Barriers, Institutional Support, and Halal Certification Readiness of Non-Certified Food MSMEs in Pamekasan Regency

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Abstract. The mandatory halal certification requirement for food MSMEs in Indonesia has entered its full enforcement phase, yet participation among micro and small business actors remains behind the national target. Most prior studies focus on the impact of certification on already-certified MSMEs, while research on the barriers and readiness of not-yet-certified MSMEs remains limited. This study analyzes the barriers, perceived institutional support, program awareness, and willingness to participate among 30 not-yet-certified food MSMEs in Pamekasan Regency, drawing on constructs from the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) as a descriptive organizing lens, analyzed descriptively rather than as a formal model test. Data were collected through a questionnaire survey and two Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) with the Halal Certification Assistance Task Force of the Ministry of Religious Affairs Office of Pamekasan Regency, and analyzed descriptively. Results show that 44% of MSMEs face barriers due to lack of information on procedures, 33% consider the procedure complicated, and only 10% cite cost as the main barrier. Half of respondents (50%) rated government support as fairly substantial, yet 60% had never received or were unaware of any assistance program, and 43% knew of the program but were confused about how to access it. Nevertheless, willingness to join remained high (87%). These findings indicate that the primary obstacle lies in perceived behavioral control (information access and clarity of program mechanisms) rather than in MSME attitude. The study recommends strengthening community-based socialization and simplifying access channels as priority strategies.

Keywords: halal certification, non-certified MSMEs, certification barriers, Theory of Planned Behavior, government assistance.

1 Introduction

The mandatory halal certification of food products circulating in Indonesia, as mandated by Law No. 33 of 2014 on Halal Product Assurance, has entered its full enforce-

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ment phase for micro and small enterprises. Through the Halal Product Assurance Organizing Agency (BPJPH), the government has targeted 13 million certified products, and a free self-declare scheme was designed to ease participation for micro and small businesses. National data nonetheless show that participation among small and medium-scale actors continues to lag well behind micro enterprises, with informational, procedural, and financial barriers persisting as dominant constraints on the free self-declare scheme across many regions [4].

Pamekasan Regency is one of the areas with a comparatively high aggregate rate of halal certification, with tens of thousands of business actors registered through the active facilitation of the local Ministry of Religious Affairs' Halal Product Certification Assistance Task Force. High aggregate achievement, however, can mask meaningful gaps at the level of individual business actors: a significant proportion of food MSMEs in the same regency have still not registered their products for halal certification, and the reasons behind this condition have rarely been examined systematically from the perspective of the business actors themselves. This concern resonates with emerging socio-legal scholarship on halal product certification in Pamekasan, which points to gaps between formal regulation and the legal culture of local business communities as a factor shaping compliance behavior [8].

The literature on halal certification among Indonesian MSMEs has so far been dominated by studies of certification's impact on the business performance of already-certified enterprises, such as covering changes in production cost, marketing strategy, sales, and consumer loyalty. An earlier publication in this research series [10] examined these dimensions in depth among 30 certified food MSMEs in Pamekasan Regency. However, the primary dataset of the same umbrella research project [17] also included a respondent cluster that has never previously been analyzed or published: 30 food MSMEs in the same regency that had not yet obtained halal certification. This cluster holds information on barriers, perceived institutional support, program awareness, and willingness to participate. These variables are most directly relevant to today's most pressing policy question: why have some MSMEs still not become certified, and what is required to encourage their participation?

This gap is conceptually distinct from the impact-oriented studies noted above and is better addressed through an intention-based lens. The Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) [1] explains that behavioral intention (the willingness to register for halal certification) is shaped by three determinants: (1) attitude toward the behavior, (2) subjective norm, i.e., the perceived social or institutional support or pressure to perform the behavior, and (3) perceived behavioral control (PBC), i.e., the extent to which a person feels capable of, and has access to the resources needed for, performing the behavior. TPB has been widely applied to explain MSME halal-certification intention in Indonesia and neighboring countries ([5]; [19]; [21]), and a cross-country study of MSMEs in Indonesia and Malaysia found that compatibility, halal knowledge, government support, consumer demand, and competitive intensity all significantly influence certification intention, with government support emerging as one of the most consistent predictors in both countries [5]. At the same time, evidence suggests that the influence of knowledge on certification intention is often indirect: Widigdo and Triyanto [21] found that knowledge becomes significant mainly when mediated by regulatory compliance,

while a related strand of work treats intention itself as a mediating variable between antecedent beliefs and eventual certification behavior [14].

