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Legal Awareness and Compliance with Halal Certification among Muslim Traders

Rahmatul Fadhil[1], Syakila Amanda[1], Musa Zulkifli[2], Asrida[3], Faisal Efendi[4]
[1]Institut Ilmu Al-Qur'an (IIQ) Jakarta, Indonesia
[2]Muhammadiyah Islamic College, Singapore
[3]Universitas Islam Negeri Mahmud Yunus Batusangkar, Indonesia
[4]STAI Balaiselasa YPPTI Pesisir Selatan Sumatera Barat, Indonesia
rahmatul.fadhil@iiq.ac.id*

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Abstract

Legal awareness and compliance have become increasingly important following the mandatory implementation of halal certification for food and beverage products in Indonesia. Despite a clear regulatory framework, levels of legal awareness and compliance with halal certification requirements continue to vary among Muslim traders. This study aims to examine legal awareness and compliance with halal certification under Government Regulation No. 42 of 2024 and to identify factors influencing compliance behavior among Muslim traders. This study employs a qualitative empirical legal approach through in-depth interviews with ten micro and small food and beverage business actors selected purposively and one key informant from the government agency responsible for cooperatives and micro-enterprises. Data were analyzed using Soerjono Soekanto's legal awareness indicators and Herbert C. Kelman's legal compliance theory. The findings reveal that four participants had obtained halal certification, two were undergoing the certification process, and four had not yet applied. Compliance was shaped not only by legal awareness but also by external assistance, administrative readiness, perceived costs, time constraints, and documentation requirements. The findings imply that strengthening legal education, simplifying certification procedures, and expanding assistance programs are essential to improving halal certification compliance among Muslim traders.

INTRODUCTION

The halal status of consumer products for Muslims was originally a religious obligation before becoming a legal obligation enforced by the state (Humaidi et al., 2026). The Quran explicitly commands Muslims to consume what is lawful (*halal*) and wholesome (*tayyib*), as stated in Quran Surah Al-Baqarah verse 168. In Indonesia, this religious principle has been institutionalized through Law No. 33 of 2014 on Halal Product Assurance, which establishes halal certification as a formal mechanism for verifying and guaranteeing the halal status of products (Alzeer et al., 2018; Elgharbawy & Azmi, 2022; Putra, 2023; Rohima et al., 2025). This regulatory frame-

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work was further strengthened by Government Regulation No. 42 of 2024, which mandates that products entering, circulating, and being traded within Indonesia must obtain halal certification. Consequently, halal certification has evolved from a matter of personal religious observance into a legally enforceable administrative obligation for business actors.

For micro and small enterprises operating in the food and beverage sector, the implementation of halal certification requirements has been introduced gradually, with a compliance deadline set for 17 October 2026. Despite various facilitation programs provided by the government, the certification rate remains relatively low compared to the total number of eligible businesses. Data from the Halal Product Assurance Organizing Agency indicate that the number of certified enterprises is still far below the broader population of micro and small businesses targeted by the policy. This condition suggests that the existence of legal regulations and certification assistance programs has not yet translated uniformly into actual compliance, particularly among Muslim traders who dominate the food and beverage business sector.

Previous studies have identified several factors contributing to the low rate of halal certification compliance, including limited legal literacy, inadequate procedural information, perceived certification costs, and administrative complexity (Basarud-din et al., 2022). At the same time, some scholars argue that mandatory halal certification may not fully account for the readiness of micro and small enterprises, particularly regarding resources, legal knowledge, and access to information (Lahuri et al., 2025). These findings indicate that halal certification is not merely a matter of legal compliance but is also closely related to business actors' legal awareness regarding the importance of certification as a mechanism for consumer protection and product assurance.

Within the framework of Islamic economic law, legal awareness and legal compliance are commonly assumed to have a linear relationship, whereby a higher level of legal awareness automatically results in greater compliance. Empirical realities, however, often reveal a more complex relationship. Business actors may comply with certification requirements despite having limited legal understanding due to external assistance or institutional support, while others who possess adequate legal knowledge may still fail to undertake the required compliance measures. Examining the relationship between legal awareness and halal certification compliance is therefore essential for understanding how legal norms are translated into actual behavior among Muslim traders.

Research on halal certification and the legal behavior of business actors has received increasing scholarly attention. Rimadhani et al., (2024) found that compliance among micro and small enterprises is significantly influenced by regulatory understanding and the intensity of government outreach programs. Similarly, Wahab et al., (2024) reported that religious motivation and halal consciousness play important roles in encouraging business actors to pursue halal certification (Masood & Azfar, 2021), however, identified limited socialization, bureaucratic complexity, and perceived costs as major obstacles to compliance. Azzahra et al., (2025) demonstrated that the Free Halal Certification Program (*SEHATI*) has contributed positively to compliance by reducing informational and financial barriers. In contrast, Maulana et al., (2024) found that relatively high levels of legal awareness do not necessarily translate into certification compliance. Their findings suggest that legal awareness alone is insufficient to explain the compliance behavior of business actors.

