

**CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES IN OBTAINING
HALAL CERTIFICATION FOR WOMEN-OWNED
MICRO-ENTERPRISES FOOD PRODUCTS IN PERLIS**

BY

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**A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirement for the
Master in Halal Industry Management**

**International Institute for Halal Research and Training
International Islamic University Malaysia**

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the participation of Micro-Industry Women Entrepreneurs (MIWEs) in the halal food sector of Perlis, Malaysia, focusing on the challenges and opportunities related to halal certification. Women's involvement in the workforce is crucial for economic growth, especially in the halal industry, which has seen increased demand from a growing Muslim consumer base. However, the number of halal-certified establishments in Perlis is low, with only 53 out of 7,150 MSMEs holding halal certificates in 2023, highlighting a significant gap in certification among women-owned businesses. Women's participation in entrepreneurship is notably lower than their representation in the Malaysian population. Research indicates that women face disparities in social and cultural expectations compared to men, which, along with various challenges in their business ventures, restricts their economic engagement. Thus, the study aims to explore MIWEs' involvement in the Perlis halal food industry, identify challenges hindering their access to halal certification, examine opportunities available, and propose guidelines for obtaining certification. A qualitative approach was adopted, utilising semi-structured interviews with fifteen participants, including seven women entrepreneurs and eight experts from various backgrounds. Data analysis involved inductive and deductive methods to identify themes related to the study objectives. The findings revealed that the external challenges consisted of limited employees for halal certification, inadequate facilities, low product marketability, and insufficient consumer demand for halal products. Internal challenges included a lack of IT skills in handling the MYeHALAL portal, a lack of positive attitude, and limited proactive engagement with government agencies. Several opportunities linked to obtaining halal certification revealed global demand for halal products, its significance in both local and international markets, customer satisfaction with halal certification, proactive government support for coaching MIWEs, and the positive impact of halal certification on business performance. The resulting guidelines for MIWEs are structured as a Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) comprising three phases: pre-application, application, and post-application, detailing 23 steps. This research provides valuable insights and resources for MIWEs to thrive in the halal industry while contributing to the existing literature on halal certification and Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs).

خلاصة البحث

تبحث هذه الدراسة موضوع مشاركة رائدات الأعمال في الصناعات الصغيرة في قطاع الأغذية الحلال في ولاية بيرليس، بماليزيا، مع التركيز على التحديات والفرص المتعلقة بإصدار شهادات الحلال. تعد مشاركة المرأة في القوى العاملة أمرًا بالغ الأهمية للنمو الاقتصادي، لا سيما في صناعة الحلال، تلك الصناعة التي شهدت طلبًا متزايدًا من قاعدة المستهلكين المسلمين المتنامية. ومع ذلك، فإن عدد المؤسسات الحاصلة على شهادات "الحلال" في ولاية بيرليس، منخفض، حيث أنّ (53) فقط من أصل (7150) شركة متوسطة أو صغيرة، تحمل شهادة حلال في عام (2023)، مما يسلط الضوء على الفجوة الكبيرة الموجودة في إصدار الشهادات بين الشركات المملوكة للنساء. تُعدّ مشاركة النساء في ريادة الأعمال أقل بكثير مقارنة بتمثيلهن في تعداد السكان الماليزي. وتشير الأبحاث إلى أن النساء يواجهن تباينات في التوقعات الاجتماعية والثقافية مقارنة بالرجال، إلى جانب تحديات مختلفة في مشروعاتهن التجارية، مما يحدّ من مشاركتهن الاقتصادية. وبالتالي، تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى استكشاف مشاركة رائدات الأعمال في الصناعات الصغير، في صناعة الأغذية الحلال في بيرليس، وتحديد التحديات التي تعيق حصولهن على شهادة الحلال، ودراسة الفرص المتاحة، واقتراح مبادئ توجيهية للحصول على الشهادات. وقد تم اعتماد نهج نوعي، باستخدام مقابلات شبه منظمة مع خمسة عشر مشاركًا، من بينهم سبع رائدات أعمال، وثمانية خبراء من خلفيات متنوعة. وتضمن تحليل البيانات

الأساليب الاستقرائية والاستنباطية لتحديد الموضوعات المرتبطة بأهداف الدراسة. أظهرت النتائج أن التحديات الخارجية تمثلت في قلة الموظفين المتخصصين بشهادات الحلال، وعدم كفاية المرافق، وانخفاض قابلية تسويق المنتجات، وعدم كفاية طلب المستهلكين على المنتجات الحلال. وتضمنت التحديات الداخلية الافتقار إلى مهارات تكنولوجيا المعلومات في التعامل مع بوابة (MYeHALAL)، والافتقار إلى الموقف الإيجابي، والمشاركة الاستباقية المحدودة مع الوكالات الحكومية. كشفت العديد من الفرص المرتبطة بالحصول على شهادة الحلال عن الطلب العالمي على المنتجات الحلال، وأهميتها في كل من الأسواق المحلية والدولية، ورضا العملاء عن شهادة الحلال، والدعم الحكومي الاستباقي لتدريب رائدات الأعمال في الصناعات الصغيرة، والأثر الإيجابي لشهادة الحلال على أداء الأعمال. تم توضيح المبادئ التوجيهية ذات الصلة برائدات الأعمال في الصناعات الصغيرة، من خلال إجراء قياسي موحد (SOP) يتألف من ثلاث مراحل: ما قبل التقديم، التقديم، وما بعد التقديم، متضمناً 23 خطوة تفصيلية. يوفر هذا البحث رؤى وموارد قيّمة لرائدات الأعمال في الصناعات الصغيرة، للنهوض بصناعة الحلال، مع المساهمة في إثراء الأدبيات المتعلقة بشهادات الحلال، والشركات متناهية الصغر، والصغيرة، والمتوسطة.

APPROVAL PAGE

I certify that I have supervised and read this study and that in my opinion, it conforms to acceptable standards of scholarly presentation and is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a thesis for the degree of Master in Halal Industry Management.

