

Challenges in the Implementation of Halal Regulations by Local Governments in Supporting the Growth of the Halal Industry: A Case Study of Kudus, Pati, and Jepara Regencies, Central Java

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the implementation challenges of halal certification policies by local governments in Kudus, Pati, and Jepara Regencies in Central Java, Indonesia. Despite strong economic potential in agriculture, fisheries, and processed food sectors, the proportion of halal-certified products remains low, indicating a gap between national policy goals and local outcomes within a decentralized governance system. Using a qualitative field study approach, this research employs in-depth interviews, participatory observation, and document analysis to explore the roles of local governments and stakeholders in policy implementation. The findings show significant variation across the three regencies, driven by differences in institutional capacity, inter-agency coordination, regulatory support, and stakeholder engagement. A substantial gap between the number of MSMEs and those with halal certification is influenced by limited access to certification services, a shortage of halal facilitators, administrative complexity, and low halal literacy among business actors. The study finds that halal certification implementation is not merely a matter of regulatory compliance but is strongly shaped by institutional arrangements and local governance capacity. It highlights that institutional connectivity and multi-level governance dynamics play a key role in explaining regional differences in policy outcomes. Strengthening coordination among institutions and integrating halal policies into local development strategies are essential to improve implementation effectiveness and reduce disparities.

1. Introduction

The implementation of the halal product assurance system in Indonesia, although regulated through various legal instruments, continues to face significant challenges in achieving halal certification targets (Pratiwi, 2022). The failure to meet the targets stipulated in Government Regulation No. 39 of 2021 prompted the government to introduce regulatory reforms through Government Regulation No. 42 of 2024. The new regulation adjusts halal certification targets and procedures to current conditions by taking into account administrative obstacles, limited inter-institutional coordination, and the uneven distribution of supporting infrastructure (Hakim & Amaliyah, 2024).

Within the context of decentralization (Setiawan et al., 2022), local governments play a strategic role in supporting the implementation of halal certification due to their close proximity to communities and business actors (Wahyuni & Huda, 2021). However, local governments' responses to central government policies have often been less than optimal, contributing to the low achievement of halal certification targets in various regions. This condition can also be observed in Kudus Regency, Pati Regency, and Jepara Regency, which possess considerable potential in the halal industry sector but still demonstrate a relatively low number of halal-certified products.

These issues indicate that the existence of regulations alone is insufficient to ensure the effective implementation of halal policies. Policy implementation requires institutional coordination, administrative capacity, adequate resources, and strong commitment from local governments to achieve policy objectives effectively. (Benedetto Lepori, Emanuela Reale, 2023) From the perspective of co-administration (medebewind), local governments are responsible for implementing central government policies effectively at the local level (Ferry, 2021).

To better understand the challenges in implementing halal regulations, the researcher reviewed several previous studies on halal regulation that employ different perspectives and analytical approaches. Research by Hasana and Pasyaha (Hasan & Pasyah, 2022) discusses challenges facing the halal industry at the national level in the digital economy era, while Jalaluddin et al. (Jalaluddin et al., 2024) analyze the development of halal regulation in Indonesia through a comparison with Malaysia, finding that Indonesia possesses a relatively comprehensive legal framework but still faces normative ambiguities and broad interpretations in its implementation, whereas Malaysia demonstrates greater regulatory flexibility. At the regional level, Rahayu and Abbas (Rahayu, 2024) examine halal tourism development in Aceh, Khusniati Rofiah et al. (Rofiah et al., 2024) focus on the legal awareness of business actors in East Java, while Widyawati and Lon (Lon, 2023) explore halal practices within Muslim minority communities in Manggarai. Unlike these studies, this research focuses on the implementation of halal regulations in Kudus Regency, Pati Regency, and Jepara Regency, thereby offering a more contextual understanding of regions with significant halal potential but relatively low levels of halal certification.