At a broader level, Asmawi & Lutfiadi, (2026) concluded through a literature review that legal awareness regarding halal certification remains relatively low among micro and small enterprises. Musadad et al., (2025) emphasized the importance of

institutional coordination and local government capacity in facilitating halal certification, while Wahid et al., (2026) highlighted the role of collaboration between regulators, halal facilitators, and business actors in ensuring effective implementation. These studies indicate that successful halal certification depends not only on individual awareness but also on institutional and structural support mechanisms.

Further studies reinforce these findings Kushidayati, (2025) argued that legal literacy is closely associated with compliance behavior in the halal certification process. Suhartini et al., (2024) described halal certification as a legal instrument that integrates consumer protection with legal certainty for business actors. Likewise, Masri et al., (2025) emphasized that the successful implementation of halal product assurance depends on both public legal awareness and institutional effectiveness. Collectively, these studies demonstrate that legal awareness, institutional support, and procedural accessibility are critical determinants of compliance with halal certification regulations.

Despite these contributions, existing studies have predominantly examined legal awareness and legal compliance as separate variables. Limited research has investigated how legal awareness is transformed into actual compliance behavior at the individual level. Moreover, most previous studies were conducted under the regulatory framework of Government Regulation No. 39 of 2021 rather than Government Regulation No. 42 of 2024, which currently governs the final stage of mandatory halal certification implementation for micro and small enterprises. This limitation highlights an important research gap concerning the relationship between legal awareness and compliance under the latest halal certification regime.

The novelty of this study lies in its examination of the relationship between legal awareness indicators and compliance behavior through the lens of Government Regulation No. 42 of 2024. Unlike previous studies that measured legal awareness or compliance separately, this research integrates Soerjono Soekanto's legal awareness framework with Herbert C. Kelman's theory of legal compliance to explain the motivations underlying business actors' compliance behavior. This approach enables a more comprehensive understanding of the gaps between legal knowledge, legal understanding, legal attitudes, and legal behavior in fulfilling halal certification obligations.

Based on this background, the study aims to analyze the forms of legal compliance demonstrated by micro and small enterprises in fulfilling halal certification obligations under Government Regulation No. 42 of 2024 and to examine their relationship with legal awareness among Muslim traders. The study also seeks to identify factors that hinder the transformation of legal awareness into compliance behavior. The findings are expected to contribute theoretically to the development of Islamic economic law scholarship, particularly in relation to legal awareness and compliance studies. Practically, the findings may provide valuable insights for policymakers, the Halal Product Assurance Organizing Agency, and local governments in designing more effective legal education, assistance, and monitoring strategies to improve halal certification compliance among micro and small enterprises.

METHODS

This study employs a qualitative approach using an empirical legal research design. Qualitative research is intended to explore social and legal phenomena in their natural settings and to understand how individuals interpret and respond to legal norms in practice (Creswell, 2018). Empirical legal research examines law as it operates within society (*law in action*), rather than focusing solely on statutory provisions (law in books) (Sumanto et al., 2021). The approach is particularly appropriate for this study because the objective is not only to assess compliance with

halal certification regulations but also to examine how legal awareness influences compliance behavior among Muslim traders in fulfilling halal certification obligations under Government Regulation No. 42 of 2024.

Research Design

This study adopts an empirical legal research design supported by a qualitative inquiry framework. Empirical legal research enables the examination of legal norms through the experiences, perceptions, and actions of those directly affected by regulatory obligations (Moleong, 2019). Within this framework, legal awareness is analyzed using Soerjono Soekanto's indicators of legal awareness, while compliance behavior is examined through Herbert C. Kelman's theory of legal compliance. This research design is appropriate because it facilitates a comprehensive understanding of the relationship between legal awareness and actual compliance behavior among Muslim traders rather than merely assessing regulatory compliance from a doctrinal perspective.

Data Sources

The study utilizes both primary and secondary data sources. Primary data were obtained through in-depth interviews with ten micro and small food and beverage business actors and one policy analyst from the agency responsible for cooperatives and micro-enterprises. Secondary data consist of legal and documentary materials, including Law No. 33 of 2014 on Halal Product Assurance, Government Regulation No. 42 of 2024, scholarly journal articles, books, government reports, and policy documents related to halal certification, legal awareness, and legal compliance (Humaidi et al., 2026; Lahuri et al., 2025; Masri et al., 2025). The combination of primary and secondary sources is appropriate because it allows the study to compare normative legal requirements with empirical realities experienced by business actors.

