



H-TREND UII IN OPTIMIZING THE HALAL ASSURANCE SYSTEM IN THE SPECIAL REGION OF YOGYAKARTA

Received: 26/01/2024; Revised: 27/05/2025; Accepted: 19/06/2025; Published: 30/06/2025

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyze the opportunities and challenges faced by the Halalan Thoyyiban Research and Education Center (H-Trend) at the Islamic University of Indonesia in optimizing the implementation of the Halal Assurance System in the Special Region of Yogyakarta. H-Trend UII was established as a research institution focusing on the study and investigation of halal products to support the implementation of this regulation. The research employs a qualitative method, collecting data through in-depth interviews with H-Trend UII administrators. The analysis utilizes a SWOT approach to classify the organization's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. The findings reveal that H-Trend plays an active role in halal research development through product testing using the RT-PCR method, supporting UMKM (Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises), and educating the public through the publication of books and brochures. However, several challenges were identified, including limitations in human and financial resources, the wide demographic spread of MSMEs, and the low awareness among business actors regarding the importance of halal certification. This study highlights the potential for H-Trend to be developed into a Halal Assurance Institution (LPH) and a Halal Product Process Assistance Institution (LP3H), thereby expanding its role within the halal ecosystem in the Special Region of Yogyakarta.

Keywords: H-Trend UII, Halal Assurance System, MSMEs

How to cite: Amal, M. F., Budiwati, A. 2025. H-Trend UII in Optimizing The Halal Assurance System in The Special Region of Yogyakarta. *Journal of Halal Product and Research*. 8(1), 21-31, <https://dx.doi.org/10.20473/jhpr.vol.8-issue.1.21-31>

INTRODUCTION

According to Consumer News and Business Channel (CNBC) Indonesia, Indonesia has the largest Muslim population globally, with approximately 231 million individuals, representing 86.7% of the total population (Putri, 2023). As a nation with a Muslim majority, Indonesia implements Islamic dietary laws, including the consumption of halal and thoyyiban (wholesome) food. Consequently, the halal assurance system constitutes a fundamental component of the national food system.

The significance of halal assurance systems is further underscored by the substantial growth potential of the global halal market. According to data from CNBC, the halal food and beverage sector expanded at an average annual rate of 5.2% over the past decade. Projections indicate that the global halal market will reach 20,671 trillion rupiah by 2025 (Emanuella, 2024). Indonesia is among the leading consumers of halal products globally. The State of Global Islamic Economy report 2020-2021 ranks Indonesia fourth in the Global Islamic Economy Indicator, which assesses countries' potential to benefit from the global halal economy. Indonesia also holds the fourth position, specifically in the halal food sector (*State of the Global Islamic Economy Report 2020/2021*, n.d.). The significant potential of the halal market at both national and international levels, combined with increasing public awareness regarding halal certification systems, underscores the necessity for the development and enhancement of the halal industry. Indonesia, as a leading consumer of halal products, is well-positioned to assume a prominent role in the global halal economy. Collaboration among government agencies, industry

stakeholders, and the broader community is required to support optimal and sustainable sectoral growth.

The COVID-19 pandemic increased public awareness regarding the importance of halal and high-quality food, extending beyond Muslim communities to the broader population. This heightened awareness contributed to increased demand for halal products. Halal-certified food and beverages are perceived as supplements that may support immune function and facilitate recovery. As a result, countries with Muslim minority populations have also shown interest in halal certification, recognizing its association with high-quality standards. Halal certification assures Muslim consumers that products comply with Islamic law, while non-Muslim consumers benefit from the associated guarantees of cleanliness, quality, purity, and safety (Harimurti et al., 2021).

The history of halal certification in Indonesia began with a Decree of the Minister of Health in 1976, which required products containing pork to be labelled as such (Sukoso et al., 2020; Faridah, 2019). This system was developed in 1985 through a Joint Decree of the Minister of Health and the Minister of Religious Affairs, which required the inclusion of the word 'Halal', but had the disadvantage of not going through an inspection process by the competent authority and was only based on self-reporting by producers (Efendi et al., 2023).