This study is expected to contribute to the development of legal and public policy studies concerning the implementation of halal product assurance at the regional level by also considering factors such as public awareness, institutional capacity, and coordination dynamics among local actors. This multidimensional approach enriches halal studies, which have previously tended to focus primarily on normative legal aspects. Furthermore, the findings of this study are expected to generate an applicable collaboration model between local governments, Halal Product Assurance Organizing Agency (BPJPH), and micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) to accelerate halal certification in other regions, particularly in the Eastern Northern Coastal region (Pantura Timur), which shares similar economic characteristics.

2. Literature Review

The literature review contains descriptions of theories, findings and other research materials obtained from the reference materials used as the basis of the research.

Public Policy Implementation

Policy effectiveness is influenced by several key variables, including policy standards and objectives, resource availability, inter-organizational communication, characteristics of implementers, socio-political conditions, and the disposition of implementers. This aligns with the policy implementation model proposed by Carl E. Van Horn and Donald S. Van Meter, which

emphasizes that the success of policy implementation is largely determined by the clarity of policy objectives, adequacy of resources, characteristics of implementing actors, and the surrounding social and political environment (Muksin et al., 2024). Implementation itself constitutes a crucial stage in the public policy cycle, as it determines the extent to which formulated policies can be translated into concrete actions and generate tangible impacts on society. This process reflects the transformation of policy ideas into real actions involving various actors, ranging from central government to technical implementers at the local level (Benedetto Lepori, Emanuela Reale, 2023). In this context, local governments act as key actors bridging national policies with local realities. They function not only as technical implementers but also as facilitators, coordinators, and regulators to ensure that halal policies are effectively implemented and provide tangible benefits to society and local business actors.

Local Government Administration

In the administration of local government, several principles govern the relationship between central and local governments, namely decentralization, deconcentration, and co-administration (*tugas pembantuan*), as stipulated in Law Number 23 of 2014 on Local Government. Co-administration refers to the assignment from the central government to local governments to carry out certain governmental affairs under central authority, with accountability to the assigning authority (Huda & Heryansyah, 2019).

In the context of halal certification, the primary authority lies with the central government through the Halal Product Assurance Organizing Agency, established under Law Number 33 of 2014 on Halal Product Assurance. However, at the implementation level, local governments play a strategic role in supporting halal certification programs. These roles include disseminating information to business actors, facilitating halal certification registration for micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs), and providing assistance in fulfilling halal requirements. Thus, the involvement of local governments in halal certification programs can be understood as the application of the co-administration principle, whereby local governments assist in implementing centrally mandated programs to expand access to certification services and enhance halal assurance for the public (Ropii, 2015).

Holistic Collaboration

Although “holistic collaboration theory” is not formally codified in classical public policy literature, it is strongly rooted in the traditions of cross-sector collaboration and collaborative governance (Astuti, R.S., Warsono, H., & Rachim, 2020). This approach emphasizes the importance of involving actors from the public sector, private sector, and civil society simultaneously and synergistically in policy formulation and implementation processes (Astuti, R.S., Warsono, H., & Rachim, 2020). Holistic collaboration views public policy as a product of complex interactions that cannot be fully understood or implemented by a single actor or sector, but rather through the integration of diverse perspectives and resources.

One of the most influential frameworks in understanding policy collaboration dynamics is the Collaborative Governance Theory developed by Ansell and Gash (2008). In this model, policy implementation is viewed as an interactive process involving both state and non-state actors through inclusive and participatory deliberative forums. The process emphasizes trust-building, consensus formation, and constructive conflict management. This approach enables diverse interests to synergize in formulating more adaptive and sustainable solutions, making holistic collaboration a crucial foundation in contemporary public policy governance (Chris Ansell, 2008).

This holistic collaboration approach is closely related to Stakeholder Theory in the context of management and public policy. Stakeholder Theory asserts that an organization or policy should not focus solely on a single group of interests (such as shareholders or government), but must consider and involve all relevant stakeholders who are affected by or have an interest in the policy.