Instrument

The principal instrument in this study is the researcher as a *human instrument*, who is responsible for collecting, interpreting, and analyzing the data (Moleong, 2019). To ensure analytical consistency, an interview guide was developed based on Soekanto's legal awareness indicators, namely legal knowledge, legal understanding, legal attitude, and legal behavior, as well as Kelman's categories of compliance, identification, and internalization (Kelman, 2018). The use of the researcher as the primary instrument is appropriate because qualitative inquiry requires flexibility in exploring participants' experiences, perceptions, and motivations that cannot be adequately captured through standardized instruments.

Data Collection Technique

Data were collected through in-depth semi-structured interviews, observation, and documentation. In-depth interviews were conducted to obtain detailed information regarding participants' legal awareness, certification experiences, and compliance behavior. Observations were carried out at participants' business locations to understand the operational context of compliance practices, while documentation was used to examine regulatory materials, policy documents, and supporting records (Engkizar et al., 2025, 2026; Eriyanti et al., 2020; Sari et al., 2025; Sugiyono, 2022). The combination of these techniques is appropriate because it enables the researcher to obtain rich, contextual, and triangulated data regarding halal certification compliance among Muslim traders.

Data Analysis Tool

The study employed an analytical matrix to organize and categorize qualitative data according to the dimensions of legal awareness and legal compliance. The matrix facilitated the classification of participants' responses based on legal knowledge, legal understanding, legal attitudes, legal behavior, and the motivational categories proposed by Kelman (Miles, 2015). The use of an analytical matrix is appropriate because it supports systematic data organization and enables comparisons across

participants, thereby improving analytical clarity and consistency.

Data Analysis Technique

Data were analyzed using the interactive model of qualitative analysis proposed by Miles, (2015), consisting of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification. Data reduction involved selecting and focusing relevant information from interview transcripts and documentary sources. Data display was conducted through thematic categorization to identify patterns related to legal awareness and halal certification compliance. The final stage involved drawing and verifying conclusions through continuous comparison of empirical findings and theoretical frameworks. This analytical procedure is appropriate because it enables the researcher to identify relationships between awareness, compliance, and the factors shaping compliance behavior among Muslim traders.

Data Validity

The validity of the findings was ensured through source triangulation and technique triangulation. Source triangulation involved comparing information obtained from business actors, government representatives, legal documents, and relevant literature, while technique triangulation was conducted by comparing data derived from interviews, observations, and documentation (Engkizar et al., 2026; Izzah & Syabrina, 2025). In addition, referential adequacy was maintained through the use of credible academic and regulatory sources to support data interpretation. These procedures are appropriate because they enhance the credibility, dependability, confirmability, and overall validity of the research findings, thereby ensuring that the conclusions accurately reflect the realities of halal certification compliance among Muslim traders.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The microenterprises in the food and beverage sector that were the subject of this study exhibit a wide variety of product types and business models. The products sold include fried rice, coconut milk rice, herb-infused rice, grilled chicken, satay, meatballs, chicken noodle soup, morning pastries, rice porridge with bone marrow, and marinated chicken which are marketed through food delivery apps and school cooperatives as well as family-run "*ayam geprek*" (crushed fried chicken) businesses. Some business owners sell processed meat-based products, while others offer products with simpler ingredients and production processes. This diversity is relevant to study because Government Regulation No. 42 of 2024 differentiates the requirements for halal certification based on the risk level of the ingredients and the complexity of the production process. The ten informants in this study are micro-business owners operating from their homes, small shops, or stalls near their residences in Sawangan Subdistrict.

At the institutional level, a representative from the Depok City Cooperative and Micro-Business Office stated that there are approximately 12,000 micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) under the guidance of the Depok City Government, and about 70 percent of them have obtained halal certification. However, the informant emphasized that this figure applies only to MSMEs under the city's guidance, as many business operators outside this program including home-based vendors do not yet possess the basic legal status required by a Business Identification Number. The Depok City Cooperative and Micro-Business Agency conducts outreach, facilitates the issuance of certificates, verifies data on target beneficiaries for assistance, and provides access to marketing and capital for business operators with complete legal documentation. The implementation of the SEHATI assistance program itself falls under the Halal Product Process Assistance Agency, not the department (Interview with an informant from the Depok City Department of Cooperatives and Micro Enterprises, 2026). This division of roles places the

research informant within a multi-layered service ecosystem that is not always interconnected.

From the perspective of local regulators, the main obstacles faced by business operators include an insufficient understanding of the benefits of certification, concerns about taxes, the small scale of their businesses and production that is solely order-based, as well as a lack of education about the SEHATI program. A source from the Cooperative and Microenterprise Agency also emphasized the importance of distinguishing between registered and supported Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) and street vendors who lack legal status, even though both are subject to the same certification requirements. Regarding sanctions, the Cooperative and Micro-Business Agency refers entirely to government regulations and positions itself as a facilitator, not as the party imposing sanctions (Interview with an informant from the Depok City Cooperative and Micro-Business Agency, 2026). This information serves as a point of comparison for business owners' accounts in the triangulation process. The interview results reveal three compliance conditions, summarized in table.