Building on this framework, the present study maps its three core survey constructs onto TPB determinants as follows: informational and procedural barriers serve as an inverse proxy for perceived behavioral control (greater barriers indicate lower perceived control); perceived government/institutional support serves as a proxy for subjective norm; and awareness of assistance-program mechanisms further contributes to perceived behavioral control. On this basis, the study advances three descriptive propositions: (P1) high informational and procedural barriers (low perceived control) are associated with low utilization of assistance programs among non-certified MSMEs; (P2) positive perceptions of government/institutional support (subjective norm) are associated with MSME willingness to participate in halal-certification assistance programs; and (P3) the level of awareness of assistance-program mechanisms is associated with willingness to participate, although this relationship is expected to be moderated by the clarity of the program's access mechanism rather than being simply linear.

Accordingly, this study aims to: (1) identify the main barriers faced by non-certified food MSMEs in the halal certification application process; (2) analyze MSME perceptions of institutional support and their level of awareness of available assistance programs; and (3) evaluate MSME willingness to participate in halal-certification assistance programs together with its associated factors. By focusing specifically on a previously unpublished data cluster, this study complements the first publication in this research series, which focused on already-certified MSMEs [10].

2 Methods

This study employs a descriptive quantitative approach supported by qualitative data from Focus Group Discussions (FGDs), as part of an umbrella research project titled "Analysis and Evaluation of the Halal Certification Process among Food MSMEs in Pamekasan Regency," funded by the Litapdimas research grant of the Indonesian Ministry of Religious Affairs [17]. The population of the umbrella project comprised 60 food MSMEs in Pamekasan Regency, divided into two clusters: 30 already-certified MSMEs (analyzed and published in Maula & Putri, 2026) and 30 not-yet-certified MSMEs. This article specifically analyzes the second, previously unpublished cluster.

The sample was determined through purposive sampling with the following criteria: (1) the respondent is an active food (and/or beverage) producer operating within Pamekasan Regency, and (2) the respondent had not yet obtained a halal certificate issued by BPJPH at the time of data collection. Data were collected between April and May 2024 through two methods: (1) a structured questionnaire distributed both in person and via Google Form, covering certification-application barriers, perceived government support, assistance status received, level of program awareness, and willingness to participate; and (2) two FGD sessions with the Halal Product Certification Assistance Task Force of the Pamekasan Regency Ministry of Religious Affairs Office, conducted before and after the survey respectively, for instrument validation and triangulation of findings. This mixed-methods design, combining a structured survey with

facilitator-level FGD triangulation, follows an approach similar to that used in recent evaluations of halal self-declare assistance programs elsewhere in Indonesia [7].

Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics (frequency distribution and percentages). Qualitative data from the FGDs were transcribed and thematically coded to enrich the interpretation of the quantitative findings. It should be emphasized that, with a sample size of n = 30 and a purposive sampling technique, this study is descriptive-exploratory in nature and is not intended for inferential statistical generalization to the broader population of non-certified MSMEs; the findings are more appropriately understood as an in-depth portrait (analytic generalization) of the specific institutional context of Pamekasan Regency.

Data transparency note: all frequency counts (n) reported in the results tables were derived from the percentages reported in the umbrella research report [17], applied to a total of 30 respondents and rounded to the nearest respondent. For one variable (perceived government support), the percentage of categories explicitly reported in the source narrative summed to only 80%; the remaining 20% is labeled "other/unspecified" and is recommended for re-verification against the original database prior to any further use of this figure.

3 Results

This section presents the descriptive analysis of 30 respondents comprising non-certified food MSMEs in Pamekasan Regency, covering four aspects: application barriers, perceived institutional support, assistance-program status and awareness, and willingness to participate.