3. Methodology

This study employs qualitative field research (Marzuki, 2005). with a socio-legal and policy research approach to examine the implementation of halal regulations in Kudus, Pati, and Jepara Regencies, Central Java. The research subjects include local governments, legislative bodies, religious institutions (such as the Indonesian Ulema Council, MUI and BPJPH), technical institutions related to halal certification, and MSME actors engaged in production and certification processes. Primary data were collected through semi-structured interviews, participatory observation, and documentation studies of relevant legislation and official reports. Meanwhile, secondary data were obtained from academic literature, policy documents, and other relevant materials (Murdiyanto, 2020).

Despite having a predominantly Muslim population and significant potential in sectors closely associated with the halal industry such as agriculture, fisheries, and food processing there remain several obstacles that hinder the halal certification process for local products. These challenges can be observed in several regions, including Kudus, Pati, and Jepara Regencies (the former Pati Residency area). The relatively low number of halal-certified products in this region, despite its substantial potential within the halal industry, indicates a gap in regulatory support for the development of the halal industry at the regional level. Clear and effective regulations in this sector are therefore essential to ensure that local products comply with halal standards. Without appropriate regulatory frameworks, barriers such as the lack of awareness regarding the importance of halal certification will remain difficult to overcome. The research locations were selected because they possess considerable potential in the halal industry, yet the implementation of halal certification remains relatively limited, making them relevant cases for exploring the gap between central regulations and local practices.

Data analysis was conducted using an inductive qualitative approach, beginning with data reduction, followed by descriptive narrative presentation, identification of interaction patterns among actors, analysis of both structural and non-structural constraints, and finally the formulation of conclusions. The validity of the data was ensured through triangulation of techniques and sources by comparing interview results, observations, and documentation, as well as perspectives from various informants. This approach enables the research not only to describe the implementation of halal regulations but also to reveal substantive factors that influence the effectiveness of policy implementation and to provide strategic recommendations for local governments and industry actors. (Zuchri Abdussamad, 2021)

4. Results And Discussion

General Overview of Halal Certification Implementation in Three Regencies

The implementation of halal certification in Kudus, Pati, and Jepara Regencies is part of the national Halal Product Assurance policy carried out by the Halal Product Assurance Organizing Agency (BPJPH). In its implementation, the halal certification process involves several stakeholders, namely BPJPH as the certification authority, Halal Inspection Institutions (LPH) as product auditors, the Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI) as the body responsible for halal determination, local governments as program facilitators, and MSME actors as the primary target group of the policy.

At the regional level, regency governments play a crucial role in supporting the implementation of halal certification, particularly through socialization activities, assistance, training, and facilitation of halal certification registration for business actors. The implementation of halal policy at the local

level is also widely supported through collaboration with the Ministry of Religious Affairs, Halal Product Process Assistants (PPH), universities, community organizations, and MSME support communities (Setiawan et al., 2022).

In general, the halal certification mechanism in the three regencies is carried out through two main schemes, namely the self-declare scheme and the regular scheme. The self-declare scheme is intended for micro and small enterprises that use simple ingredients and have relatively low-risk production processes. In this scheme, business actors are assisted by halal companions to ensure the conformity of ingredients and production processes before submission to BPJPH. Meanwhile, the regular scheme involves direct inspection by LPH of raw materials, production processes, and the Halal Product Assurance System (SJPH) implemented by business actors.

In practice, the three regions demonstrate different implementation patterns in accordance with their respective local conditions. These differences are reflected in the form of local government support, MSME mentoring patterns, levels of business participation, and the focus of halal program development in each region.

In Kudus Regency, the implementation of halal certification tends to develop through institutional strengthening and regulatory support at the local level (Sutejo, 2025). The local government has begun to integrate the halal certification program with MSME development policies and the local economy. Program implementation is carried out through halal socialization, free halal certification facilitation for MSMEs, and cooperation with universities and halal assistance institutions (Imam Prayitno, 2025). The strong religious character of Kudus society also contributes to the increasing awareness of the importance of halal products. Nevertheless, the implementation of halal certification in Kudus still faces several challenges, such as limited digital literacy among MSMEs, uneven distribution of halal assistants, and the readiness of micro enterprises to fulfill administrative requirements and the Halal Product Assurance System (SJPH) standards (Abdul Syakur, 2025).