Table 1. Status of Compliance with Halal Certification Requirements by Informants

Code	Products	Business Identification Number	Halal Certificate	Access Channel for Application Process	Category
U-1	Fried rice, fried noodles, kwetiau, rice vermicelli	Available	Applied for, not yet issued (±6 months)	Family connection; fee stated to be payable after issuance	In process
U-2	Grilled chicken, soto	Available	Obtained	Arranged by a neighbor; free of charge	Compliant
U-3	Nasi uduk, fried snacks	Available	Obtained (±4 months earlier)	Offered by a friend; free of charge; ±2 weeks	Compliant
U-4	Nasi ulam	Available (through outreach program)	Not yet applied for	Previously advised to apply; postponed	Delayed
U-5	Chicken satay, meatballs, chicken noodles	Available	Applied for, not yet issued (±1 month)	Student facilitator, contact obtained from halal seminar; free of charge	In process
U-6	Seasoned pre-cooked chicken (*ayam ungkep*)	Not available	Not available	Free assistance offered by a local community figure was declined	Delayed

Code	Products	Business Identification Number	Halal Certificate	Access Channel for Application Process	Category
U-7	Crispy smashed chicken (*ayam geprek*)	Not available	Not available	Previously offered assistance; application not yet initiated	Delayed
U-8	Traditional morning cakes/snacks	Available	Obtained and displayed	Facilitator visited the business location; free of charge; ±1 week	Compliant
U-9	*Bubur sumsum* ("Safar Porridge")	Only available for long-established businesses	Not available	Assistance was previously offered; process halted at the Business Identification Number stage	Delayed
U-10	Meatballs, chicken noodles, dimsum	Available	Obtained for all products (self-declare, 2024)	Assisted by several facilitators through university networks; free of charge; ±2 weeks	Compliant

Table 1 shows that four informants (U-2, U-3, U-8, and U-10) stated that they already had a Business Identification Number and a halal certificate, two informants (U-1 and U-5) already had a Business Identification Number and were awaiting the issuance of their certificates, while four informants (U-4, U-6, U-7, and U-9) do not yet have a halal certificate. The "access channel" column reveals a more significant pattern than the status figures: all informants who have obtained or are in the process of obtaining a certificate did so through an intermediary whether a neighbor, friend, family acquaintance, a facilitator who visited their location, or a campus network. Not a single informant reported applying for the certificate independently through the Halal Product Guarantee Agency's system. This finding forms the basis for the following two discussions.

The Two-Way Gap Between Legal Awareness and Compliance Behavior

Regarding the legal knowledge indicator, the data show varying levels of knowledge that do not always correlate directly with certification status. U-2 stated that he was aware of regulations requiring halal certification. Conversely, U-8, who already possesses and displays a halal certificate, actually stated, "*If there is such a regulation, I just don't know about it*" (Interview with U-8, 2026). U-4, who has not yet applied for a certificate, also admitted to being unaware of the regulation, even though they had obtained a Business Identification Number through an outreach program and had previously been advised to apply for a halal certificate. U-3 and U-6 were unaware of the SEHATI program, but the two ended up in different situations: U-3 is certified because a friend offered to help, while U-6 declined a similar offer. Knowledge of the requirement is thus not a decisive prerequisite for compliance behavior among the informants in this study.

Regarding the indicator of legal understanding, the most striking difference was evident between informants who received assistance and those who did not. U-3

explained that the ingredients for each menu item must be listed in detail: "*Tempe has to be made the ingredients for orek tempe, whatever they are, must be listed in detail*" (Interview with U-3, 2026). U-5 mentioned the documents that must be submitted: the Business Identification Number, the Resident Identity Card, as well as a description of the ingredients and the production process from raw materials to the finished product. U-10 understood that products made from slaughtered animals require additional proof. This procedural understanding was formed during the assistance process, not prior to it. Conversely, U-4 and U-7 had received information that the application process could be completed free of charge, but that information had not yet translated into scheduled administrative steps. In the context of microenterprises, this understanding is more accurately interpreted as learning through practice rather than mastery of the regulatory content.

Regarding the legal attitude indicator, there are three orientations. The first orientation emphasizes the benefits to the business: U-3 and U-8 associate the certificate with consumer trust, while U-5 and U-10 mention increased revenue and product marketability. The second orientation emphasizes regulations: U-1 stated that they were obtaining the certificate "*just to follow the rules*," and U-2 stated that since regulations already exist, "*we have no choice but to follow them*" (Interviews with U-1 and U-2, 2026). The third orientation involves delay or refusal. U-6 considers the process "*too burdensome*" for his business, which "*only does small-scale sales*," and rejected an offer of free certification processing (Interview with U-6, 2026). U-6's refusal is not a rejection of the value of halal certification, but rather an assessment that the government's procedures are disproportionate to the scale of his business. Regarding the legal behavior indicators, the relationships among the indicators turned out to be nonlinear. These patterns are summarized in table.

