatwa committee for establishing a halal certificate for a product (PP No.30 of 2021). It is found obstacles experienced by street vendors when applying for halal certificates for their products, such as business actors feeling that it is not too important to register their product's halal certificate because they feel that their product is definitely halal, lacking of knowledge regarding how to register, how to access or understand the registration application/website, and experiencing obstacles in the registration process such as returning the application, filling in the requirements, and so on. Therefore, in this research we analyzed difficulties experience of PPH assistant during halal certification process and attempted to provide a solution for the problems. The difficulties encountered by PPHs can be used as a guide for other PPHs and the Ministry of Religion in improving the number of halal certificates in

Indonesia.

The increase of halal-certified products, both foods, medicines, cosmetics, consumer goods, and services, provides benefits, namely guaranteeing the safety of products consumed, having a unique selling point, providing inner peace for the community, providing comparative advantages, providing protection for domestic products from global competition, provides company documentation and administration systems even better, and halal certification is a ticket to gaining global market access (Warto & Samsuri, 2020). Based on research by Dasima Nordin et al. (2016), halal food and beverage companies in Malaysia feel the benefits of halal certification on the company's finances and financial performance after obtaining halal certification as seen from the influence of customer satisfaction which is an increase in the company's financial performance because halal certification contains the highest level of quality standards. Thus, if PPH assistants in Indonesia can educate and assist business actors in registering halal certificates, the benefits of increasing the number of certified products will be felt throughout Indonesian society. Therefore, apart from training for PPH Assistants, an analysis of the difficulties faced is also needed to be used as an evaluation to make applying for halal certificates easier and faster.

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### **Method, Data, and Analysis**

This research was conducted from December 2023 to March 2024. Methods of this research use descriptive research that aims to systematically describe or explain a

phenomenon that is currently occurring with factual data. The respondents were chosen based on have certified as PPH assistants and experience about provided education and guidance on halal certification to business actors. The number of respondents used was thirty persons that obtained through social media such as WhatsApp group of PPH assistants from the Halal Center Institute at UIN Sunan Kalijaga. The data collection technique uses a questionnaire as an instrument. The questionnaire instrument in this research was created online via the Google Forms platform. The questions were created based on the results of interviews with PPH assistants regarding the experiences they faced while being PPH assistants, then we collected them into one to find out how many of the same problems they faced. To equalize the respondents understanding, we made some question items in the research questionnaire comprising of (1) Identities of PPH assistants such as gender and age, (2) Length of time as a PPH assistant, (3) Time of application for halal certificates by business actors, (4) Reasons for business actors to apply for halal certificates, (5) Difficulties experience of PPH assistants during halal certification process, (5) Length of time in applying for halal certificates, and (6) Benefits of halal certificates for business actors. Questionnaire data processing was then used multivariate analysis presented in figures or diagrams and analysed in depth according to theory.

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### **Result and Discussion**

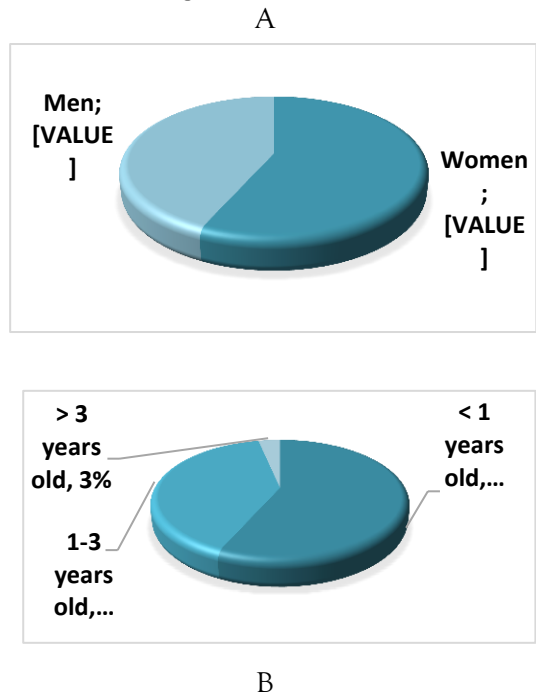
#### **PPH Assistant**

PPH guidelines is a set of procedures

designed to confirm a product's halal status by comparing it to the business actor's halal declaration through validation and verification procedures. Frequently, a halal advisor or a certified halal consulting organization with expertise in the sector serves as the halal product process facilitator. Additionally, they might assist merchants comprehend the halal laws and specifications in their nation or area. Industries can increase their marketability and build consumer trust in their products by ensuring that respective products fulfill halal regulations and receive a trustworthy halal certification with the aid of halal product process guidelines.