A significant turning point occurred in 1988 when Prof. Tri Susanto's discovery of pork ingredients in dozens of products became a national issue, causing public unrest (Sup et al., 2020). In response to these findings, the Indonesian Ulama Council's Food, Drug, and Cosmetics Assessment Agency (LPPOM MUI) was established on January 6, 1989, which then collaborated with various institutions such as BPOM and related ministries (Sukoso et al., 2020). The halal product assurance system introduced by the Indonesian Ulama Council (MUI), a non-governmental organisation (NGO), was initially implemented as a social initiative rather than a legal requirement. During this period, halal certification applications were voluntary rather than mandatory (Akim et al., 2019). In implementing halal certification, LPPOM MUI collaborates with the Food and Drug Supervisory Agency (BPOM), the Ministry of Agriculture, the Ministry of Religious Affairs, the Ministry of Cooperatives, and the Bogor Agricultural Institute (IPB) (Sukoso et al., 2020).

In addition, this institution also has a scope of business in halal assurance system training, scientific research and assessment, halal socialization and promotion, as well as fostering LPPOMs in the regions. However, the core of this institution is halal certification (Sukoso et al., 2020) which was first issued in 1991. It has been explained previously that halal certification is still a social necessity because the MUI, which accommodates this, is not a government agency, but rather an NGO (non-governmental organization). An institution or non-governmental organization dedicated to development issues. The scope of an NGO's work covers local, national, and even international levels, with a diverse range of activities spanning religious, political, economic, and socio-cultural issues (Rizky, 2017).

A significant momentum occurred in 2014 with the enactment of Law No. 33 of 2014 concerning Halal Product Guarantee, whereby all products sold in Indonesia must have a halal certificate, except for products that are haram (forbidden). Therefore, there are no longer any products that are syubhat (doubtful). And because the law is a product of the government, the institution that enforces the regulation must be a government agency. Therefore, the Halal Product Guarantee Agency was established as the halal certification body in Indonesia (Syamsu & Arintawati, 2023). This indicates that the demand for halal products has transformed from what was originally a social demand into a state or national demand (Akim et al., 2019).

The Halal Product Guarantee Agency (BPJPH) under Law No. 33 of 2014 on Halal Product Guarantee has two tasks. First, to provide comfort, security, safety, and certainty of the availability of halal products for the community in consuming and using products. Second, to increase the added value for business actors to produce and sell halal products. In addition, this institution also has several authorities, including:

- a. Formulating and establishing Halal Product Guarantee (JPH) policies;
- b. Establishing norms, standards, procedures, and criteria for Halal Product Guarantee (JPH);



- c. Issuing and revoking Halal Certificates and Halal Labels on Products;
- d. Registering Halal Certificates for imported products;
- e. Conducting socialisation, education, and publication of Halal Products;
- f. Accrediting Halal Inspection Agencies (LPH);
- g. Registering Halal Auditors;
- h. Supervising Halal Product Guarantee (JPH);
- i. Guiding Halal Auditors; and
- j. Collaborating with domestic and foreign institutions in the field of Halal Product Guarantee (JPH).

BPJPH is under the Ministry of Religious Affairs, which was established on October 11, 2017, as a follow-up to Law No. 33 of 2014 with the function of providing comfort, security, safety, and certainty that halal products are safe for consumption and use by the public. Through this law, halal certification, which was initially voluntary, became mandatory for the benefit of the entire nation (Sukoso et al., 2020). This regulation came into effect on October 17, 2019, and is binding on all elements of society, especially those involved in the halal industry in Indonesia. However, through Presidential Regulation (Perpres) Number 153 of 2024, it was decided that BPJPH would no longer be under the Ministry of Religious Affairs; its status was upgraded to a Non-Ministerial Government Institution (LPNK) that reports directly to the President. This change aims to increase the independence, flexibility, and effectiveness of BPJPH in carrying out its duties in the field of Halal Product Guarantee.

This law also stipulates that the authority to issue halal certificates no longer lies with the MUI, but with the BPJPH. However, the MUI still has an irreplaceable role in the certification process. If a product wants to obtain a certificate, it must report to the BPJPH. The report will be forwarded to the Halal Guarantee Agency, which carries out the audit. The results are then submitted to the MUI for a fatwa. After the halal fatwa is issued, the MUI will report back to the BPJPH for the issuance of the certificate. However, implementation in the field shows a different situation. The law requiring halal certification for businesses, especially those in the food sector, has not been fully implemented. This is reflected in the large number of products, particularly those traded by micro-enterprises, that do not yet have halal certification. Of the 100% of industry players, only about 1% are large industries, with the remaining 99% being MSMEs (Sari et al., 2022).