Table 2. Patterns of Relationships Between Legal Awareness and Compliance Behavior Among Informants

Pattern	Informants	Empirical Indications	Theoretical Interpretation
Compliance facilitated without regulatory knowledge	U-3, U-8	Certified; unaware of the SEHATI program or relevant regulations; the process was handled by friends or facilitators.	Legal behavior precedes knowledge and understanding; reflects identification and an orientation toward consumer trust.
Rule-oriented compliance	U-1, U-2, U-5	Applied because "there is a regulation"; did not mention fear of sanctions.	Compliance driven by anticipation of regulatory expectations and authority demands.
Convergence of regulatory obligations and business interests	U-10	Linked business needs with regulatory obligations; actively sought alternative facilitators.	Approaches internalization, although full internalization cannot yet be conclusively established.
Awareness without compliance	U-4, U-7, U-9	Aware of certification opportunities, with some knowing that the process is free of charge; constrained by time, perceived costs, or Business Identification Number issues.	Knowledge and positive attitudes do not translate into behavior; indicates capacity-related barriers.

Pattern	Informants	Empirical Indications	Theoretical Interpretation
Rejection based on business scale considerations	U-6	Declined a free assistance offer; perceived the procedure as "too demanding"; existing market channels did not require certification.	Negative legal attitudes arising from calculations of appropriateness and practicality, rather than rejection of halal values themselves.

Table 2 shows that the gap between awareness and compliance works both ways. The first direction is compliance without full regulatory awareness, as seen in U-3 and U-8. Both have fulfilled their obligations, but their knowledge of government regulations and programs is limited or nonexistent. Their behavior stems from administrative obstacles being handled by others: an assistant arrives, records the production process, and completes all stages. This type of compliance can be called facilitated compliance. The second direction is awareness without compliance, as seen in U-4, U-7, and U-9. All three are aware of the possibility of obtaining permits; some even know that the process is free and state that they need it, but their actions are held back by time constraints, perceptions of cost, or fundamental legal concerns. This finding confirms Suhartini's assertion that indicators of legal awareness are not absolutely interdependent (Suhartini et al., 2024), while also correcting the causal assumption that posits awareness as a sufficient condition for compliance (Wahyudi, 2022). Among the informants in this study, the variables bridging these two indicators were administrative capacity and access to legal assistance.

The group currently in the process shows that compliance behavior can also be delayed after it has begun. U-1 stated that the process had been ongoing for about half a year with no certainty as to when the certificate would be issued, and that the fee was to be paid once the certificate was ready. U-5 had submitted the documents and was promised completion within two weeks, but the certificate had not yet been issued at the time of the interview. Both informants have demonstrated lawful behavior but have no control over the continuation of the process because all communication with the system is handled by an intermediary. This situation demonstrates that reliance on an intermediary not only simplifies the process but also shifts control over compliance from the business operator to another party.

These findings add nuance to previous research. Izzah & Syabrina, (2025) found a high level of legal awareness among Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprise (MSME) owners in Pamulang, whereas Saputri & Maura, (2024) concluded that legal awareness among business owners remains low. Data from Sawangan indicate that these differences in awareness levels are insufficient to predict behavior, as informants with limited knowledge may still obtain certification, while those aware of the ease of the process may actually delay doing so. Similarly, the finding by Hasanah et al., (2026) that business owners view certification as a market strategy is evident only among some informants and does not apply to business owners whose markets do not require certification. In other words, the level of awareness is more appropriately treated as a enabling condition rather than a cause that guarantees compliance.

An analysis using Kelman's framework clarifies the motives behind this behavior. A compliance orientation is evident in U-1, U-2, and, to some extent, U-5, who linked their decisions to the existence of rules. However, none of the informants cited fear of reprimands, fines, or product recalls as a reason. Since the obligation is still in a phased implementation period, compliance here is more accurately understood as anticipatory compliance with the demands of the authorities, in line with Kelman's formulation, which encompasses acceptance of the authorities'

demands and is not merely fear of punishment (Kelman, 2018). The orientation toward "*identification*" appears stronger and more distinctive. U-3 stated that he accepted the offer to obtain certification "*because many here already have halal certification*," so the certificate serves as a marker of membership in the local merchant community (Interview with U-3, 2026). U-5 emphasized that a business can only grow if the business owner joins multiple groups, and that access to mentors is indeed gained through halal seminars and organizational networks. In this data, the "*identification*" orientation manifests not only as conformity to the group but also as trust in known intermediaries, such as neighbors, friends, local religious leaders, and professors. It is this relational trust that makes the informant willing to share data on raw materials and production processes.