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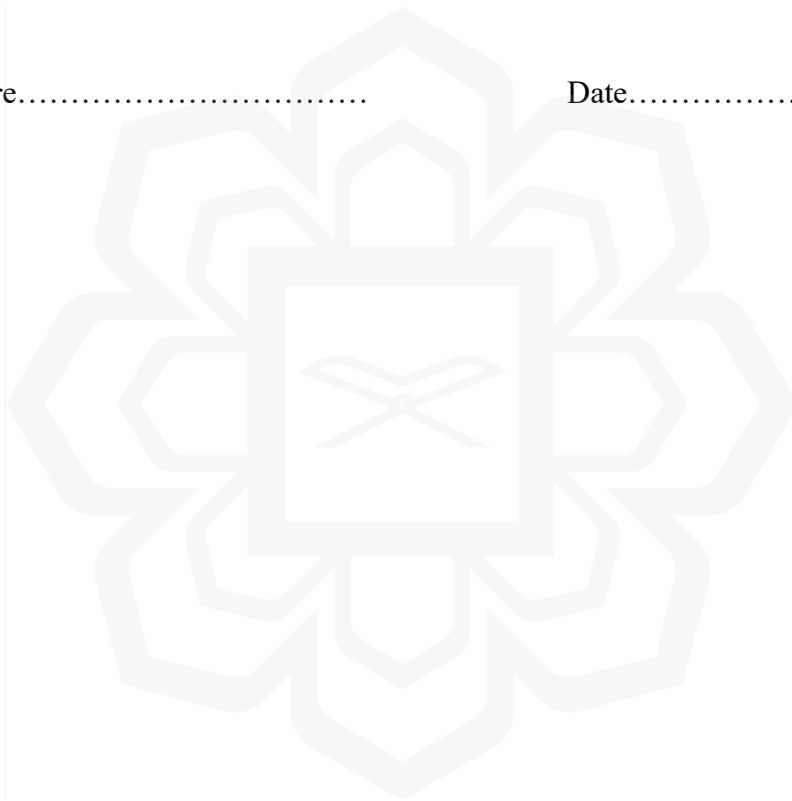
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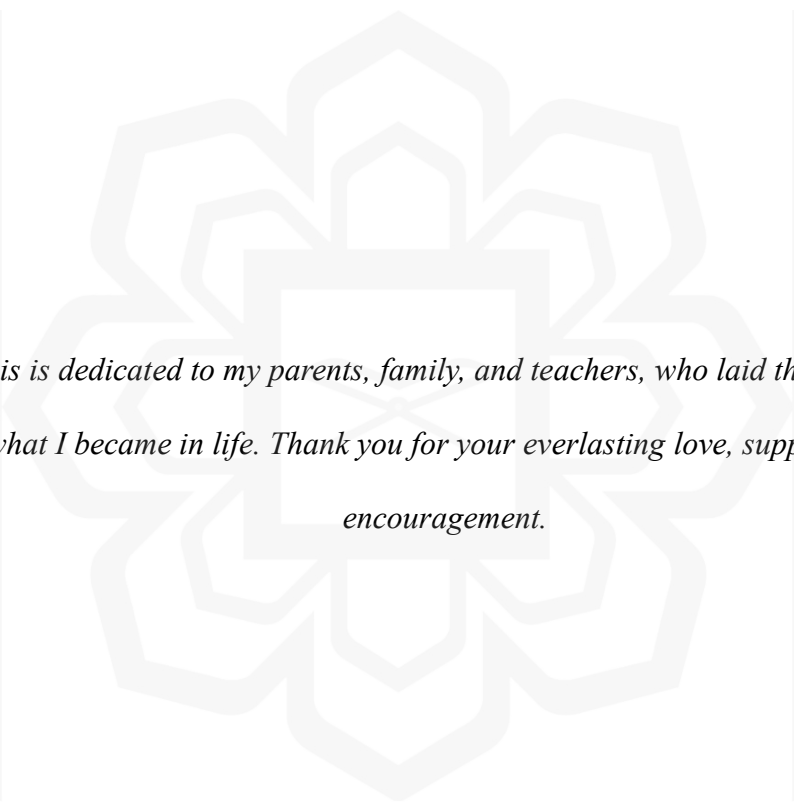
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This thesis is dedicated to my parents, family, and teachers, who laid the foundation for what I became in life. Thank you for your everlasting love, support, and encouragement.

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To my wonderful parents—my heroine and hero—I dedicate my thesis as an expression of my appreciation. Throughout this difficult and lonely road, you have been my greatest source of motivation and encouragement. At some moments when I was at my lowest point, you had been there and never criticised me. Not only that, but both of you also always placed the greatest trust and empathy for me. I could never have made it this far or become the person I am today without your everlasting optimism. I also would like to express my gratitude towards my youngest sister and brothers, who went through hard times because of me; thank you for always bearing with my mood swings and rants.

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While I could not list every name on this page due to space constraints — I ask for your forgiveness, I was fortunate to get much love and prayers from many of you, particularly my extended family and friends. I express my deepest gratitude to everyone.

Afaf Syakirah binti Md Rosdy,

Arau, Perlis

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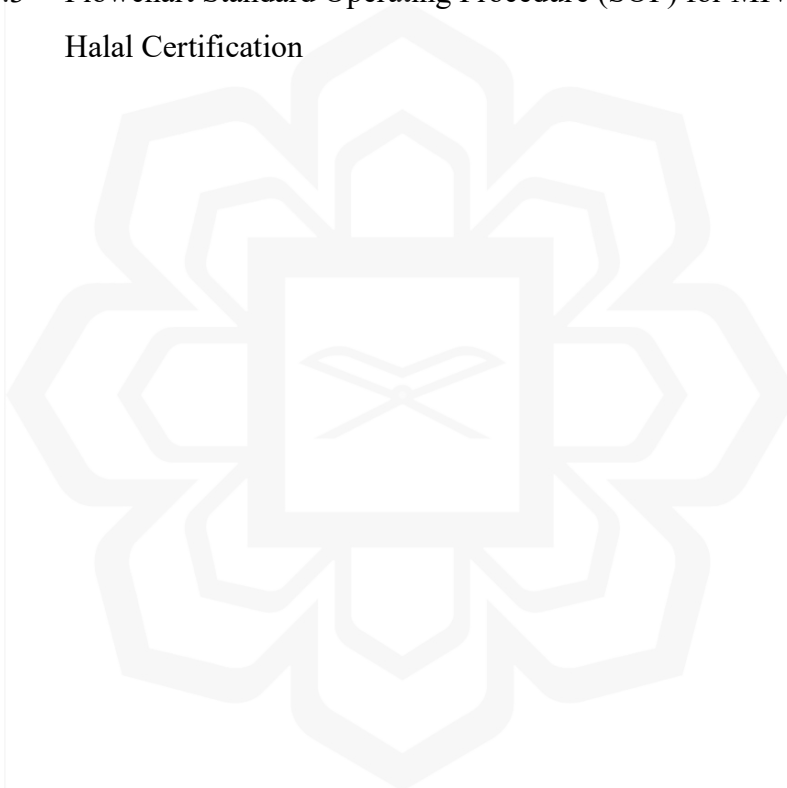
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LIST OF SYMBOLS