This system is known as the Halal Assurance System, a system that provides legal certainty regarding whether a product is halal or not, which can only be proven by the existence of a Halal Certificate. This certificate, based on the law, is not issued simply by looking at the final result of a product, but covers the entire process from the selection of raw materials, the processing, slaughtering (if animal ingredients are used), tools, production space, storage, distribution, presentation, and much more, all of which must meet halal standards. This means that supervision is comprehensive from upstream to downstream. The main purpose of this regulation is to provide assurance, comfort, and certainty to the public, especially Muslim consumers, that the products they consume are guaranteed to be halal and in accordance with Islamic law. This law also protects non-Muslim consumers because this system also guarantees the cleanliness, quality, and safety of a product. This regulation also fundamentally changes the halal certification system from voluntary to mandatory.

In addition, another obstacle in the halal certification process is the limited number of Halal Inspection Agencies (LPH), which are still few, with an insufficient number of auditors and a narrow scope of inspection. Based on data from the official BPJPH website, it was found that in 2022, there were only three LPHs, but in 2024, there were 79 LPHs spread across Indonesia, which is directly proportional to the increase in the number of Halal Auditors (*Kepala BPJPH*, n.d.)

The limited number of LPHs has an impact on the availability of halal auditors and the extent of the area that can be covered, which will also affect the certification costs to be borne by business actors. Therefore, efforts to increase the number of LPHs are very important to strengthen the management of halal product guarantees and make the certification process easier, more effective, and more affordable for more business actors. (Ansyah et al., 2024).



Problems in the implementation of the Halal Product Guarantee Law face significant obstacles from a regulatory perspective, particularly in relation to the late issuance of Government Regulation of the Republic of Indonesia Number 31 of 2019 concerning the Implementation Regulations of Law Number 33 of 2014 concerning Halal Product Guarantee. This late issuance indicates a gap between the legislative and executive branches in the implementation of the halal assurance system in Indonesia (Kusnadi, 2019).

Referring to Article 65 of the JPH Law, which reads:

"Regulations implementing this Law must be stipulated no later than two (2) years from the date this Law is promulgated." (Undang-Undang Nomor 33 Tahun 2014 Tentang Jaminan Produk Halal, 2014)

In connection with Article 65, Article 67 paragraph (1) further states:

"Obligation to obtain halal certification for products circulating and traded in the territory of Indonesia, as referred to in Article 4, shall come into force 5 (five) years from the date of promulgation of this Law." (Undang-Undang Nomor 33 Tahun 2014 Tentang Jaminan Produk Halal, 2014)

This situation highlights a discrepancy between the timeframe mandated by law and the practical realities of implementation in the field. This late issuance not only demonstrates non-compliance with legislative regulations but also has implications for the overall effectiveness of the halal assurance system. This indicates the need for an in-depth evaluation of formulating and implementing policies related to halal product assurance in Indonesia.

This situation is exacerbated by the low level of awareness and compliance among businesses regarding halal product regulations. Many business operators see halal compliance as an extra burden. They do not consider it a fundamental responsibility or a necessity for protecting the rights of Muslim consumers. Socialisation and education on the legal consequences of violating halal regulations are lacking. There are also a few incentives for operators who comply. Both factors contribute to weak law enforcement in this sector. In 2021, a field study was conducted as part of a Community Service Programme (KKN) in the Kaliurang Kilometer 12.5 area. This area, particularly along Jalan Pandanaran, Yogyakarta, is a centre for MSMEs. The study revealed resistance to halal certification. Most MSME actors in the area did not have halal certificates. They also showed reluctance to apply for accreditation. Business operators indicated that the halal certification process is seen as burdensome both administratively and operationally (Amal et al., 2021).

These findings indicate a gap between halal product assurance regulations and the readiness and perceptions of business actors at the micro and small-enterprise level. This rejection highlights the complexity of implementing the halal assurance system, particularly in the MSME sector, which is the backbone of the community's economy. It also highlights the urgency of evaluating and formulating a more adaptive approach to the characteristics and capacities of MSMEs in the context of halal certification implementation.

In an effort to optimise the implementation of the halal assurance system in the Special Region of Yogyakarta, the Islamic University of Indonesia initiated the establishment of a research institute called the Halalan Thoyyiban Research and Education Centre (H-TREND). This institute focuses its activities on research and studies related to the halal assurance system. This research aims to analyse the opportunities and challenges faced by H-TREND in its role as a partner institution that contributes to the assessment and study of halal products.