Meanwhile, the implementation of halal certification in Pati Regency has developed more through an empowerment approach and direct public service to MSMEs. The local government, together with the Ministry of Religious Affairs, actively conducts assistance programs, free halal certification services, and outreach activities directly targeting business actors at the village level. The halal program is also increasingly linked to rural economic development and micro-enterprise empowerment. This condition has encouraged higher participation of MSMEs in applying for halal certification, particularly in the food and beverage sector. However, the program still faces several obstacles, including perceptions of high certification costs, limited understanding of administrative procedures, and low digital technology proficiency among small business actors (Sukino, 2025).

In Jepara Regency, the implementation of halal certification has developed in line with increasing market demand and business competition. The local government promotes halal certification as part of its MSME development and local product competitiveness enhancement program. The halal certification program in Jepara is closely associated with the “UMKM Naik Kelas” initiative, which includes improving business legality, strengthening digital marketing, and expanding market access (Arifin, 2025). The relatively higher administrative readiness of MSME actors in Jepara also supports the implementation of the halal certification program in the region. In practice, halal certification is not only perceived as an administrative requirement but also as an effort to increase consumer trust and product value (Ray, 2025).

Overall, the implementation of halal certification in Kudus, Pati, and Jepara Regencies demonstrates that halal policy at the regional level develops in accordance with the social, economic, and capacity conditions of each area. Kudus Regency emphasizes institutional strengthening and regulatory support, Pati Regency focuses on empowerment and MSME service delivery, while Jepara Regency prioritizes business competitiveness enhancement and market development. These differences indicate that the implementation of halal certification at the local level does not follow a uniform pattern but is adapted to the needs and characteristics of each region.

Comparative Performance of Kudus, Pati, and Jepara

Analisis komparatif terhadap implementasi kebijakan sertifikasi halal di Kabupaten Kudus, Pati, dan Jepara menunjukkan bahwa perbedaan kinerja implementasi tidak membentuk pola hierarkis yang linear antara daerah yang “maju” dan “tertinggal”. Sebaliknya, variasi implementasi mencerminkan perbedaan kapasitas kelembagaan, orientasi tata kelola, serta strategi pemerintah daerah dalam menerjemahkan kebijakan nasional Jaminan Produk Halal ke dalam konteks lokal masing-masing. Dalam perspektif *multi-level governance*, implementasi kebijakan halal di ketiga daerah berkembang melalui konfigurasi aktor, pola koordinasi, dan tingkat integrasi kebijakan yang berbeda-beda.

A comparative analysis of halal certification policy implementation in Kudus, Pati, and Jepara Regencies indicates that differences in implementation performance do not form a linear hierarchy between “advanced” and “lagging” regions. Instead, the variation reflects differences in institutional capacity, governance orientation, and local government strategies in translating the national Halal Product Assurance policy into their respective local contexts. From a multi-level governance perspective, the implementation of halal policy in the three regions develops through varying configurations of actors, coordination patterns, and levels of policy integration(Hudson et al., 2019).

Comparatively, Jepara Regency demonstrates a relatively more effective implementation, particularly in terms of policy integration and the mainstreaming of halal programs into regional economic development. Halal certification is not positioned merely as an administrative compliance instrument, but is integrated into MSME empowerment agendas through the “UMKM Naik Kelas” program, business legalization, digital marketing transformation, and market expansion initiatives(Arifin, 2025). This integration reflects the local government’s adaptive capacity in linking halal policy with broader strategies for enhancing local economic competitiveness. As a result, implementation in Jepara tends to be more collaborative and market-oriented. In addition, the relatively higher administrative readiness of MSME actors further strengthens operational effectiveness. These findings suggest that implementation success is not solely determined by program intensity, but also by the region’s ability to embed halal policy within a broader economic development ecosystem.