A halal product consultant is an individual or group that helps producers ensuring their goods satisfy halal standards and receive halal certification from reliable certifying organizations (Aini et al., 2023). Moreover, PPH assistant comes from government agencies or business entities that partner with Islamic social/religious organizations, legal entities, and universities who received a PPH assistant competency certificate from BPJPH after attending PPH mentoring training. The training aims to provide knowledge about procedures for submitting PPH and the ability to analyse the ingredients used by business actors in making their products so that they do not contain haram elements. By attending training and obtaining a certificate, PPH assistants relatively can assist business actors in applying for product certification.

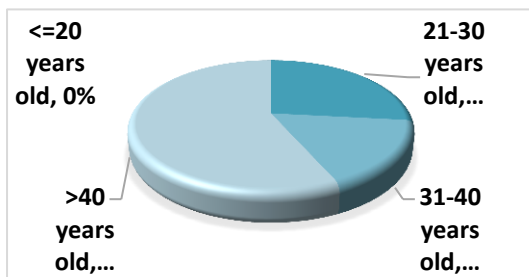
Figure 1. (A) Gender of PPH Assistant and (B) Age of PPH Assistant



In this study, 30 respondents were PPH assistants, most of whom were female (57%) and aged >40 years (57%) (Figure 1). Most respondents had been PPH assistants for less than 1 year (57%), while only 3% had experience as PPH companions for more than 3 years (Figure 2). The government has a program of 10 million halal-certified products by 2024 as an acceleration program for implementing halal certification for micro and small enterprises through PPH assistants. To support this program, training was created for prospective PPH assistants who, after receiving a competency certificate from BPJPH, can educate and assist business actors so that more and more products are halal-certified in Indonesia. Therefore, PPH assistants still have relatively new

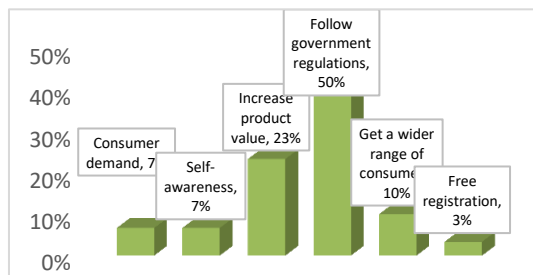
experience in assisting business actors.

Figure 2. Length of Time as a PPH Assistant



In general, business actors apply for a halal certificate for their products after the product has been marketed as much as 47% and when it is required to be halal certified, as much as 53% can be seen in the graph in Figure 3. Based on Law No. 33 of 2014, products entering, circulating, and trading in Indonesian territory must be certified halal. Halal certificates are required for food and beverage products, slaughtering services and slaughtering products, raw materials, food additives, and auxiliary materials for food and beverages as of October 17<sup>th</sup>, 2024. Business actor's awareness of the importance of halal certificates can be seen from the survey results above; they have applied for them after their products have been marketed and when they must be certified.

Figure 3. Time to apply for halal certificates by business actors

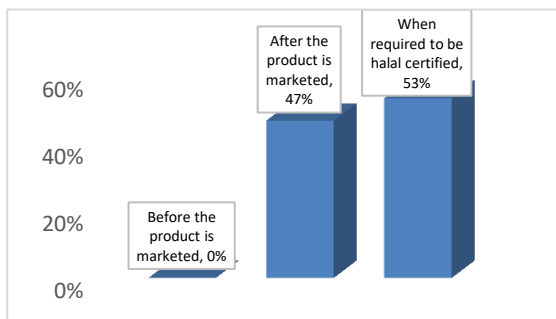


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 DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.21580/jdmhi.2024.6.2.20335>

### Reasons Why Business Actors Apply for Halal Certificates for Their Products

The reasons business actors apply for halal certificates, ranked from highest to lowest proportion, are following government regulations (50%), increasing product value (23%), attracting a wider range of consumers (10%), consumer demand (7%), self-awareness (7%), and free registration (3%). Figure 4 shows a graph of the reasons business actors apply for halal certificates.