A literature review shows that many studies have been conducted on halal assurance systems from various perspectives. Atiah and Fatoni conducted a comparative study of the halal assurance systems in Indonesia and Malaysia (Atiah & Fatoni, 2019), while Murjani examined the legal and political aspects of the implementation of halal assurance systems (Murjani, 2015). Akim et al. discussed the transformation of halal certification from a social demand to a national demand (Akim et al., 2019). Megoondo and Winjaya wrote about the application of halal certification from the perspective of consumer protection in terms of the products they consume (Megoondo & Winjaya, 2023). Nurhayani



and Muslim analyzed the professionalism and independence of LPPOM MUI in the publication of halal certificates, specifically in the Central Java region (Nurhayani & Muslim, 2019).

Based on this literature review, there is a significant research gap regarding the role of H-TREND in the halal assurance system. Although several studies have comprehensively discussed halal assurance systems, both nationally and internationally, from various perspectives, no research has been found that specifically examines the H-TREND organisation. References related to H-TREND are limited to mentioning its existence at the Universitas Islam Indonesia, without further elaboration on its role and contribution. Furthermore, there has been no research that specifically analyses the role of university research institutions in optimising halal assurance systems at the regional level. This study fills this gap by focusing on the strategic role of H-TREND in the regional halal assurance ecosystem, an aspect that has not been covered or explored in previous literature.

This study aims to: (1) Discover the strategic role of H-Trend UII in the development of the halal ecosystem in D.I Yogyakarta, (2) Identify opportunities and challenges in the implementation of the Halal Assurance System, (3) Formulate recommendations for institutional capacity building for H-Trend. The significance of this research is increasingly relevant given the target implementation of mandatory halal certification in October 2024. The transformation of this institution into a Halal Assurance Agency (LPH) and a Halal Product Process Assistance Agency (LP3H) opens up opportunities for strengthening the strategic role of higher education institutions in the national halal ecosystem.

METHODOLOGY

This research is classified as field research, with data collection conducted through interviews. This method was chosen to gain a deeper understanding of the respondents' views, and due to the small number of respondents (Sugiyono, 2013). Respondents were selected by identifying individuals who had the knowledge and/or influence to explain the issue being studied, referred to as key informants/key knowledgeable, and reputational sampling (Patton, 2015) namely Ardi Nugroho, S.Farm., M.Sc., who serves as the chair of the H-Trend UII organization. The interview was conducted on Wednesday, 24 January 2024, at the Faculty of Mathematics and Natural Sciences, Universitas Islam Indonesia, Yogyakarta.

The results of these interviews will be analyzed using the SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats) technique, a multidimensional tool used in strategic organizational evaluation. This technique serves to identify internal organizational factors, including positive aspects such as strengths and weaknesses. In addition, this analysis also considers external factors consisting of opportunities and threats that can hinder the organization's development. The main value of SWOT analysis lies not only in its mapping, but also in its application for future-oriented strategic decision making (Wicaksono, 2021).

Strengths are internal factors within an organization that enhance its development and competitive position. These attributes are significant because they distinguish the organization from its competitors. SWOT analysis is used to identify such competitive advantages. In contrast, weaknesses are internal factors that negatively affect organizational development and competitiveness. Clearly identifying these weaknesses enables targeted improvements and reduces organizational vulnerability. Opportunities refer to favorable external conditions that organizations can leverage to advance their progress and competitive standing. When effectively utilized, these opportunities may be transformed into strengths that further support organizational growth. Threats are external factors that may hinder organizational performance. The identification of threats typically results from systematic strategic analysis. Early detection of threats allows organizations to anticipate challenges and mitigate their potential impact on performance (Wicaksono, 2021).



RESULTS & DISCUSSIONS

The Existence and Strategic Contribution of H-Trend UII

H-Trend UII organization was established in October 2015, initiated by academics from the Faculty of Mathematics and Natural Sciences, Universitas Islam Indonesia. Its establishment was in response to the enactment of Law No. 33 of 2014 concerning Halal Product Guarantee. As an Islamic educational institution, the Islamic University of Indonesia has a moral responsibility to contribute significantly to the implementation of the halal assurance system. The urgency of establishing this organization was further reinforced by empirical findings regarding the use of mirin in the campus environment. Mirin is a non-glutinous rice fermentation product by *Aspergillus oryzae* that contains alcohol components because of the fermentation process (Kaneko & Kumazawa, 2015), is categorized as haram from the perspective of Sharia.