Meanwhile, Pati Regency exhibits relatively strong performance in administrative facilitation and the expansion of halal certification services. The local government, together with the Ministry of Religious Affairs, demonstrates a stable coordination capacity in developing assistance services, accelerating certification processes, and strengthening the network of halal assistants down to the village level(Khamid, 2025). Implementation in Pati is characterized by a more technocratic and administrative governance model, with a primary focus on public service effectiveness and the mobilization of facilitation programs for MSMEs(Sukino, 2025). This condition enables Pati to be

relatively effective in expanding access to halal certification at the operational level, particularly through a public service-based approach. However, compared to Jepara, the integration of halal policy into broader regional economic development agendas remains less developed. Thus, Pati's main strength lies in its facilitation capacity and administrative coordination stability, although cross-sectoral institutional collaboration is still evolving.

On the other hand, Kudus Regency demonstrates a distinct implementation character in terms of regulatory institutionalization. Operationally, halal certification implementation in Kudus still faces relatively more complex challenges, particularly in inter-agency coordination, the distribution of halal assistants, and technical implementation capacity at the MSME level. Coordination fragmentation among regional government organizations indicates that governance integration has not been fully achieved. Nevertheless, this does not necessarily reflect weak policy commitment. Instead, Kudus shows a stronger tendency toward legal-institutional strengthening through the formulation of local regulatory instruments, such as Regional Regulations (Perda) followed by planned Regent Regulations (Perbup) concerning halal certification facilitation (Sutejo, 2025). This regulatory strengthening indicates a higher degree of formal policy institutionalization compared to the other regions. From a policy implementation perspective, the existence of local regulations has the potential to enhance policy certainty, clarify authority structures, and strengthen program sustainability in the long term (Wahyuni & Huda, 2021). Thus, Kudus demonstrates more advanced capacity in regulatory-institutional development, although technical implementation effectiveness still faces various operational constraints.

When viewed holistically, the three regencies exhibit strengths in different dimensions of implementation. Jepara is relatively superior in policy integration and the mainstreaming of halal certification into regional economic development. Pati shows more stable capacity in administrative facilitation and the expansion of public services for MSMEs. Meanwhile, Kudus demonstrates more developed regulatory institutionalization through the strengthening of local legal frameworks. These differences indicate that halal certification implementation at the regional level does not follow a uniform pattern but is shaped by institutional capacity, actor networks, cross-sector coordination patterns, and each region's development orientation.

This comparative finding underscores that the effectiveness of halal policy implementation is not determined solely by the number of programs or administrative achievements, but also by the ability of local governments to build policy integration, strengthen institutional coordination, and create adaptive governance structures that respond to the needs of local MSMEs. Consequently, the differences in implementation across Kudus, Pati, and Jepara represent variations of halal governance models at the regional level, each with its own strengths and limitations across specific implementation dimensions (Ferraro & Failler, 2024).

Determinant Factors of Implementation Variations

A cross-case analysis of halal certification implementation in Kudus, Pati, and Jepara Regencies indicates that variations in implementation performance cannot be explained by a single factor. Instead, they result from a complex institutional configuration. In Jepara, implementation intensity is relatively higher due to its integration with the UMKM Naik Kelas program, which enables process acceleration through a business clustering approach. Conversely, in Pati, implementation tends to be more administrative-procedural, resulting in slower certification processes due to limited assistant capacity and weak programmatic integration. Meanwhile, Kudus demonstrates a more

stable implementation pattern supported by a more established regulatory and institutional structure. This pattern indicates that variations in halal certification implementation are shaped not only by technical factors, but also by institutional configurations and the level of policy integration within regional development agendas.

This configuration emerges from the interaction of human resource capacity, institutional coordination patterns, fiscal capacity, the degree of regulatory institutionalization, business actors' literacy levels, and connectivity within the national halal certification network. From a multi-level governance perspective, halal policy implementation is influenced not only by internal local government capacity but also by the ability of regions to integrate national policies into local governance structures. Therefore, the variations observed in Kudus, Pati, and Jepara are better understood as differences in regional halal governance models.