3.1 Main Barriers in Applying for Halal Certification

Table 1 and Fig. 1 show that the most frequently reported barrier is a lack of information regarding certification requirements and procedures (44%, n = 13), followed by the perception that the administrative procedure is complicated and time-consuming (33%, n = 10). Cost limitations were reported by only 10% (n = 3) of respondents, the same proportion as the group reporting no barriers at all (10%, n = 3). A small proportion (3%, n = 1) reported a slow certificate-issuance process as their main barrier.

Table 1. Main Barriers Faced by MSMEs in Applying for Halal Certification (n = 30). Source: Primary data, Putri (2024), reprocessed (2026).

Barrier Category	n	Percentage (%)
Lack of information on procedures/requirements	13	44%
Complicated and lengthy administrative procedure	10	33%
No barriers	3	10%
Cost limitations	3	10%
Slow certificate issuance process	1	3%
Total	30	100%

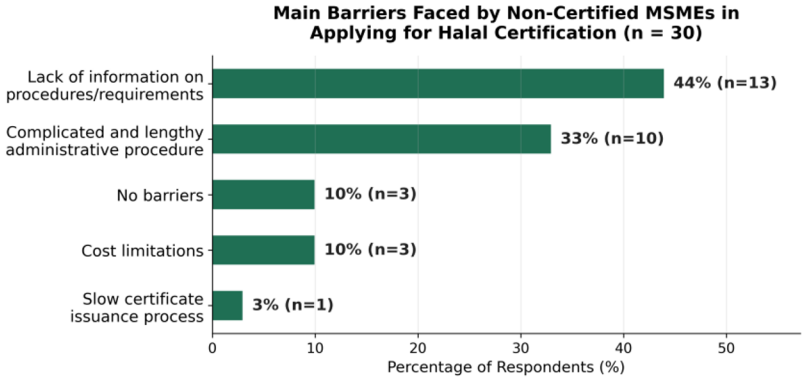


Fig. 1. Distribution of Main Barriers in Applying for Halal Certification (n = 30, with n and % labels). Source: Primary data, Putri (2024), reprocessed (2026).

3.2 Perceived Government/Institutional Support

Table 2 shows that half of the respondents (50%, n = 15) rated government support in halal-certification assistance as fairly substantial. However, 17% (n = 5) rated this support as insufficient, and 13% (n = 4) reported no support at all; 30% of respondents (n = 9) held a negative perception of the institutional support available to them.

Table 2. MSME Perceptions of Government/Institutional Support (n = 30). Source: Primary data, Putri (2024), reprocessed (2026). *This category is the residual of 100% minus the three categories explicitly cited in the source report narrative; re-verification against the original database/chart is recommended.

Perceived Government Support	n	Percentage (%)
Fairly substantial	15	50%
Other/unspecified category*	6	20%
Insufficient	5	17%
None at all	4	13%
Total	30	100%

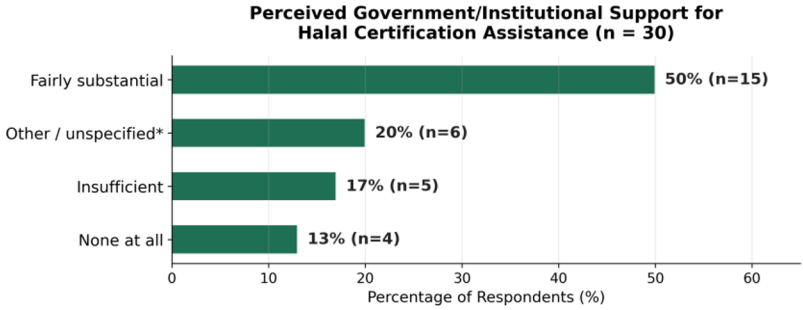


Fig. 2. Perceived Government/Institutional Support for Halal Certification Assistance (n = 30). Source: Primary data, Putri (2024), reprocessed (2026).

3.3 Assistance Status and Program Awareness

Table 3 shows that only 40% (n = 12) of respondents had previously received direct assistance or outreach related to halal certification, while 60% (n = 18) had either never received such assistance or were unaware of the program's existence (30%, n = 9, each).

Table 3. Halal Certification Assistance Status Received by MSMEs (n = 30). Source: Primary data, Putri (2024), reprocessed (2026).