E ¹	Women Entrepreneur – 1
E ²	Women Entrepreneur – 2
E ³	Women Entrepreneur – 3
E ⁴	Women Entrepreneur – 4
E ⁵	Women Entrepreneur – 5
E ⁶	Women Entrepreneur – 6
E ⁷	Women Entrepreneur – 7
H ¹	Halal Auditor – 1
O ¹	Agency Officer – 1
O ²	Agency Officer – 2
O ³	Agency Officer – 3
O ⁴	Agency Officer – 4
A ¹	Academician – 1
A ²	Academician – 2
A ³	Academician – 3

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AIM	Amanah Ikhtiar Malaysia
BKKM	Department of Food Safety and Quality (<i>Bahagian Keselamatan dan Kualiti Makanan</i>)
BMF	Buy Muslim First
BNC Women	Business Networking Club Women
CCC	Certificate of Completion and Compliance (<i>Perakuan Siap dan Pematuhan</i>)
CFO	Certificate of Fitness for Occupation (<i>Sijil Layak Menduduki</i>)
CUP	Change Upgrade Product
CVIA	Chuping Valley Industrial Area
DE	Development Expenditure
DOSM	Department of Statistics Malaysia
FAMA	Federal Agricultural Marketing Authority (<i>Lembaga Pemasaran Pertanian Persekutuan</i>)
FELCRA	Federal Land Consolidation and Rehabilitation Authority (<i>Lembaga Penyatuan dan Pemulihan Tanah Persekutuan</i>)
FoSIM	Food Safety Information System of Malaysia (<i>Sistem Maklumat Keselamatan Makanan Malaysia</i>)
FSMS	Food Safety and Management Systems
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GHP	Good Hygiene Practices
GIEI	Global Islamic Economic Indicators
GMP	Good Manufacturing Practice
HACCP	Hazard Analysis and Critical Control
HAS	Halal Assurance Systems
HBB	Home-Based Business
HDC	Halal Development Corporation Berhad
HPB	Halal Professional Board
HR	Human Resources
IC	Identity Card
IHCS	Internal Halal Control System

INHART	International Institute for Halal Research and Training
INSKEN	National Entrepreneurship Institute (<i>Institut Keusahawanan Negara</i>)
ISO	International Organization for Standardization (<i>Pertubuhan Penstandardan Antarabangsa</i>)
IT	Information Technology
JAIPs	Department of Islamic Religious Affairs Perlis (<i>Jabatan Hal Ehwal Agama Islam Perlis</i>)
JAKIM	Department of Islamic Development Malaysia (<i>Jabatan Kemajuan Islam Malaysia</i>)
JKM	Malaysian Department of Social Welfare (<i>Jabatan Kebajikan Masyarakat</i>)
JKN	State Health Department (<i>Jabatan Kesihatan Negeri</i>)
JPV	Malaysian Veterinary Services Department (<i>Jabatan Perkhidmatan Veterinar Malaysia</i>)
JPW	Women's Development Department (<i>Jabatan Pembangunan Wanita</i>)
KPWKM	Ministry of Women, Family and Community Development (<i>Kementerian Pembangunan Wanita, Keluarga dan Masyarakat</i>)
KUIPs	Perlis Islamic University College (<i>Kolej Universiti Islam Perlis</i>)
KUSKOP	Ministry of Entrepreneur Development and Cooperatives (<i>Kementerian Pembangunan Usahawan dan Koperasi</i>)
LPPKN	National Population and Family Development Board (<i>Lembaga Penduduk dan Pembangunan Keluarga Negara</i>)
MADA	Young Agricultural Development Board (<i>Lembaga Kemajuan Pertanian Muda</i>)
MAHIM	Master in Halal Industry Management
MAIN	State Islamic Religious Council (<i>Majlis Agama Islam Negeri</i>)
MAIPs	Perlis Malay Religious and Ceremonial Council (<i>Majlis Agama Islam dan Adat Istiadat Melayu Perlis</i>)
MARA	People's Trust Council (<i>Majlis Amanah Rakyat</i>)
MARDI	Malaysian Agricultural Research and Development Institute (<i>Institut Penyelidikan dan Kemajuan Pertanian Malaysia</i>)
MCO	Movement Control Order
MDA	Medical Device Authority (<i>Pihak Berkuasa Peranti Perubatan</i>)

MeSTI	Food Safety Tangible Responsibility Industry (<i>Makanan Selamat Tanggungjawab Industri</i>)
MHMS	Malaysian Halal Management System (<i>Sistem Pengurusan Halal Malaysia</i>)
MIWEs	Micro-Industry Women Entrepreneurs
MOH/KKM	Ministry of Health (<i>Kementerian Kesihatan Malaysia</i>)
MPPHM	Malaysia Halal Certification Procedure Manual (<i>Manual Prosedur Pensijilan Halal Malaysia</i>)
MSIC	Manufacturing Standard Industrial Classification
MSME	Micro, Small and Medium Enterprise
NAWEM	National Association of Women Entrepreneurs of Malaysia
NCIA	Northern Corridor Implementation Authority
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NPRA	National Pharmaceutical Regulatory Agency (<i>Bahagian Regulatori Farmasi Negara</i>)
OE	Operation Expenditure
OEM	Original Equipment Manufacturer
PBT	Local Authority (<i>Pihak Berkuasa Tempatan</i>)
P.B.U.H	Peace Be Upon Him
Peladang	Farmers Organization Board (<i>Lembaga Pertubuhan Peladang</i>)
Pertanian	Department of Agriculture (<i>Jabatan Pertanian</i>)
PIP	Perlis Inland Port
PJKM	Food safety assurance Program (<i>Program Jaminan Keselamatan Makanan</i>)
PKD	District Health Office (<i>Pejabat Kesihatan Daerah</i>)
PKENPs	Perlis State Economic Development Corporation (<i>Perbadanan Kemajuan Ekonomi Negeri Perlis</i>)
PNS/Pernas	National Corporation Berhad (<i>Perbadanan Nasional Berhad</i>)
RISDA	Rubber Industry Smallholders Development Authority (<i>Pihak Berkuasa Kemajuan Pekebun Kecil Perusahaan Getah</i>)
RISEC	RISDA Entrepreneurs Club
RM	Malaysian Ringgit (<i>Ringgit Malaysia</i>)
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
Sdn Bhd	Limited Liability Company (Sendirian Berhad)
SEA	Southeast Asia