The vision of this organization is "To become a trusted halal education and research institution in Indonesia and the world, providing peace of mind for Muslims and becoming a global halal center that provides nationally and internationally recognized information and solutions." (Interview with Mr Ardi Nugroho, 2024).

H-Trend's vision and strategic positioning, which covers national and international aspects, shows great ambition while remaining relevant to the needs of the global halal market. However, to realize this vision, more systematic institutional capacity building is needed, given H-Trend's limited resources and operational coverage, which is predominantly in the Special Region of Yogyakarta.

To establish this organization, the three founders initiated dialogue with the vice-chancellor's office. Given the organization's relevance to product halal certification, a partnership was formed with the Directorate of Islamic Education and Development (DPPAI) at the Islamic University of Indonesia in the context of halal and haram assessment. Although initially this organization was under the auspices of FMIPA because its founders came from that faculty, to optimize its operational scope, H-Trend was later restructured under the leadership of the Vice-Chancellor for Academic Development and Research, who at the time of writing is Prof. Dr. Jaka Nugraha, S.Si., M.Si. This structural transformation enabled the expansion of the organization's focus, not only limited to halal science aspects, but also covering the dimensions of Islamic economics and various other related fields (Interview with Mr. Ardi Nugroho, 2024).

H-Trend experienced a two-year interval without formal leadership. Organizational revitalization occurred in 2018 with the appointment of Dr Sani Rachman Soleman, M.Sc, as chairperson. Dr Soleman held this position until 2020, when Ardi Nugroho, S.Farm., M.Sc, succeeded him. Nugroho contributed to this study as a resource person (Interview with Mr. Ardi Nugroho, 2024). At the time of writing, the H-Trend management structure consisted of one administrator and four core administrators.

Since resuming operations in 2018, H-Trend has formed a partnership with the Sharia Economic Society to implement initiatives supporting halal tourism and other halal-related activities in the Yogyakarta region. H-Trend has participated in multiple expositions, presenting Universitas Islam Indonesia (UII) products that have successfully passed halal testing conducted by H-Trend. The organization's primary activities include research, education, and the dissemination of halal information. In research, H-Trend processes testing requests to analyze product content using the real-time polymerase chain reaction (PCR) method (Interview with Mr. Ardi Nugroho, 2024) This technique enables the detection of pork contamination in food products, even with small sample sizes, minimizes contamination risk, and allows for the simultaneous examination of numerous samples (Luluk Rahmania et al., 2021)

The H-Trend portfolio includes testing various consumer products, ranging from clothing, processed meat products such as meatballs and sausages, to beef burgers. This organisation also acts as a forum for public complaints regarding food products whose halal status is in doubt. One significant initiative that has been carried out is surprise inspections at various UII canteens, which resulted in the discovery of several products contaminated with haram substances. The results of the investigation were followed



up at the university leadership level, in this case, the rectorate, which then resulted in a comprehensive assistance programme for food producers in the canteen facilities. One of H-Trend UII's activities is field research. H-Trend receives more complaints than it conducts direct spot checks, which is a logical consequence of limited human and financial resources. H-Trend also found a case involving a meatball business whose products were indicated to contain haram ingredients. Upon investigation, the main problem did not originate from the producer but from the slaughterhouse (RPH) as the raw material supplier, which did not meet the standards of the halal product assurance system. Given that H-Trend does not have the authority to take enforcement action, the only thing it could do was to advise the meatball business owner not to source raw materials from the same supplier (Interview with Mr. Ardi Nugroho, 2024).

One case, in which contaminated meatballs were found due to problems at the slaughterhouse, reveals the deeper complexity of the HVC (Halal Value Chain), which is a manifestation of industrial integration that harmonises various stages, from input to final consumption. The entire halal product process requires comprehensive supervision of each supporting component. The initial stages require strict supervision of the selection of basic ingredients and the use of technology in the processing. Sanitation and halal verification are the main focus in the packaging process before the product reaches consumers. Distribution mechanisms and marketing strategies must also adhere to Sharia principles. Optimising every element in the halal value chain not only produces products with guaranteed halal status but also improves quality standards and competency in the market environment (Hakim & Sugianto, 2024). This case shows that halal assurance requires a more comprehensive approach, not just supervision at the final production point. This emphasizes the importance of coordination between institutions, the urgency of slaughterhouse standardization, and the need for an integrated traceability system from upstream to downstream.