First, human resource capacity particularly Halal Product Process Assistants (PPH) shows significant variation in determining implementation effectiveness. In Jepara, limited numbers of assistants do not become a major obstacle because they are compensated through integration with the *UMKM Naik Kelas* program, enabling a cluster-based collective mentoring model (Usman, 2025). In Pati, limited assistants directly slow down verification processes due to the absence of program-based substitution mechanisms, making implementation highly dependent on individual assistant capacity (Khamid, 2025). In Kudus, assistant distribution is more structured through established formal institutions, allowing mentoring, verification, and validation processes to run more systematically and consistently. Thus, human resource capacity functions not only as a technical factor but also as an indicator of organizational capacity in policy implementation (Imam Prayitno, 2025).

Second, institutional coordination shows distinct patterns across regions that directly affect policy effectiveness (Molenveld et al., 2021). In Jepara, coordination is programmatic as it is integrated into regional economic development agendas, particularly MSME development, creating more adaptive cross-sector synergy. In Pati, coordination is more sectoral and administrative, resulting in policy fragmentation and lower service efficiency. In Kudus, coordination is more structured through regional regulations and clearly defined division of roles among local government agencies, resulting in more stable implementation. This indicates that coordination depends not only on the presence of actors, but also on institutional design governing inter-actor relations.

Third, local fiscal capacity acts as an enabling condition influencing the direction of halal policy implementation (Mugwagwa et al., 2015). In Jepara, halal certification funding is integrated into MSME competitiveness programs, thereby oriented toward local economic strengthening. In Pati, fiscal limitations restrict implementation to basic administrative activities such as socialization and minimal facilitation without sustained program development. In Kudus, fiscal capacity is relatively stable because halal programs are embedded within regional development planning structures, ensuring greater sustainability. Thus, fiscal capacity is not merely about budget size, but also about strategic allocation orientation (Samekto, 2012).

Fourth, the degree of regulatory institutionalization shows significant differences in implementation patterns. Kudus has more operational regulatory instruments, strengthening implementation certainty and institutional role clarity (Sutejo, 2025). Jepara develops more flexible regulations integrated with economic programs, supporting an adaptive approach (Sutisna, 2025). In contrast, Pati remains dominated by administrative approaches without strong operational regulatory

reinforcement, making implementation heavily dependent on formal bureaucratic mechanisms(Sukino, 2025). This indicates that regulation functions not only as a legal instrument but also as a stabilizing mechanism for policy implementation(Jumadi, 2018).

Fifth, halal literacy among business actors is a cognitive factor influencing policy adoption at the micro level(Al Kautsar & Muhammad, 2022). In Jepara, literacy improves through participatory and practice-based involvement in the *UMKM Naik Kelas* program(Usman, 2025). In Pati, literacy develops more slowly due to a predominantly administrative approach with limited direct educational engagement(Zainuddin, 2025). In Kudus, literacy is relatively stable due to structured formal socialization supported by strong regulatory backing(Anwari, 2025). Thus, halal literacy is strongly influenced by the intervention model applied in each region.

Sixth, connectivity within the national halal certification network plays an important role in determining implementation efficiency. In Jepara, service access is faster due to MSME program integration strengthening connections with national actors(Ariffin, 2025). In Pati, limited connectivity with LPH and certification actors results in slower and more bureaucratic processes(Zainuddin, 2025). In Kudus, institutional connectivity is stronger and more structured, accelerating halal certification processes(Anwari, 2025). This shows that implementation effectiveness is determined by the level of institutional connectivity rather than merely the presence of actors.

The findings indicate that halal certification implementation in the three regions remains highly dependent on central government policy. Local governments primarily act as technical implementers rather than policy innovators. Regional discretionary space is constrained by national regulations, standard operating procedures, and centralized program schemes(Arends, 2020). However, variation in adaptation still exists: Jepara through program integration, Kudus through regulatory strengthening, and Pati through administrative compliance.