SIRIM	Standard and Industrial Research Institute of Malaysia (<i>Institut Piawaian dan Penyelidikan Perindustrian Malaysia</i>)
SKU	Stock Keeping Unit
SLPM	Food Handler Training School (<i>Sekolah Latihan Pengendali Makanan</i>)
SME	Small and Medium Enterprise
SME Corp.	SME Corporation
SOCSO/PERKESO	Social Security Organization (<i>Pertubuhan Keselamatan Sosial</i>)
SOP	Standard Operating Procedure
SPM	Malaysian Certificate of Education (<i>Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia</i>)
SSM	Companies Commission of Malaysia (<i>Suruhanjaya Syarikat Malaysia</i>)
S.W.T	Subhanahu wa ta'ala
TEKUN Nasional	The National Entrepreneurial Group Economic Fund (<i>Tabung Ekonomi Kumpulan Usaha Niaga</i>)
TERAJU	Bumiputera Agenda Steering Unit (<i>Unit Peneraju Agenda Bumiputera</i>)
TPB	Theory of Planned Behaviour
TQM	Total Quality Management
UN	United Nation
UUM	Northern University of Malaysia (<i>Universiti Utara Malaysia</i>)
WENA	Women Entrepreneur Network Association
WOW	Women Of Will (<i>Pertubuhan Wanita Berdaya</i>)
YB	Yang Berhormat
YKS	Social Entrepreneurship Foundation (<i>Yayasan Keusahawanan Sosial</i>)

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS FOR POSTGRADUATE PROGRAMMES

Ph.D	All doctoral programmes (Halal Industry)
MAHIM	Master in Halal Industry Management
MAHIS	Master in Halal Industry Science



COMMON ABBREVIATIONS

app.	appendix	n.p.	no place: no publisher
art./arts.	article/articles	no./no.s	number/numbers
b.	born	n. s.	new series
bk./bks.	book/books	o. s.	old series
C. P. C.	Criminal Procedure Code	P. B. U. H.	Peace Be Upon Him
c.	copyright	P. L. D.	All Pakistan Legal Decisions
ca.	(circa): about, approximately	P. P. C.	Pakistan Penal Code
cf.	compare	p./pars.	paragraph/paragraphs
ch.	chapter (in legal <i>firms</i>)	passim	here and there
chap./chaps.	chapter/chapters	pt./pts.	part/parts
col./cols.	column/columns	q. v.	(<i>quode vide</i>): which see
comp./comps.	compiler/compiler; compiled by	Q. Sh	Qanun – E Shahadat
dept./depts.	department/departments	S. L. J.	The Sudan, Law, Journal
d	died	S. W. T.	Subhanahu Wa Ta'ala (Praise be to Allah and the Most High)
div./divs.	division/divisions		
e. g	(<i>exempligratia</i>); for example	sc.	scene
ed./eds.	edition/editions; editor, edited by	sec./secs.	section/sections
<i>et al.</i>	(<i>et alia</i>): and others	sic.	so, thus
et seq	(<i>et sequers</i>): and the following	s. l.	(<i>sinoloco</i>): no place of publication
etc	(<i>et cetera</i>): and so forth pages that follow	s. n.	(<i>sine nomine</i>): no publisher
<i>fig./figs.</i>	<i>figure/figures</i>	s. v.	(<i>sub-verbo, sub-voce</i>) <i>under the word of heading</i>
ibid.	(<i>ibidem</i>): in the same place	trans.	translator/translated by
id	(<i>idem</i>): the same below	v./vv.	verse/verses
L. E.	Law of Evidence	viz.	(<i>videlicet</i>): namely
l. v.	(<i>locus variis</i>): various places (of publication)	vol./vols.	volume/volumes
ms./mss.	manuscript/manuscripts		
n. d.	no date		

THE TRANSLITERATION OF ARABIC TERMS

A. The transliteration and spelling of Arabic terms used in the thesis are summarized as below:

Table A: Transliteration of Arabic Terms Used in the Thesis

Terms	Transliteration	Arabic Words
Allah	<i>Allah</i>	الله
Asnaf	<i>Asnaf</i>	أَصْنَافٌ
Fardhu Kifayah	<i>Fardhu Kifāyah</i>	فَرْدٌ كِفَايَةٌ
Hadith	<i>Al-Ḥadīth</i>	الْحَدِيثُ
Halal	<i>Ḥalāl</i>	حَلَالٌ
Halalan Tayyiban	<i>Ḥalālān Ṭaiyyibān</i>	حَلَالًا طَيِّبًا
Haram	<i>Ḥarām</i>	حَرَامٌ
Maqasid	<i>Maqāsid</i>	مَقَاصِدٌ
Maqasid al-Sharia	<i>Maqāsid al-Sharī'ah</i>	مَقَاصِدُ الشَّرِيعَةِ
Masalih Mursalah	<i>Maṣāliḥ al-Mursalah</i>	مَصَالِحُ الْمُرْسَلَةِ
Maslahah	<i>Maṣlahah</i>	مَصْلَحَةٌ
Najs	<i>Najis</i>	نَجِسٌ
Quran	<i>Al-Qur'an</i>	الْقُرْآنُ
Sharia	<i>Sharī'ah</i>	الشَّرِيعَةُ
Shubhah	<i>Shubhah</i>	شُبْهَةٌ
Sunnah	<i>Al-Sunnah</i>	السُّنَّةُ
Tawhid	<i>Ṭawḥīd</i>	تَوْحِيدٌ
Tayyib	<i>Ṭayyib</i>	طَيِّبٌ
Ummah	<i>Ummah</i>	أُمَّةٌ
Zakat	<i>Zakāh</i>	زَكَاةٌ