Assistance Status Received	n	Percentage (%)
Previously received assistance/outreach	12	40%
Unaware of any assistance program	9	30%
Never received any assistance at all	9	30%
Total	30	100%

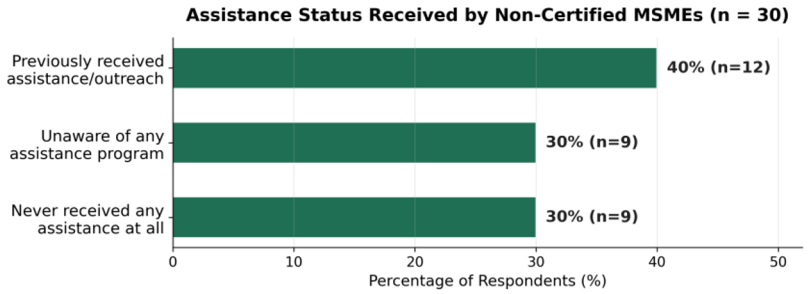


Fig. 3. Assistance Status Previously Received by Non-Certified MSMEs (n = 30). Source: Primary data, Putri (2024), reprocessed (2026).

Table 4 further reveals that even among respondents who were aware of the assistance program's existence, a majority (43%, n = 13) reported being confused about how to access it, and 24% (n = 7) considered the information they received unclear. Fully 30% (n = 9) were entirely unaware of the program, and only a small proportion (3%, n = 1) reported an unresponsive facilitator as their main barrier.

Table 4. MSME Awareness of the Assistance Program Mechanism (n = 30). Source: Primary data, Putri (2024), reprocessed (2026).

Level of Program Awareness	n	Percentage (%)
Aware of program, but confused about access	13	43%
Completely unaware of the program	9	30%
Aware of program, but information unclear	7	24%
Aware of program, but facilitator unresponsive	1	3%
Total	30	100%

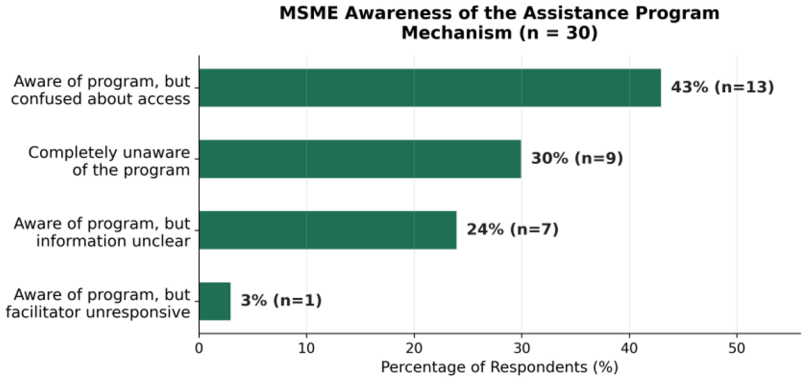


Fig. 4. MSME Awareness of the Government Assistance Program Mechanism (n = 30). Source: Primary data, Putri (2024), reprocessed (2026).

3.4 Willingness to Participate in Assistance Programs

Despite the relatively low level of program knowledge and the informational barriers described above, Table 5 and Fig. 5 show that MSME willingness to join a halal-certification assistance program remains very high, at 87% (n = 26). Only 10% (n = 3) indicated they would consider it first, and a very small proportion (3%, n = 1) indicated unwillingness.

Table 5. MSME Willingness to Join a Halal Certification Assistance Program (n = 30). Source: Primary data, Putri (2024), reprocessed (2026).

Willingness to Join Assistance Program	n	Percentage (%)
Willing to participate	26	87%
Will consider first	3	10%
Unwilling	1	3%
Total	30	100%

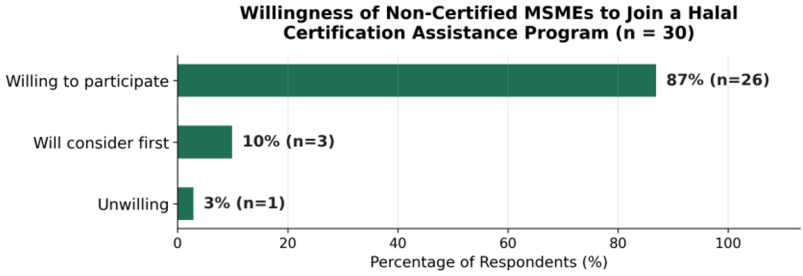


Fig. 5. Willingness of Non-Certified MSMEs to Join an Assistance Program (n = 30). Source: Primary data, Putri (2024), reprocessed (2026).