The closest indication of internalization was seen in U-10, who stated that there is "*a continuity between personal needs and government mandates*," so that "*the two are intertwined*" (Interview with U-10, 2026). U-10 also demonstrated a different kind of perseverance: when one mentor requested payment for products made from slaughtered animals, U-10 sought out another mentor until all of their products were certified. However, the interviews have not yet explored consistency of values, long-term commitment, and independent action when guidance is unavailable; thus, the data are insufficient to conclude that any informant has achieved full internalization. The dominant pattern among the informants in this study is anticipatory compliance mediated by identification.

The most important finding from this analysis is the distinction between halal awareness and awareness of the legal requirements for halal certification. When a customer asked, "*This is halal, right, Ma'am*?", U-4 replied, "*Yes, of course it's halal*!" (Interview with U-4, 2026). This response indicates that religious norms regarding halal status have been internalized, but halal is understood as a subjective certainty sufficiently guaranteed by the merchant's assurance. The certification requirement under Government Regulation No. 42 of 2024, however, operates on a different logic: it transforms halal claims into a verified and enforceable legal certainty. The gap among these informants does not lie in their acceptance of halal values, but rather in their lack of acceptance of the need to prove those values through state procedures. Therefore, public awareness campaigns that merely emphasize the importance of halal products risk missing the mark, because what has not yet been established is an understanding of the function of verification.

From the perspective of Islamic economic law, these findings call into question the very rationale for the existence of the halal product assurance regime. Labeling requirements that merely mandate the correct and accurate display of halal symbols are deemed insufficient to provide legal certainty regarding a product's halal status; thus, a certification mechanism is needed to protect Muslim consumers with greater certainty (Rustandi et al., 2026; Sari, 2018). Thus, certification does not replace the merchant's integrity but shifts the burden of proof from personal conviction to procedures verifiable by a third party. For business owners who are certain their products are halal, it is this logic of shifting the burden of proof that remains misunderstood, making the certification requirement appear to be an excessive formality. Explaining the consumer protection function of certification rather than focusing solely on religious obligations is key to bridging the gap between halal awareness and legal awareness of halal certification.

Legally speaking, the four informants who were not yet certified at the time of the study cannot be classified as violators, since the compliance deadline for Micro and Small Enterprises is still in a phased implementation period until October 17, 2026. A more accurate status would be "*deferred compliance*." However, the facilitated compliance process for the group that has already been certified also presents vulnerabilities. Articles 50 and 51 of Government Regulation No. 42 of 2024 require

business operators to have a Halal Supervisor, to maintain the halal status of their products on an ongoing basis, and to report changes in the composition of ingredients or in the production process of halal products. These obligations presuppose a level of autonomy that is not yet evident among the informants who have obtained certification, as the entire process is handled by a third party. U-9's experience illustrates the consequences: when a product changed from chicken porridge to bone marrow porridge, the legal status held for the original business unit could not automatically be applied. Issues regarding post-certification oversight have also been identified as a weak point in the implementation of the halal product assurance system (Nuraisyah, 2026). With the implementation of administrative sanction mechanisms through Regulation No. 2 of 2026 of the Halal Product Guarantee Agency (BPJPH, 2026), compliance that is merely "borrowed" from a consultant has the potential to become a violation when there are unreported changes in ingredients, menus, or suppliers.

Barriers to Halal Certification Compliance: From Standards to Compliance Capacity

The barriers to halal certification compliance among the informants in this study cannot be reduced to the personal shortcomings of business owners. These barriers are better understood as a failure to align legal obligations with the administrative capacity of microenterprises. The types of barriers identified are summarized in Table.

Table 3. Obstacles to Compliance with Halal Certification Requirements

Barrier	Nature	Informants	Empirical Indications
Basic business legality (Business Identification Number) not yet available or not applicable to the business unit	Administrative	U-6, U-7, U-9	Business Identification Number has not yet been obtained; Business Identification Number is only available for the older business unit.
Perceived costs and risks of formalization	Cognitive	U-4; Department of Cooperatives and Micro Enterprises	Fear of high costs despite awareness that the certification process is free of charge; concerns about taxation, as reported by the Department of Cooperatives and Micro Enterprises.
Inconsistent information regarding application pathways and costs	Institutional	Department of Cooperatives and Micro Enterprises; U-10	Meatball products were reportedly classified under the paid regular scheme, whereas U-10 obtained certification through the *self-declare* scheme at no cost.
Limited time and labor capacity	Business capacity	U-4, U-7, U-9	Operating businesses from morning until evening; attending university outside the city; using remaining time for rest after trading activities.

Barrier	Nature	Informants	Empirical Indications
Complexity of ingredients and documentation requirements	Technical	U-3, U-5, U-7, U-9, U-10	Detailed ingredient lists for each menu item; documentation of slaughter-derived ingredients; production process video requirements.
Access to assistance depends on informal networks	Institutional	U-1, U-2, U-3, U-5, U-8, U-10	Access obtained through acquaintances, neighbors, friends, seminars, and university networks; government-supported programs reportedly had low participation rates.
Absence of market pressure	Market-related	U-6, U-7	Food delivery platforms and bazaars attended by the businesses did not require halal certification.