B. Transliteration of Arabic terms according to the spelling as found in Table B.

Table B: Transliteration of Arabic Terms According to the Spelling

b	=	ب	z	=	ز	f	=	ف
t	=	ت	s	=	س	q	=	ق
th	=	ث	sh	=	ش	k	=	ك
j	=	ج	î	=	ص	l	=	ل
í	=	ح	ì	=	ض	m	=	م
kh	=	خ	ï	=	ط	n	=	ن
d	=	د	Ð	=	ظ	h	=	ه
dh	=	ذ	‘	=	ع	w	=	و
r	=	ر	gh	=	غ	y	=	ي

Short vowels

a = َ

i = ِ

u = ُ

Long vowels

ā = ا + َ

ī = ا + ِ

ū = ا + ُ

Diphthong

ya = ا + ي

wa = ا + و

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides a comprehensive overview of Micro-Industry Women Entrepreneurs (MIWEs) involved in micro, small, and medium enterprises (SMEs) within the halal industry in Malaysia. It outlines the study's background, detailing its primary focus and the issues it seeks to address. Following this, the chapter delineates the research questions, objectives, scope, and significance to establish a clearer context for the investigation.

1.2 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Women's participation in the workforce contributes significantly to the country's economy and halal industry. According to the Department of Statistics Malaysia (2024a), the number of women-owned establishments was 219,015 in 2022, spanning all sectors, where it had been growing at a rate of 2.3% annually since 2015. Furthermore, they produced a gross output of RM136.9 billion, contributing value-added worth of RM61.4 billion. In addition, women's participation in entrepreneurial activities supplements households' income and boosts other economic activities (Yaacob @ Ramli & Yusof, 2023). Several studies have underscored the active participation of women entrepreneurs in the food industry (Yaacob @ Ramli & Yusof, 2023; Zainal, 2022). Accordingly, a microenterprise plays a significant role in the dynamism and growth of business populations, especially in developing countries. Most of these microenterprises are owned by women, who can be described as poor or experiencing various poverty-related issues (Fuad *et al.*, 2022). General inflation in Malaysia also creates awareness among women and youths about earning an income through business (Yaacob @ Ramli & Yusof, 2023). As part of the microenterprise communities, they are essential for the growth and development of the economy and can contribute significantly to the halal industry. Acknowledgement from the

government has opened many opportunities for micro-entrepreneurs to apply for halal certification and reap the benefit of being in the halal market (Mat Puat *et al.*, 2024). Incorporating women into the MSME halal sector is crucial for facilitating the development of a diversified halal business market.

Malaysia has been identified as having a swift and massive growth in the halal business. With various sectors producing halal products due to a growing Muslim consumer base worldwide, the need for halal certification has also increased (Ambo & Ahamdun, 2024; Husin *et al.*, 2023). The State of Global Economy Report 2022 illustrated that Muslim consumer spending on halal products and services was valued at USD 2 trillion in 2021. The rise in spending was attributed to the growing Muslim population, which reached 1.9 billion in 2021 (Dinar Standard *et al.*, 2023). As the report highlighted, many manufacturers, including cosmetics and pharmaceutical companies, have embraced halal certification to cater to the Muslim market by riding this global trend and demand. Malaysia has been particularly active in the halal food sector, as proven by its significant investments and robust halal blockchain adoption (Dinar Standard *et al.*, 2023). The certification not only acts as a sign of conformity to Islamic dietary laws, but it also attests to the marketability and consumer confidence that are vital in propagating the successful operation of microenterprises (Ali & Ahmad, 2023). These two roles are essential in supporting businesses within the halal industry in improving its performance and subsequent growth in a competitive and growing global economy.

The halal certification process can present a network of challenges and opportunities for Micro-Industry Women Entrepreneurs (MIWEs) in the food sector. For example, constraints related to complying with regulatory requirements, financial support and limited resources are the challenges which may impede their ability to achieve certification (Arif *et al.*, 2021; Hassan *et al.*, 2023; Mohamad Hilmi *et al.*, 2021). The intricacies involved in maintaining compliance with halal standards can also pose significant challenges, especially for those operating at a micro-scale (Arif *et al.*, 2021; Mat Puat *et al.*, 2024). According to Azman (2021), the SME sector, particularly for women entrepreneurs, has undergone adverse situations during the pandemic. Despite government support initiatives, many women-led businesses have struggled significantly during this period (Nik Dahalan *et al.*, 2023). For women entrepreneurs

who have been documented to face unique challenges in business endeavours (Mohamad & Bakar, 2017), navigating the halal certification landscape can be overwhelming. However, these challenges are accompanied by substantial opportunities. Aside from access to larger markets and higher consumer confidence, halal certification allows women entrepreneurs to grow their businesses while contributing to the community.

In various discussions presented in the literature, Perlis has shown promising capabilities in the halal industry. Hashom *et al.* (2022) have pointed out that the halal food and beverage sector and agriculture in Perlis hold capabilities that can serve domestic, regional, and international markets. This is supported by Rafie *et al.* (2021), where the cultural and geographic proximity of Perlis and Thailand create the potential to enhance cross-border trade of halal products and attract investment. Furthermore, the government of Perlis has been proactive in establishing the state's halal industry, realising the value it can add to economic growth. The Research Division and Halal Hub of the Department of Islamic Religious Affairs Perlis (JAIPs) has adopted several measures to ensure halal certification in Perlis adheres to the highest standards in providing halal products and services. Additionally, many programs and trainings have been organised to encourage the participation of MSMEs in halal certification (Hassan *et al.*, 2023). This justifies the need for halal certification, especially among eligible enterprises, to improve revenue and product sales. The successful implementation of halal practices requires a robust framework of legislation, regulations, and administrative oversight (Hassan *et al.*, 2023). By emphasising high quality standards and motivating the MSMEs to obtain halal certification, Perlis has the capability to expand the market of halal food products internationally.

Women are strategic pillars for attaining the SDGs. Thus, the promotion and encouragement of female entrepreneurs to enter the workforce is paramount. Without the role of women entrepreneurs in society, it would be impossible to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by the United Nations (UN), particularly in terms of gender equality (SDG 5), economic empowerment (SDG 8), and social inclusion (SDG 10) (Estrada & Schuber, 2022). Therefore, numerous attempts by government agencies have empowered Malaysian women through initiatives and support, especially as entrepreneurs and pillars of society. Thus, this research aims to

examine the involvement of Micro-Industry Women Entrepreneurs (MIWEs) in the Perlis's halal food industry, the challenges of obtaining halal certification, and the opportunities provided in this sector. The study seeks to understand the challenges related to halal certification, which will ultimately foster strategies and supportive measures to facilitate access through the proper framework underlined by JAKIM. Therefore, the outcomes of this study will significantly contribute to helping and strengthening MSMEs in the halal food manufacturing sector.