Figure 4. Reasons why business actors apply for halal certificates for their products



Business actors mainly carry out halal certification to follow government regulations. This is because the government requires halal-certified products as of 17 October 2024 for 3 groups, namely food and beverages, slaughtering services and slaughtering products, raw materials, food additives, and auxiliary materials for food and beverages. Through the Ministry of Religion, the government is also intensifying the Sertifikat Halal Gratis (SEHATI) program for micro and small enterprises to increase the number of halal-certified products. Apart from that, some punishments will be given if business actors do not carry out halal certification, namely in the form of written warnings,

administrative fines, and withdrawal of goods from circulation by the provisions of PP Number 39 of 2021.

Another reason business actors apply for a halal certificate is to increase product value and attract a wider range of consumers. Halal certificates greatly benefit by increasing consumer confidence, superiority in selling power, and competitive advantage over competitors. Consumer confidence includes ensuring that their food or drink is clean and free from prohibited substances and that environmental cleanliness is guaranteed. Halal certificates can also increase consumer confidence. The success of any business depends on consumer trust. Every company that obtains permission from the government will increase consumer confidence. A halal certificate proves that the product meets standards and adds value in providing consumer guarantees. Apart from that, halal certificates can increase the selling power of products. Consumer demand for halal products is growing because consumer awareness of the importance of halal products is increasing. Halal certificates have a competitive advantage over competitors. Competitive advantage includes increased social legitimacy, increased economic competitiveness, perceived importance of stakeholders, and top management commitment (Hashim & Mohd Nor, 2022).

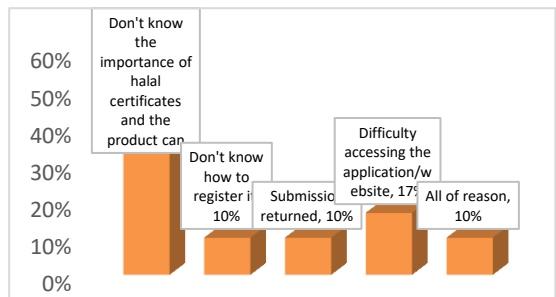
Self-awareness, consumer demand, and free costs are why business actors apply for halal certificates in a lower proportion than other reasons. The factor that influences business actors in applying for a halal certificate is interest. Interest is an individual's drive for

a particular object. Interest is related to cognitive, emotional, motoric aspects and motivation in doing something you want. Factors of interest among business actors in applying for a halal certificate include understanding halal certification, halal certification costs, awareness of business actors, and confidence of business actors. The most dominant factor influencing business actors to carry out halal certification is belief. In this case, belief is the belief of MSME actors about the importance of halal certification (Harbit & Syafrida, 2022).

### Difficulties Experience of PPH Assistant While Inviting Business Actors to Register Halal Certificates

when assisting business actors, the PPH assistant experienced several difficulties, which resulted in the halal certificate application process taking longer than usual. This is because business actors have different understandings of applying for a halal certificate. Figure 5 shows the difficulties experienced by PPH assistants when inviting business actors to register halal certificates.