In educational and informational activities, H-Trend focuses on producing various forms of scientific works, such as popular articles and books on halal and haram, which were written in 2021. In 2024, there are plans to publish another book discussing the wisdom of halal in health. H-Trend also has a collaboration with the Pharmacy Department at UII to provide education about halal to the public in the form of brochures and articles in the mass media. Additionally, in the Pharmacy Study Program, there is a course that supports the Halal Assurance System, namely the Halal Pharmaceutical Product Assurance course, which examines the steps on how pharmacy students can understand the halal product process and matters related to halal. Several books and educational materials in the form of pamphlets as shown in the following image.



Figure 1. H-Trend UII's Publication





Figure 2. Education About Sacrificial (Qurban) Animals



Figure 3. Education About Vaccination Laws from an Islamic Perspective

In 2019, H-Trend had a plan to elevate the status of H-Trend from its original role as a halal research institution to become an LPH (Halal Assurance Institution) and LP3H (Halal Product Process Assistance Institution) by inviting representatives from the BPJPH and the Waqf Agency as part of a collaboration in the initiation of the LPH UII. However, this plan was hindered due to the global COVID-19 pandemic. It was not until 2022 that this plan was resumed, with the initial step being the certification of halal auditors. Among the lecturers included in this auditor group are two lecturers from the Chemistry program, an expert from the Pharmaceutical Biology Laboratory, and a lecturer from the Industrial Technology program.

The three academics mentioned above come from the field of science, as H-Trend itself prioritizes the scientific aspect of halal, given that UII still lacks scientific works discussing halal science. However, there is also a team of experts outside the H-Trend management as part of an effort to raise the status of H-Trend to LPH and LP3H and to broaden the scope of activities and knowledge, so as not to focus solely on science. This team is referred to by the source as the 'Sharia Team,' which consists of an expert in the field of Sharia and Fiqh, an expert in the field of Finance, Banking, and Islamic Economics, and another from the Faculty of Medicine at UII.

Opportunities for Institutional Development in the Halal Ecosystem

H-Trend can become an LPH and LP3H. This can be seen from other activities that have the potential to be realized, such as the recruitment of P3H as field parties tasked with assisting the halal product process. There is already a concept to collaborate with DPPM to create a Halal Cluster Community Service Learning (KKN) plan where students will be given training to become halal product assistants (P3H) to be deployed to the community, with the target that students can assist at least 1

MSME. Then, the Pharmaceutical Halal Product Assurance course can be included in the MBKM program, where H-Trend will be the host for the course. Students will be trained to become P3H, then registered, and subsequently assist with 1-3 SMEs to obtain halal certification, like activities conducted in the KKN program (Interview with Mr. Ardi Nugroho, 2024).

H-Trend's scope of work already covers the Special Region of Yogyakarta, as evidenced by its collaboration with the Jogja Halal Community organization under the Sharia Economic Society. Before the COVID-19 pandemic hit, there were already provincial-scale plans to create a halal tourism map of Yogyakarta, particularly in the culinary sector, like the one in Singapore.

The various integrative approaches taken by H-Trend, combining scientific perspectives (Chemistry, Biology, Pharmacy, and Industrial Technology) and balanced with a Sharia team, demonstrate a good understanding that halal certification requires a multidisciplinary approach. This reflects the essence of contemporary Islamic studies, which cannot be separated from developments in science and technology. However, the author observes a limitation in human resources within the organizational structure, where only four internal administrators could become a bottleneck in organizational development. This number is still relatively small to handle the existing potential and challenges, especially with plans to expand into LPH and LP3H. In addition, the issue of financing also needs serious attention, especially for RT-PCR testing, which requires high operational costs, not to mention the costs required for other educational activities, which, of course, still require funding.