1.3 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The number of establishments that have obtained the halal certificate in Perlis is still relatively small compared to the number of existing MSME establishments. The global demand for halal food and products has underscored how crucial halal certification is for MSME sectors. A halal certificate is an official document that offers legal recognition for the products and services approved by halal certifying bodies (Department of Islamic Development Malaysia, 2020). The growing awareness of Muslims and non-Muslim consumers towards certified halal food products (Saleh & Rajandran, 2024) has helped create a high demand for halal products and services. However, the number of halal certification holders in Perlis remains relatively low compared to holders from other states (Hassan *et al.*, 2023). The data indicates a significant disparity between the number of halal-certified establishments and the number of micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) in Perlis. In 2023, only 53 establishments held halal certificates, which is notably low given the 7,150 MSMEs recorded in Perlis as of 2022 (Department of Statistics Malaysia, 2024a). This suggests that while there is a growing number of MSMEs, the uptake of halal certification among these businesses is insufficient.

In the broader context of women's entrepreneurship in Malaysia, available data from 2015 showed 9,546 women-owned establishments in the manufacturing sector compared to 39,555 non-women-owned establishments. Specifically, within the food product manufacturing sector, there were 2,347 women-owned establishments (Department of Statistics Malaysia, 2017c). Meanwhile, Perlis' women-owned establishments accounted for 2,208 out of 6,755 total establishments (Department of

Statistics Malaysia, 2017a), reflecting a significant presence but indicating that women's participation in the labour market was still lagging. The halal certification data further highlights this issue. In 2015, JAKIM recognised 6,138 businesses for halal certification across Malaysia, with only 636 being women-owned (Department of Statistics Malaysia, 2017b). This underscores a trend where women entrepreneurs are underrepresented in sectors that could enhance their marketability and growth potential through halal certification. This low number of halal-certified businesses suggests a missed opportunity for these enterprises to tap into the growing halal market. Given the increasing number of MSMEs and the anticipated growth in women-owned businesses in recent years, initiatives are critical to fostering economic growth and gender equity in Perlis' halal landscape.

Women's participation in entrepreneurship is also believed to be significantly low in Malaysia. This claim is supported by Bernama (2024), where the number of women entrepreneurs is lower compared to men. Abd Wahid *et al.* (2021) presented that most women entrepreneurs have not expanded their businesses beyond the local level. The inability of their firms to function optimally in the international market was due to scarce access to the international market, limited capital, outdated equipment, and the lack of connection and innovation (Abd Wahid *et al.*, 2021). Since microenterprises have fewer capabilities and capacities than small and medium-sized businesses, they may face even more significant challenges and fewer opportunities (Mohd Thas Taker & Mohammed, 2013), including obtaining the halal certification (Zakaria *et al.*, 2022). In this regard, the issues MIWEs face in their business endeavours might indirectly impact their obtainment and overall implementation of halal certification, influencing their capability to grow internationally.

Women generally face disparity in cultural and social expectations compared to men, including participation in entrepreneurship and the economic sector. The Global Gender Gap Report 2023 showed that Malaysia ranked 102nd, indicating the presence of gender disparities within the society (Ho Hui Ping, 2023). From the Statistics on Women Empowerment in Selected Domain in 2022, the gender gap index of the state of Perlis in opportunities and economic participation scored 0.658 (Department of Statistics Malaysia, 2023a). Women, in general, are expected to play feminine roles or be obedient wives, loving mothers, and home caretakers despite being economically

productive. These social expectations complicate matters for women entrepreneurs as they struggle to get a foothold in business. Syed Salleh and Mansor (2022) asserted that women's labour force participation is lower than men's due to traditional gender roles that persist within society despite modern advances in women's education. These social norms, including marriage and childcare, influenced women's decisions to participate in the labour force or to leave the workforce. Correspondingly, Chipfunde *et al.* (2021) highlighted that the drastic decline in performance among women entrepreneurs may lead to the possibility of shutting down the business. Even though women entrepreneurs are acknowledged in the business realm, there is a perception that entrepreneurial careers are masculine, where men tend to have more advantages than women (Ayob *et al.*, 2023; Omar & Mohd Noor, 2024). Several studies highlighted the insufficient effectiveness of government initiatives aimed at empowering women entrepreneurs in Malaysia despite significant investments and efforts. The Malaysian government has invested significantly in programs to empower women entrepreneurs in response to the issues among women entrepreneurs. For instance, the government's effort to build and open new preschools is to support working mothers by addressing their children's access to education. Besides, to enhance the capability and productivity level of MSME *Bumiputera* entrepreneurs, the government has allocated RM1.6 billion in loans and financial facilities to assist the venture of start-up companies (Bernama, 2023). These initiatives aim to encourage women to participate in the labour force and improve their standard of living. However, despite such attempts, the overall effectiveness in enhancing the survival rate has been moderate all these years (Syed Salleh & Mansor, 2022). Consequently, the problem hinges on whether the women are conscious and aware of these initiatives (Abd Wahid *et al.*, 2021), which indicates the need to enhance their awareness of the initiatives and programs involved. It is to ensure their participation in the workforce while their business endeavours sustain and flourish.

Women entrepreneurs have been identified to encounter several challenges in their business ventures that may hinder the obtainment of halal certification. The halal realm has expanded beyond the food and beverage sector, encompassing fashion, cosmetics, medicine, tourism, and banking tourism (Battour *et al.*, 2022). This allows women to engage in various roles within the developing halal market segments. However, challenges persist as the world evolves and adapts to current circumstances. Considering the challenging business environment, women entrepreneurs have been

attributed to lacking the necessary knowledge and competencies and the non-systematic management of business activities (Mohamad & Bakar, 2017; Raja Hasan & Tambi, 2023). Furthermore, qualified and skilled employees are underlined as one of the principal factors in halal certification procedures (Hassan *et al.*, 2023; Mohamad Hilmi *et al.*, 2021). However, women entrepreneurs and new establishments struggle in hiring competent employees (Abd Wahid *et al.*, 2021). Rural women entrepreneurs encounter challenges such as inadequate infrastructure in marketing activities (Kamarul Zaman & Zainol, 2024). Said and Enslin (2020) outlined that women entrepreneurs in developing countries also face additional challenges to business success, such as society's perception of befitting work for women and access to networking. This will restrict business expansion and limit women entrepreneurs from successfully engaging in halal certification. However, the challenges listed are provided generally instead of in the context of obtaining halal certification. Thus, this study is necessary to fill the gap and examine the challenges and opportunities in obtaining halal certification from the perspectives of MIWEs in Perlis.