Figure 5. Difficulties Experienced of PPH Assistants

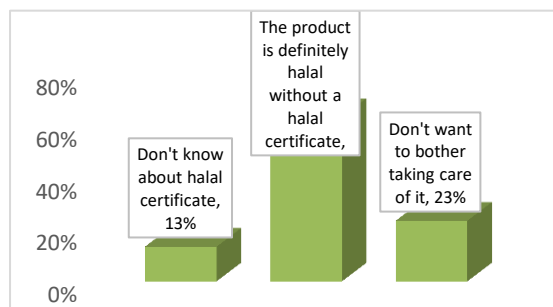


The most considerable difficulty

experienced by PPH assistants when inviting business actors to register for halal certificates is that business actors need to learn the importance of halal certificates for their products, as much as 53% (Figure 5). Figure 6 shows that the reasons they feel that a halal certificate is not important are they don't know what a halal certificate is (13%), feel that the product is halal without registering halal (63%), and are lazy about getting a halal certificate (23%). Some business actors may need to learn more about halal certification and its impact on the market. A lack of information or understanding regarding the requirements and benefits of halal certification can make them feel that they do not need to register their products. According to Al-shami & Abdullah (2023), halal certification for a product has become necessary. People become more selective and reluctant to consume products that do not have a halal certificate; products that do not have a halal certificate will be abandoned.

- a. Business actors feel that they do not know the importance of a halal certificate, and their products are sold without a halal certificate

Figure 6. Reasons Business Actors Didn't Know the Importance of Halal Certificates



Business actors' trust in their halal products

without halal certification is also a serious problem. Indonesia is a country with a majority Muslim population. Halal food and beverage products should be a must. According to Islam, it has established special guidelines for its adherent that halal food is generally acceptable for consumption, while Muslims should avoid haram food. Halal certification not only regulates the raw materials but also regulates the food quality regarding sanitation, hygiene, and other halal aspects (Herdiana et al., 2024).

People's desire to consume halal and *thayyib* food is a belief that is entrenched in the lives of Muslim communities. According to Henderson (2016), halal and *tayyib* food products are safe and have potential market advantages. For consumers, including a halal label on food products, will restore their right to select and consume the type of food they want. Therefore, the inclusion of labels must be visible, thus showing the good intention of business actors to restore consumer rights (Tedjakusuma et al., 2023). This halal certificate also guarantees community health, protection, and inner satisfaction. Given the above aspects, PPH assistants' role in assisting business actors in applying for halal certificates for their products is needed so that no more business actors will find it difficult to process halal certification.

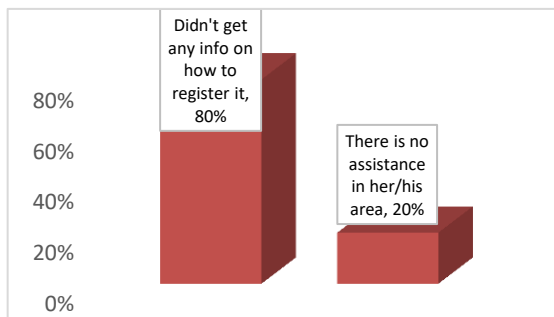
- b. Business actors do not know how to register their products' halal certificate

One of the difficulties faced by PPH assistants is business actors need to learn how to register a halal certificate (10%) (Figure 5). Figure 7 shows that 80% of



business actors didn't know how to register a halal certificate, and 20% did not receive halal certification assistance. Business actors do not fully understand the importance of halal certificates or the registration process because they have never received socialization regarding halal certification. Apart from that, they also do not understand the benefits of halal certification or realize that their products meet halal criteria (Ghazali et al., 2022).

Figure 7. Reasons why business actors do not know how to register their products' halal certificates



Business actors need adequate access to information sources to register for a halal certificate. A lack of literature, training, or promotion on halal products could be a factor. Some businesses may need to know that halal certification is available or relevant to their products or services. A lack of awareness of the registration procedures can prevent them from missing this opportunity. The registration procedure needs to be simplified, or the information provided must be more transparent. In that case, respondents may need help understanding the steps required, which could make it difficult to get the information they need (Evans et al., 2021). Without pressure from the market,

regulations, or other external parties to encourage business actors to obtain halal certification, they will not seek information regarding registration procedures. Business actors experience limited time, energy, or finances, which prevent them from seeking information or following halal certification registration procedures.