Table 3 shows that the barriers are multi-layered. The first layer is basic legal compliance. An informant from the Cooperative and Microenterprise Agency emphasized that legal requirements are tiered, with a Business Identification Number as the first requirement, so "*it's illogical to say halal certification is mandatory when they don't have a Business Identification Number*" (Interview with an informant from the Cooperative and Microenterprise Agency of Depok City, 2026). The absence of a Business Identification Number for U-6 and U-7 means the first step in the halal certification process has not yet been initiated. U-9's case is more complex: he holds a Business Identification Number for the chicken porridge business he previously operated, but the halal certification process for that product stalled because he was required to submit documentation regarding the chicken ingredients, whereas the new bone marrow porridge outlet which opened during Ramadan does not yet have its own Business Identification Number. Although the issuance of Business Identification Numbers for low-risk businesses is designed to be straightforward under Government Regulation No. 5 of 2021, for business owners who switch products or open new units, ensuring legal compliance is an ongoing process not a one-time task.

The second layer is the perception of cost. U-4 stated, "*I'm afraid the obstacle is the high cost, and I'm also worried the process will take too much time*" (Interview with U-4, 2026), even though in another part of the interview he acknowledged that the application process is free of charge. U-7 even knew that the cost was "*zero rupiah*." This finding indicates that cost perceptions can persist even after accurate information has been received, consistent with the observation that micro and small business owners tend to view certification as burdensome even though a free option is available (Juliana et al., 2025). Informants from the Cooperative and Microenterprise Agency added another dimension not mentioned by business owners: the concern that legal registration would make their revenue traceable and trigger tax obligations. The feared costs, therefore, are not only certification fees but also the consequences of business formalization. This finding refines the conclusion of Maura et al., (2024), which identified costs as a barrier. Among the informants in Sawangan, actual costs rarely served as a barrier because all four certified informants stated they obtained certification at no cost; what hindered them was uncertainty about costs and the associated risks of formalization.

It turns out that perceptions of these costs are also influenced by inconsistent institutional information. Informants from the Cooperative and Microenterprise Agency stated that roadside meatball businesses enter the regular certification process at a minimum cost of 3 million rupiah, while U-10 stated that its meatball products

obtained certification through the self-declaration process at no cost after changing their advisor. This article does not assess which statement is accurate for a specific product; what is analytically important is that the determination of the certification pathway for products made from slaughtered meat still gives rise to differing interpretations at the implementation level. When the criteria of Article 98 of Government Regulation No. 42 of 2024 regarding ingredients whose "*halal status has been confirmed*" and simple processing procedures are interpreted differently by government agencies and consultants, this uncertainty translates into perceptions of costs at the business operator level.

The third layer consists of time and effort as non-monetary compliance costs. U-4 works from morning until around 4:00 p.m. and described the two-day training session he once attended as "*seeming to take up a lot of time*." U-7 is attending college out of town, while other family members work. U-9 replied briefly, "*Time, that's it*," after explaining that the afternoon is a rest period after selling goods since early morning (Interview with U-9, 2026). For microenterprises run by one or two people, every hour spent on administrative tasks is an hour lost from production and sales. This obstacle explains why the successful informants are generally those who were visited by facilitators, rather than those who were asked to come to government offices. U-4 herself recalled that she was once asked to come to the mayor's office to process a certificate, and that request was never followed up on. This finding also highlights the limitations of an education-based outreach approach, which, in the study by Firman & Rohendi, (2023), was linked to successful compliance: for U-4, the outreach program successfully resulted in obtaining a Business Identification Number, but the format of the activity itself reinforced the impression that processing the certificate would take time away from trading.

The fourth layer involves the complexity of materials and documentation. The requirements for verification vary depending on the nature of the product. U-8, which handles breakfast pastries, completes the process in about a week, whereas U-10, which handles products made from slaughtered meat, had to switch mentors because one of its products was initially subject to a fee. This difference underscores that business mentoring cannot be standardized. Businesses using simple ingredients require assistance with data entry, whereas those dealing with meat, numerous product variants, or consignment products need help tracing suppliers and verifying the halal status of ingredients. The need for documentation of the production process is also a stumbling block that is easily overlooked. In the case of U-8, the mentor recorded the cake-making process directly, so this stage was completed without any burden on the business owner. In contrast, the U-7 family's tape business was initially registered but the process was not continued; U-7 suspects this was because the video of the production process had not been submitted. Requirements that seem simple to policymakers can become roadblocks in the process when no one follows up on them.