MSMEs are also highlighted to face challenges in adopting halal certification. One of the prominent challenges is the ignorance or lack of awareness shown towards the implementation of halal certification. Previous studies have found that fewer *Bumiputera* SMEs hold halal certificates than non-*Bumiputera* (Abu Bakar *et al.*, 2017; Abu Bakar *et al.*, 2019; Hasan *et al.*, 2020). This fact is worrisome, especially when many customers are expected to purchase halal-certified products from *Bumiputera* SMEs, who are predominantly Muslims (Mohamad & Backhouse, 2014). Additionally, small firms may not value halal certification highly, given their business type. Some owners manage their firms as a source of leisure or pastime (Adonia *et al.*, 2018). Thus, they may not see the necessity of acquiring halal certification, especially when they only serve their customers locally and do not deal with a large-scale business (Mohamad Hilmi *et al.*, 2021). Several studies have highlighted the issue of non-compliance regarding halal certification among food manufacturers. For instance, studies by Ab Rahman *et al.* (2011), Ag Damit *et al.* (2023), and Mohamad Hilmi *et al.* (2021) have pointed out situations where food manufacturers do not conform to the stipulated requirements and standards as provided by halal certification authorities. Cases of fraud and malpractice have been reported within the halal industry in many parts of the world, compromising consumer confidence (Ahmad Fauzi *et al.*, 2017; Hanzala *et al.*, 2021;

Mohamad Hilmi *et al.*, 2021). The non-compliance is a severe violation that entails the provision of regulations and can lead to suspension or revocation of the halal certificate. In addition, Ab Rahman *et al.* (2011), Abu Bakar *et al.* (2017), and Arif *et al.* (2021) have depicted that SMEs are not confident about their ability to conform to these standards. Based on the studies, the level of awareness and compliance with halal certification still needs to be improved, which requires further research on the level of involvement of MIWEs in the Perlis halal food industry to provide a better understanding of this issue.

A lack of studies has developed guidelines that cater specifically to MIWEs in obtaining halal certificates. For instance, to facilitate the creation of halal food products, Mohamad and Backhouse (2014) created a conceptual framework that prioritises product profitability and halal certification. Secondly, Bachri *et al.* (2022) have presented a conceptual model of Aceh women entrepreneurship in enhancing halal tourism in their community. However, these models do not specifically address the probable problems MIWEs encounter. Women entrepreneurs are perceived to have different types of difficulty in managing business (Mohamad & Bakar, 2017) and securing halal certifications among micro-entrepreneurs (Arif *et al.*, 2021). Concerning this, it restricts their ability to compete with major corporations. In their case, halal certification is necessary so that the microenterprise owners can meet the halal standards and add value to their businesses.

Women entrepreneurs are significant in micro and entrepreneurial enterprises. However, the challenges and opportunities they face in this context remain understudied. Therefore, this study aims to examine the involvement of MIWEs in the Perlis halal food industry, to identify the challenges MIWEs encounter in obtaining halal certification in Perlis, and to unveil the opportunities for halal certification among MIWEs in Perlis. The final objective of the research is to formulate a guideline which will act as a framework for prospective halal certification seekers among MIWEs. The guideline is designed to be a comprehensive framework which MIWEs can easily implement. The research findings help expand the existing knowledge on the challenges and opportunities of securing halal certification in Perlis and contribute to developing the Perlis halal food industry.

1.4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This study addresses the following research questions:

- i. What is the involvement of micro-industry women entrepreneurs in the Perlis halal food industry?
- ii. What challenges hinder micro-industry women entrepreneurs from obtaining halal certification?
- iii. What are the opportunities and relevant government agencies for micro-industry women entrepreneurs to obtain halal certification?
- iv. What are the guidelines for obtaining halal certification for micro-industry women entrepreneurs in Perlis?

1.5 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

This is qualitative research on the challenges and opportunities in obtaining halal certification, specifically among micro-industry women entrepreneurs in Perlis. Further analysis is conducted to develop a propitious guideline for halal certification.

Hence, the following are the specific objectives of this research:

- i. To study micro-industry women entrepreneurs' involvement in the Perlis halal food industry.
- ii. To identify the challenges that hinder micro-industry women entrepreneurs from obtaining halal certification.
- iii. To explore the opportunities and relevant government agencies for micro-industry women entrepreneurs to obtain halal certification.
- iv. To propose a guideline for micro-industry women entrepreneurs to obtain halal certification in Perlis.

1.6 RESEARCH SCOPE

This study seeks to assess the involvement, challenges, opportunities, and guidelines of halal certification among MIWEs in Perlis in response to the demands and expectations of customers in the halal food industry. It particularly examines their participation in halal training, level of halal awareness, and understanding of halal concepts. The research scope also covers the challenges MIWEs face in obtaining halal certification, government support and initiatives, and related agencies available for MIWEs in Perlis. Lastly, this research encompasses the guideline or Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for obtaining a halal certificate.

The study exclusively addresses MIWEs by considering the entrepreneurs' age, marital status, academic background, business period, and location. Entrepreneurs are often categorized based on various demographic characteristics such as age, race, business period, sex, marital status, and educational background (Sajilan *et al.*, 2015). These demographic characteristics have been found to influence the performance of entrepreneurs in their companies (Lukiastuti & Wahyuni, 2023). Depending on the setting, the specific demographic characteristics of an entrepreneur may have a greater or lesser influence on their involvement, as well as the challenges and opportunities in obtaining halal certification. Therefore, integrating these demographics provides a holistic understanding of the research objectives.