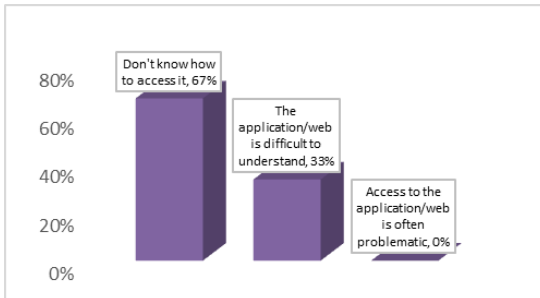
In this case, the role of PPH assistants is vital to provide information or educate business actors regarding halal certification so that business actors know how to register their products. To overcome this, steps that can be taken include increasing information campaigns, providing training or seminars, and collaborating with the government or related institutions to increase the awareness and skills of business actors regarding halal certification. Simplicity and transparency in registration procedures can make it easier for respondents to understand and follow the necessary steps (Ali et al., 2021).

- c. Business actors find it difficult to access the "Si Halal" application/website

The second most significant difficulty felt by PPH assistants was that business actors had trouble accessing the "Si Halal" application/website as much as 17% (Figure 5). Submissions for halal certification are carried out by business actors via the "Si Halal" website at <https://ptsp.halal.go.id/> or using the Ministry of Religious Affairs SuperApps mobile application, which can be downloaded on Play Store for Android or Appstore for IOS. Access to the "Si Halal"

website can be opened using a browser such as Mozilla Firefox Internet Explorer or Microsoft Edge or other browsers. To access the website, you need internet access or a data package.

Figure 8. Reasons why business actors have difficulty accessing the "Si Halal" website.



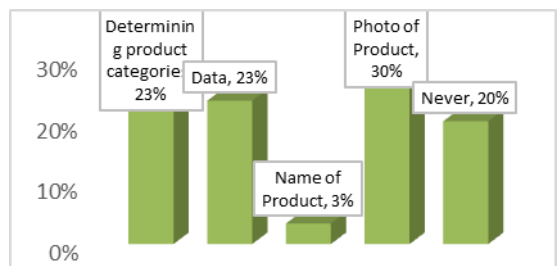
Based on the experience of PPH assistants in assisting business actors, several business actors experienced difficulties accessing the "Si Halal" website because they still lacked skills in using digital technology. Hence, they chose not to apply for a halal certificate for their products. Figure 8 shows that PPH assistants feel that many business actors do not know how to access the "Si Halal" website (67%) and have difficulty understanding how to use it (33%). However, business actors have never experienced problems with accessing the "Si Halal" website. In this case, the role of PPH assistants is vital in educating and guiding business actors to introduce and use "Si Halal" website to register halal certificates for their products.

- d. Business actors experience returns when applying for a halal certificate

In the verification and validation process, the PPH assistant will check the suitability

of the data entered in the submission on the "Si Halal" website. Based on a survey, business actors experienced returns on halal certificate applications. The return of this application occurred due to a discrepancy between the information and data regarding the product submitted and the conditions specified in the halal certificate as regulated in the Decree of the Head of BPJPH No. 33 of 2022 concerning Technical Guidelines for Accompanying Halal Product Processes in Determining Halal Certified Obligations for Micro and Small Business Actors (Ahmadiyah et al., 2023). Some of the reasons for returning applications are discrepancies that often occur, namely product photos uploaded to the system that is not the same as the original product (30%), data mismatch (23%), product category determination (23%), and product name (3%) (Figure 9). However, some never get return applications (20%). The return of this application is temporary, where business actors are given time to revise or complete the application.

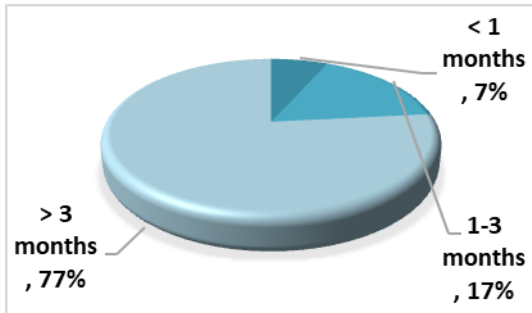
Figure 9. Reasons for returning a halal certificate application



The time required from the application process to the issuance of a halal certificate can be seen in Figure 10, namely more than 3 months (77%), 1-3 months (17%), and less than 1 month (7%). Most of them need

a longer time because they face difficulties during PPH assistance, one of which is returning the halal certificate application. Hence, it takes time to revise it.