Beyond these operational factors, there is a structural binding factor, namely the degree of halal policy integration into regional development agendas. This factor serves as the main explanatory variable linking institutional capacity differences with implementation performance variation. In Jepara, integration of halal policy with MSME development creates an economic and programmatic implementation orientation. In Pati, halal policy has not become a central part of the development agenda, resulting in administrative-oriented implementation. Meanwhile, in Kudus, integration with regional regulatory structures creates a more institutionalized and stable implementation orientation. Thus, the degree of policy integration into regional development is a key determinant in explaining inter-regional implementation variation.

Based on empirical findings, halal certification implementation across Kudus, Pati, and Jepara forms three main institutional configurations. Jepara represents an integrative-programmatic model, where implementation is supported by integration with regional economic development programs that enhance MSME access, literacy, and participation. Pati reflects an administrative-procedural model, where implementation is oriented toward bureaucratic compliance, resulting in formal stability but low innovation and adaptation. Meanwhile, Kudus represents a regulatory-institutional model, where strengthened regulations and institutional structures produce higher implementation consistency. Thus, implementation variation does not merely reflect differences in technical capacity but more fundamentally indicates that policy effectiveness is shaped by the model of halal

policy institutionalization at the regional level, particularly its degree of integration into local development agendas (Jewed & Abdullah, 2025).

Cross-Case Synthesis and Analysis of Halal Certification Implementation Patterns

The cross-case synthesis of Kudus, Pati, and Jepara Regencies indicates that variations in halal certification implementation cannot be reduced merely to local government capacity. Instead, they reflect a multi-level governance configuration based on a networked governance system. In this context, policy implementation is better understood as the result of interactions among national institutional structures, the adaptive capacity of local governments, and the degree of connectivity among actors within the halal certification ecosystem (Hudson et al., 2019). Thus, differences across regions do not represent a hierarchy of capacity, but rather variations in the level of integration and connectivity within the national halal policy implementation system.

To systematically understand these variations, the analysis is organized into four key dimensions that shape the effectiveness of halal certification governance: structural, network, connectivity, and integration dimensions. These dimensions provide an analytical framework for explaining how inter-actor relations, institutional capacity, and cross-level coordination patterns shape the implementation characteristics in each region.

First: Structural Dimension. At the structural level, halal certification implementation demonstrates a strong dependency on national policy design (structural implementation dependency). The primary authority lies with the Halal Product Assurance Organizing Agency (BPJPH), which defines standards, certification mechanisms, and accreditation for Halal Inspection Institutions (LPH). Within this framework, local governments function as policy implementers rather than primary designers. This condition limits local policy innovation space, meaning that observed variations do not stem from differences in policy design, but from each region's adaptive capacity in operationalizing national policies within local contexts. In other words, the hierarchical nature of the policy structure forms the foundational pattern of implementation at the regional level (Ferraro & Failer, 2024).

Second: Network Dimension. At the network level, halal certification operates as a network-driven implementation system. Implementation effectiveness is highly determined by interactions among BPJPH, the Ministry of Religious Affairs, LPH, halal assistants, universities, and MSME actors. In this context, implementation is not purely top-down, but involves collaborative cross-actor processes. Collaborative governance theory explains that public policy success depends on the ability to build trust, coordination, and consensus among actors (Hutagalung, 2022). This is reflected in the differing patterns across the three regions: Jepara shows stronger integration through the *UMKM Naik Kelas* program, Kudus relies on stable institutional coordination, while Pati remains within a more limited sectoral coordination pattern.

Third: Connectivity Dimension. At the connectivity level, there is evidence of uneven institutional connectivity across regions. Although the halal certification system is nationally standardized, implementation effectiveness is strongly influenced by the degree of regional connectedness to certification institutions and supporting actors. Jepara demonstrates more adaptive connectivity due to integration between certification programs and MSME empowerment initiatives, which accelerates service access. Kudus exhibits more stable connectivity supported by established institutional and regulatory structures. Meanwhile, Pati shows limited connectivity due to a

predominantly administrative approach that is not yet strongly integrated into the national halal certification network. However, this disparity should not be interpreted as absolute regional superiority, but rather as a reflection of uneven functional distribution within the national institutional system.