In addition to internal obstacles, obstacles also arise from outside the organization, making it difficult to implement a Halal Assurance System. The author conducted interviews in 2021 in the Pandanaran area, where there are many MSMEs, and found that none of them had halal certification. They argued that obtaining halal certification was complicated and complex because it required careful attention to processes, ingredients, equipment, and other factors, which discouraged business owners from pursuing it. In addition, demographic and community issues also posed challenges. In the Yogyakarta region, which is quite large and covers a considerable distance, many people still live in rural areas where there is little concern about halal certification. Many MSMEs also do not yet have halal certification, even though, from the perspective of the Halal Assurance System, MSMEs that use meat as an ingredient can be categorized as high risk, meaning they have a high risk of contamination with non-halal substances or issues related to slaughtering in slaughterhouses that also do not yet have halal certification.

H-Trend UII has also coordinated with BPJPH to establish a consortium, in which BPJPH will bring together academics and practitioners to discuss how P3H can reach all groups, including MSMEs or even smaller businesses, without compromising the halal requirements of a product (Interview with Mr. Ardi Nugroho, 2024).

Challenges also arise from individuals who misuse halal certificates. Based on data from Kompas (Saptohutomo, 2023), there is a wine brand called Nabidz that has obtained a halal certificate from BPJPH. The brand's halal certificate was obtained through a self-declare mechanism, which was also accompanied by P3H. After investigation, it turned out that the product that was registered and successfully obtained a halal certificate was grape juice/extract. The fraud came from several parties. First, from the business operator who affixed the halal logo on a different product (wine) from the one registered. Second, from individuals from the P3H who knew that the grape juice/extract was produced through a fermentation process, which, based on Government Regulation No. 39 of 2021, cannot be done through self-declaration and must go through regular halal certification. Therefore, the BPJPH decided to revoke Nabidz's halal certificate and cancel its accompanying PPH registration number.

Therefore, this Halal Product Guarantee reveals a fundamental contradiction. On the one hand, an overly strict system will hinder the participation of business actors, especially MSMEs with limited resources. However, excessive relaxation will open the door for abuse (Interview with Mr. Ardi Nugroho, 2024). This is a classic challenge in regulation, namely striking a balance between ease of accessibility and system integrity.



In addition to the complexity that is being addressed, another complaint that has arisen is the length of time it takes for the MUI to issue halal fatwas. For large businesses, the process begins with the manufacturer registering the product with the BPJPH, then forwarding it to the LPH for auditing, then submitting it to the MUI to request a fatwa, then returning to the BPJPH for the issuance of a certificate. Meanwhile, for MSMEs, after registering the product with the assistance of the P3H, the data is sent directly to the MUI to request a fatwa. One of the main obstacles faced is that all product fatwa requests must go through the Central MUI in Jakarta, resulting in a large volume of documents reviewed by the MUI. The source also suggested maximizing the potential of the MUI at the provincial and city levels as parties that can be requested for fatwas to expedite the process (Interview with Mr. Ardi Nugroho, 2024)

The halal certification process involving the central MUI in Jakarta demonstrates a highly centralized bureaucracy that has the potential to hinder efficiency. The source's suggestion to involve the MUI at the provincial level could certainly maximize other potential and is a smart strategic solution. This kind of decentralization will not only speed up the process but also provide a greater scope for the provincial MUI to be involved in assessing the halal status of a product.

The mandatory halal certification plan in October 2024 is an important momentum that is not only a long-term regulation but also a fundamental transformation in the halal product ecosystem in Indonesia. H-Trend sees this as a strategic opportunity to position itself as a pioneer in a comprehensive and integrity-based halal assurance system, especially in assisting the halal certification application process for MSMEs around UII. This opportunity is even more wide open given that H-Trend's status as an LP3H institution is only awaiting a decree from the university rectorate, so that it can immediately participate actively in supporting the implementation of the halal certification policy that will soon be enforced.

CONCLUSIONS

Halalan Thoyyiban Research and Education Centre (H-Trend) at the Islamic University of Indonesia (UII) plays an important role in supporting the halal assurance system in the Special Region of Yogyakarta. H-Trend has developed its halal research capacity through RT-PCR testing methods, MSME assistance programmes, and community education initiatives. This organisation also has the potential to develop into a Halal Assurance Institution (LPH) and a Halal Product Process Assistance Institution (LP3H), which could expand its scope within the halal ecosystem. Accelerating institutional transformation into LPH and LP3H is a strategic step to begin optimising its role in society. If this can be realised, H-Trend will become a reference point for how higher education institutions can take on a strategic role in the implementation of the Halal Product Assurance Law and become an applicable solution that has a direct impact on the community in the Special Region of Yogyakarta, especially MSME entrepreneurs.

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