Figure 10. Length of Time in Applying for a Halal Certificate



### **Benefits felt by Business Actors in the Process of Applying for Halal Certificates for Their Products**

A Halal Certificate is an acknowledgement of the halalness of a product issued by BPJPH. Halal certification has a positive impact on business actors and consumers. The positive impact for business actors is increasing product interest, product value, consumer trust, more secure products, reaching a broader market, and competitive products. Halal certificates can increase interest in products and product value. This aligns with research conducted by Septiani & Ridlwan (2020), which states that halal certification and awareness positively affect customers' purchasing intentions or decisions about halal food products. Other research also suggests that halal certificates positively impact product purchasing decisions. Other things, such as halal awareness and knowledge about the product influence consumer product purchases (Efendi, 2020).

The process of obtaining halal certification offers numerous benefits for business actors, enhancing both marketability and consumer trust (Dashti, et al., 2024). First, halal certification broadens market access, especially in Muslim-majority countries and regions with high demand for halal products. It enables businesses to tap into a growing global halal market valued in the trillions, spanning food, cosmetics, pharmaceuticals, and beyond (Parray & Mokhtar, 2024). Second, it boosts brand credibility, signaling compliance with stringent quality, safety, and ethical standards, which appeals to both Muslim and non-Muslim consumers (Osanlou & Rezaei, 2024). Third, it fosters competitive advantage by differentiating products in crowded markets (Sahi et al., 2022). Additionally, the certification process often encourages improvements in production practices, fostering efficiency and sustainability (Ghalih & Chang, 2024). Thus, obtaining halal certification not only opens new market opportunities but also enhances brand reputation, operational practices, and long-term profitability.

The steps in obtaining halal certificates for business actors in Indonesia is mentioned in Law no.3 of 2014, which following (Faiqoh & Fatwa, 2024):

1. Application submission
2. Determination of halal inspection agency (LPH)
3. Inspection and testing
4. Determination of product halalness
5. Issuance of halal certificates
6. Halal label
7. Halal certificate renewal
8. Financing

Halal certificates on products can increase consumer confidence and product guarantees. Previous research compared micro and small enterprises' performance between halal-certified and those that were not. The results of this research state that there are differences in business performance, including business profits and number of customers, between MSEs that are halal-certified and MSEs that are not halal-certified (Akbar & Rohman, 2023). Products that have a halal certificate can compete and reach a broader market. This is because halal certification can increase the prestige of exports with the cooperation of ISO institutions between other Muslim countries. Many countries have accepted Halal certification because countries in Asia, Australia, Europe, America, and Africa have adopted the MUI Halal Guarantee System (Ula'm et al., 2023). Halal certificates can increase a company's competitiveness because halal products have a Unique Selling Point (USP), so the product becomes more valuable in the eyes of consumers (Tahliani & Renaldi, 2023).

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## **Conclusion**

The analysis reveals that PPH (Halal Product Process) assistant face several challenges, including a lack of standardized guidelines, limited access to halal training, coordination issues with business actors, and administrative burdens during certification processes. Addressing these difficulties requires a multi-faceted approach. Key solutions include providing comprehensive and standardized training programs, establishing clear communication channels between stakeholders, streamlining documentation

processes through digital platforms, and enhancing government support for ongoing mentorship. By implementing these measures, the effectiveness of PPH assistants can be significantly improved, ensuring smoother certification processes and fostering the growth of halal-certified products in both domestic and global markets.

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## **Recommendation**

Based on the findings, this study recommends several actionable steps to enhance the effectiveness of PPH (Halal Product Process) assistants. First, relevant authorities should develop standardized training modules to equip assistants with the necessary skills and knowledge. Second, digital platforms should be introduced to streamline the documentation and application processes, reducing administrative burdens. Third, fostering stronger collaboration between business actors, certification bodies, and PPH assistant through regular workshop and communication forums will improve coordination. Lastly, continuous government support in the form of incentives and mentorship programs is essential to sustain the efforts of PPH assistants. These recommendations will help overcome the challenges identified and promote a more efficient and scalable halal certification system.

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