The fifth layer is institutional in nature and represents the most striking finding. An informant from the Cooperative and Microenterprise Agency stated, "*Sometimes the agency has offered free halal certification services, but there are few participants*" (Interview with an informant from the Depok City Cooperative and Microenterprise Agency, 2026). At the same time, U-3 and U-6 were unaware of the SEHATI program, and U-8 stated that they had never participated in a government program. Services were available, but they did not reach the business owners who needed them. Instead, these connections occur through informal channels namely, neighbors, friends, local religious leaders, students, and professors. The fragmentation of roles further widens this gap: SEHATI quotas are set nationally; assistance is provided by the Halal Product Process Assistance Agency; while the agency's role, according to the informant, is limited to matching target data. This

situation indicates that local government partnerships under Government Regulation No. 42 of 2024 including funding from the local budget (Article 104) have not yet been fully integrated with the access channels actually used by business operators. Wahyudi, (2022) research in Banyuwangi identified inter-agency communication and coordination as key to the implementation of halal certification. Data from Sawangan reveals another aspect of this coordination: inter-agency coordination may function at the data level, but it still fails to reach business operators if it is not connected to the social networks where information actually circulates. Access that depends on social connections also has implications for service equity, because business operators who do not have contacts to guide them, are not part of a community, or do not have time to attend seminars will be left behind even though they have the same right to assistance.

The sixth factor is the lack of market pressure. U-6 sells his products through a food delivery app that, according to him, does not require a halal certificate, and U-7 participates in a bazaar that also does not require one. The Cooperative and Microenterprise Agency does provide access to marketing and capital for businesses with complete legal documentation, but these incentives only extend to businesses under its guidance. For business owners outside that scope, the lack of a certificate has not yet resulted in any tangible losses. In fact, the trend of the halal market as an opportunity for Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) has been widely identified (Zainorrahman & Zulfikri, 2023). Questions from buyers to U-4 indicate that consumer demands do exist, but they are still sufficiently addressed through verbal assurances. U-4 even noted that the need for certification is most acutely felt when receiving orders from new buyers. This aligns with the statement from the Cooperative and Microenterprise Agency that many microenterprises operate on a made-to-order basis and view certification as disproportionate to the scale of their operations. Conversely, according to an informant from the Office of Cooperatives and Microenterprises, official bazaars such as those held during car-free days are generally populated by certified businesses. This means that when a market channel requires certification, compliance tends to follow; when it does not, legal obligations must stand on their own.

These six layers form a single chain. Legal norms create obligations; the Business Identification Number and supporting documents serve as the administrative gateway; guidance translates requirements into practical steps; while time, perceived costs, product characteristics, and market incentives determine whether the process is completed. If anyone link in the chain is missing, the obligation remains merely at the level of knowledge or intention. That is why U-4 and U-6 are both uncertified but require different approaches: U-4 already has a Business Identification Number and states that it needs certification, so the barriers lie in the perception of risk and time, whereas U-6 does not yet have a Business Identification Number and does not yet view certification as a business necessity. Consequently, capacity-building efforts must be based on a status assessment: verification and ongoing support for those who are already certified; monitoring until certification is granted for those in the process; on-site Business Identification Number services for those lacking basic legal status; clarification of costs and taxes for those who are uncertain; and technical assistance for products made from slaughtered animals. Informal intermediaries that have proven effective need to be formally linked to local government programs. Once the phased implementation period ends, a gradual sanctions approach that prioritizes guidance as emphasized by the Halal Product Guarantee Agency BPJPH, (2026) needs to be implemented, taking into account that noncompliance among microenterprises more often stems from a lack of capacity rather than willful defiance (Hamidiyah et al., 2025; Juliana et al., 2025).

CONCLUSION

The findings demonstrate that legal awareness and compliance with halal certification among Muslim traders do not constitute a linear relationship. Compliance may emerge despite limited legal understanding when supported by external facilitation, while adequate legal awareness does not necessarily translate into compliance behavior due to administrative, procedural, and capacity-related constraints. This study contributes to the halal product assurance literature by revealing that legal awareness indicators operate dynamically and are mediated by institutional support, administrative readiness, and access to facilitation. Accordingly, compliance with halal certification should be understood not merely as a consequence of legal knowledge but also as the outcome of interactions between cognitive, social, and institutional factors.

The novelty of this study lies in integrating Soerjono Soekanto's legal awareness framework with Herbert C. Kelman's compliance theory under the regulatory context of Government Regulation No. 42 of 2024. This approach provides a more nuanced explanation of how Muslim traders respond to halal certification obligations and distinguishes between religious awareness of halal products and legal awareness of certification requirements. The findings imply that policies aimed at increasing halal certification compliance should move beyond conventional legal socialization by strengthening administrative assistance, improving procedural accessibility, and enhancing institutional support mechanisms to facilitate sustainable compliance among micro and small enterprises.

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Author contribution

Rahmatul Fadhil: data curation, writing-original draft preparation, **Syakila Amanda & Musa Zulkifli:** analysis, conceptualization, **Asrida & Faisal Efendi:** methodology, visualization, editing.

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