Fourth: Integration Dimension. Differences in implementation are also influenced by the level of local institutional integration within regional development agendas. Jepara reflects an integrative-programmatic model through the alignment of halal policy with MSME development. Pati demonstrates a transitional pattern in which coordination exists but has not yet been fully institutionalized in a collaborative manner. Kudus, on the other hand, represents a regulatory-institutional model characterized by stronger legal frameworks and institutional stability. These variations indicate that halal policy implementation is not merely technical in nature, but is strongly shaped by the position of the policy within regional development priorities.

The four analytical dimensions, at the synthesis stage, can be reduced into three main layers through a grouping process based on similarities in conceptual functions. Overall, this cross-case synthesis indicates that variations in halal certification implementation are primarily determined by the interaction of these three main layers. First, the structural layer refers to the national policy design, which is hierarchical and regulatory in nature. Second, the network layer reflects the quality of interactions among actors within a collaborative system. Third, the connectivity layer indicates the degree of institutional integration at the local level(Ferry, 2021).

Among these layers, national policy structure serves as the foundational determinant that defines the boundaries of implementation, while the quality of networks and connectivity determines performance variation at the regional level. The Halal Product Assurance Organizing Agency (BPJPH) remains the central actor in this structure; however, implementation effectiveness is highly dependent on the ability of local governments to manage networks and institutional integration.

Thus, differences among Kudus, Pati, and Jepara do not reflect hierarchical capacity gaps, but rather variations in institutional integration and connectivity intensity within the national halal certification system. Ultimately, halal policy implementation emerges from the interaction between a hierarchical national structure, collaborative actor networks, and the adaptive capacity of local governments to embed policy into local development agendas.

Theoretically, these findings reinforce the argument that policy implementation in a decentralization context cannot be explained solely through resource-based or formal structural perspectives(Setiawan et al., 2022). Instead, implementation effectiveness is determined by the interaction between institutional capacity, inter-actor coordination, and institutionalized collaboration(Peters, 2018).

This study further extends implementation theory by demonstrating that coordination is not merely an operational variable, but functions as a structural mediating mechanism that determines the conversion of policy into tangible outputs(Benedetto Lepori, Emanuela Reale, 2023). From a policy perspective, three main implications emerge. First, strengthening local regulations is necessary to ensure institutional certainty and clarify role distribution among actors(Wahyuni & Huda, 2021). Second, halal human resource capacity development must be prioritized to reduce implementation disparities. Third, collaborative governance design should be institutionalized as a

permanent coordination mechanism, rather than remaining as temporary programs (Molenveld et al., 2021).

5. Conclusion

This study shows that variations in halal certification implementation in Kudus, Pati, and Jepara Regencies are not solely determined by administrative capacity or the intensity of local government programs, but are primarily influenced by the degree of integration of halal policy within regional development governance and the institutional configurations that support implementation. These differences are reflected in three implementation patterns, namely an integrative-programmatic model in Jepara, an administrative-procedural model in Pati, and a regulatory-institutional model in Kudus. Overall, these findings confirm that the effectiveness of halal policy implementation is context-dependent and shaped by the ability of local governments to build policy integration, cross-sector coordination, and institutional connectivity within the national halal certification system.

Theoretically, this study expands the literature on policy implementation in the context of decentralization by emphasizing that implementation success cannot be explained solely through resource-based or bureaucratic compliance approaches. Instead, institutional connectivity, policy integration, and collaborative governance function as key mechanisms that bridge national policies and local implementation. From a policy perspective, the study highlights the need to strengthen local regulations, enhance the capacity of halal facilitators, and institutionalize cross-sector coordination to improve implementation effectiveness and reduce inter-regional disparities. However, this research is still limited to the district level and does not deeply explore local political dynamics, intergovernmental fiscal relations, or the role of non-governmental actors. Therefore, future studies are recommended to adopt cross-regional comparative or longitudinal approaches.

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