3.5 Triangulation Summary from the Focus Group Discussions

The FGD results with the Halal Product Certification Assistance Task Force of the Pamekasan Regency Ministry of Religious Affairs Office corroborate the quantitative patterns above. Four main recommendations emerged from the FGDs: (1) intensifying socialization of certification procedures; (2) simplifying administrative procedures; (3) expanding cost-subsidy schemes for financially constrained MSMEs; and (4) expanding the network of external facilitators to strengthen technical support and consultation for business actors [17].

4 Discussion

4.1 Information Barriers as the Dominant Constraint on Perceived Behavioral Control

The descriptive pattern in these results is consistent with P1: 44% of MSMEs point to a lack of information as their main barrier, while only 10% cite cost. In TPB terms, non-certified MSMEs in Pamekasan appear to be held back mainly by low perceived behavioral control — not knowing how to carry out the registration process — rather than by a negative attitude toward certification or by financial constraints. National data from Fathoni et al. [4] point the same direction, identifying informational and procedural barriers as the dominant constraint on MSE participation in halal certification across Indonesia. Two country-specific comparisons sharpen this picture. In Malaysia, Md Rodzi et al. [11] found that unclear halal perception, more than cost, was the root cause behind a cascade of further certification obstacles; in Lombok, Prawiro and Fathudin [16] identified process complexity and limited procedural understanding, not fees, as the central bottleneck for MSMEs. Amalia and Andni [2], studying Kudus Regency, add a related nuance: education level and halal awareness predicted certification decisions more strongly than cost did. Taken together, this cross-regional consistency is worth pausing on — it suggests that cost-subsidy policies, often treated as the default solution in halal certification debates, may miss the mark in Pamekasan specifically if the underlying problem is information access rather than money.

4.2 Government Support: A Gap Between Perception and Access

Before looking at the data, the expectation was that perceived government support and actual program access would move together: MSMEs who believe the government is supportive should also be the ones reaching the program itself. The results complicate that expectation. Half of respondents (50%) rate government support as fairly substantial, yet 60% have never received or are unaware of any assistance program. Separating subjective norm (the general belief that government supports halal certification) from perceived behavioral control (concrete access to a specific program) helps explain the gap. Fianto et al. [5] found government support to be a consistent predictor of certification intention in both Indonesia and Malaysia, but their measure captured general

perceived support rather than direct program-access experience as used here — a difference in what is being measured, not necessarily a disagreement in findings. This descriptive pattern is broadly aligned with P2: a favorable subjective norm is present, but it does not translate automatically into a high level of perceived behavioral control. Othman, Md Shaarani, and Bahron [13] reach a related conclusion in a different setting, showing that knowledge, attitude, and policy sensitivity jointly — not individually — determine how far a policy actually translates into compliance behavior, while Azis, Juanda, and Nurhayati [3] similarly find that MSMEs can perceive halal-label policy as welfare-enhancing even where uptake of specific facilitation mechanisms stays uneven.

4.3 The Gap between Program Awareness and Clarity of Access Mechanisms

Of the three findings discussed here, this one aligns most closely with P3, because it descriptively locates where the disconnect occurs: 43% of MSMEs who already know the assistance program exists still do not know how to use it. Widigdo and Triyanto [21] make a related argument — that knowledge affects certification intention indirectly, mediated by regulatory compliance — and access-mechanism clarity appears to function the same way in this data. A campaign that only increases how much information circulates, without simplifying how registration and assistance are actually accessed, is likely to leave this specific barrier untouched. Pratikto, Agustina, and Mutiara [15] reach a compatible conclusion in their study of self-declare readiness: what predicts readiness is literacy about the mechanism itself, not general halal knowledge. The Pamekasan Task Force FGD arrived at the same conclusion independently, recommending simpler administrative procedures and a wider network of external facilitators — a recommendation this study's data now gives empirical grounding to.

4.4 High Willingness Despite Limited Access

The most encouraging figure in this dataset is willingness: 87% of MSMEs say they want to join an assistance program, even though most have limited direct experience with one and many remain unaware it exists. Read against Handayati et al. [6], who found attitude to be an important mediator of certification intention in the same province, this suggests MSME attitude toward halal certification in Pamekasan already starts from a positive baseline — the obstacle is not interest, it is access. Left unaddressed, that gap risks wasting willingness that already exists rather than something policy still needs to build from scratch. Isabella and Loliyani [7], studying Lampung, add a caution worth keeping in mind here: even after MSMEs enroll, sustaining a self-declare program depends on facilitator capacity and the quality of post-certification monitoring, so converting willingness into registration is necessary but not sufficient on its own. The stakes of getting this right are not small: Salindal [18] links certification compliance to gains in innovative capacity and market performance, a pattern this research series has already documented directly among Pamekasan's certified MSME cluster, where certification tracked with real gains in sales and consumer loyalty [10].

4.5 Policy Implications

Based on the discussion above, this study recommends three policy priorities. First, strengthening community-based socialization and local digital platforms that reach MSMEs down to the village/sub-district level, given that the dominant barrier is an information disconnect rather than reluctance. Second, there is a need to simplify access channels for assistance programs, for instance by providing a clear and easily reachable single point of contact, in order to address the access confusion reported by 43% of respondents. This priority also aligns with findings in the socio-legal literature on Pamekasan, which emphasize the importance of outreach strategies that are responsive to local legal culture rather than relying solely on formal channels [8]. Third, replicating the active facilitation model already shown to succeed with the certified MSME cluster in the same regency [10] for the non-certified cluster, given that the high willingness to participate suggests that expanding facilitation coverage is likely to yield rapid results.

5 Limitations

This study has several important limitations that should be considered when interpreting the findings. First, the small sample size (n = 30) and the purposive sampling technique limit statistical generalization to the broader population of non-certified MSMEs. Second, the analysis is descriptive and does not test formal causal or statistical correlations between variables. The three TPB constructs (attitude, subjective norm, and perceived behavioral control) are used solely as a conceptual lens to organize and interpret the descriptive findings; the propositions labeled P1–P3 are descriptive expectations, not statistical hypotheses, and this study does not constitute a formal test or validation of the TPB model. Third, the data originate from a 2024 research report and therefore may not reflect possible changes in conditions following the full enforcement of the mandatory halal-certification requirement. Future research is encouraged to use larger samples and structural equation modeling (SEM) to test the TPB framework more rigorously, as undertaken by Fianto et al. [5] and Handayati et al. [6].

6 Conclusion

This study concludes with three main findings regarding halal-certification readiness among non-certified food MSMEs in Pamekasan Regency. First, the primary barrier faced by MSMEs is not cost limitation (10%) but a lack of information about certification procedures and requirements (44%) and a perception of administrative complexity (33%). Second, there is a paradox between a fairly positive perception of government support (50% rate it as fairly substantial) and low actual access to assistance programs (60% have never received or are unaware of the program), driven largely by confusion over access mechanisms (43%) rather than by the absence of the program itself. Third, MSME willingness to participate in assistance programs remains very high (87%), indicating that a positive attitude toward halal certification is already well established and

constitutes important, currently underutilized, social capital due to gaps in information access and program mechanisms.

Conceptually, this study offers a descriptive account of non-certified MSMEs organized through constructs drawn from the Theory of Planned Behavior, rather than a formal test of the theory, indicating that perceived behavioral control, reflected in access to information and clarity of program mechanisms, is a more decisive factor than attitude alone, which is already positive from the outset. Practically, this study recommends that the Pamekasan Halal Certification Assistance Task Force and BPJPH prioritize strengthening community-based socialization and simplifying program access channels, rather than focusing solely on expanding cost subsidies, as the most effective strategy for converting already-high willingness into actual participation in halal certification. Further research using larger samples and inferential statistical modeling (such as SEM or logistic regression) is recommended to test the TPB framework proposed in this study more rigorously.

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