This study also targets MIWEs, who own a small factory or shop-based enterprise that manufactures food products. MIWEs have been underrepresented in Malaysia in the context of halal food certification. Understanding their challenges can help bridge this gap. MIWEs are chosen to investigate their differences in halal certification compared to their male counterparts (Omar & Mohd Noor, 2024). Women are observed to be subjected to socio-cultural barriers that have imposed several constraints on them (Syed Salleh & Mansor, 2022). Thus, this study aims to discover whether these boundaries impact their obtainment of halal certification. In addition, women entrepreneurs can play a pivotal role in the growth of the halal food industry, as well as other sectors such as fashion, personal care and cosmetics (Husin *et al.*, 2023). Identifying these challenges is essential for enhancing their participation and success in the halal sector. Moreover, this research identifies the opportunities tailored for MIWEs

regarding awareness, programs, and initiatives available in Perlis. Hence, this study can help address existing policies to give better support for MIWEs regarding the available institutional resources. Other essential personnels involved in this study are the related agencies and academicians in Perlis. They are selected to yield more insightful results because of their engagement in entrepreneurship, halal certification, and professional experience as halal executives.

Perlis is chosen as the primary research setting. It is the smallest state in northern Malaysia, with an area of 81, 931.20 hectares, equivalent to 819 km². Perlis is flanked by Thailand's southern border and Kedah's northern border. In addition, Kangar is the metropolis of Perlis, while Arau is the sovereign capital (Hong Ching *et al.*, 2014). The researcher chose several location, namely Arau, Kangar and Simpang Empat, to conduct the research. These smaller divisions of administrative communes were chosen because of the available economic activities and infrastructure that allow for a diverse range of entrepreneurial practices (NADI, n.d.; Sharif, 2023). According to the Department of Statistics Malaysia (2023b), the whole population of Perlis consists of 292,700 residents, in which the majority consist of *Bumiputera* (88.6%), Chinese (7.1%) and Indian (1.8%). Most urban residents of Perlis, such as in Kangar, work in the service sector (Abdullah & Zakarya, 2022). In addition, strategic towns such as Padang Besar and Kuala Perlis can create excellent opportunities to promote halal food and travel destinations (Azmi *et al.*, 2017). Perlis predominantly comprises SMEs that target the locals rather than the international market (Hassan *et al.*, 2023). Additionally, Shahabuddin *et al.* (2022) implied that Perlis is one of Malaysia's least developed and economically disadvantaged states, with a low contribution to the nation's GDP. To support the growth of SMEs in Perlis and enable them to obtain halal certification, it is crucial to study the participation of MSMEs in the halal food industry in this region.

Furthermore, the study adopted a qualitative research method through an interpretive study. Using a qualitative methodology that considers the cultural and social factors allowed the researcher to understand the women entrepreneurs' challenges and opportunities in obtaining halal certification subjectively (Pervin & Mokhtar, 2022). In addition to enriching the overall analysis, this method contributes to broader discourses and global debates on gender and economic empowerment in the halal sector. Semi-structured interviews were conducted to gain the data for this study by integrating

the interview protocols (Yeong *et al.*, 2018). Semi-structured interviews were conducted for data collection because they provided structure but allowed for the richness of the participants' accounts of their experiences seeking halal certification. Next, the data analysis procedures were deductive-inductive (Cho & Lee, 2014). Using deductive and inductive approaches helps to synthesize both strategies and provides better coverage of the study's objectives when studying multifaceted themes. This study aims to tap into women entrepreneurs' potential and help them expand their food products in the halal market. Hence, the results of this finding were analysed and developed into a guideline for MIWEs to obtain halal certification as a guiding model.

1.7 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The significance of this study is addressed from both practical and theoretical points of view. From a practical perspective, the significance of a study refers to its potential impact on society, industry, or a specific group of people. It highlights how the research is beneficial to the development of science and society in general. On the other hand, from a theoretical perspective, the significance of a study refers to its contribution to the development of a specific field of research. It explains how the research findings enhance the existing knowledge and understanding of the studied phenomenon.

1.7.1 SME Entrepreneurs

This study enhances the knowledge and skills required in the halal food industry. Consumers are increasingly interested in the nutritional benefits of halal products. With increasing acceptance of halal products and changes in lifestyle, competition among halal products in terms of food quality and customer service will intensify in the future (Abu Bakar *et al.*, 2019). Thus, there is a need for the local halal food manufacturing industry to understand the demand and conform to the expectations. It encourages the adoption of halal certification among the MSME community, considering that all human beings, especially Muslims, strive to purchase and consume safe and halal food. The guideline in this study can provide information on the standard operating procedures for halal certification among industry players.

1.7.2 Women Entrepreneurs

The results of this study contribute to the benefit of women food manufacturers and operators as well. These women entrepreneurs are essential to the growth of the halal market and national economy (Martiana *et al.*, 2018). Therefore, it is imperative that the government and other agencies of Malaysia administer the women entrepreneurs to guarantee that all segments of society are involved, supported, and strengthened to ensure a prosperous economy. The developed guidelines offer assistance and guidance in their application for halal certification. Therefore, MIWEs can benefit from this study, especially in gaining extra knowledge, practices, and guidance related to halal certification to provide the best services and grow their businesses.

1.7.3 Policymakers

Through this research, it is also expected that the policy of the halal food industry will be improved and enhanced. For MSME sectors to discover their potential and reach international demand, the most essential quality to be concentrated on is gaining the halal market's confidence in their ability to produce authentic halal food products. This can be accomplished by readdressing issues in the industry, reinforcing, redeveloping, and monitoring halal certification regulations (Ambali & Bakar, 2014) among its micro, small and medium-sized food manufacturers. This study enables the related organisations or authorities to identify the challenges affecting the industry players to improvise their initiatives and offer better solutions. Therefore, conducting this research helps to provide research findings and knowledge to facilitate proper planning and policymaking, especially for microenterprises to adopt halal certification.

1.7.4 Academicians

The study can be used as additional information for future researchers. This research aims to stimulate more discussions and theoretical development of microenterprises in the halal market and business performance, particularly among women entrepreneurs. Therefore, this study attempts to discover new insights concerning the involvement,

challenges and opportunities of obtaining halal certification, particularly in Perlis, Malaysia, which have not yet been addressed in previous studies.

Additionally, since this study involves identifying the research subjects' reality through their beliefs, experiences, and knowledge on this issue, it has a significant implication for behavioural planning as this research offers valuable insights into the factors that contribute to the behaviour based on their socio-cultural settings. The Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) provides a theoretical foundation for developing and implementing behavioural planning interventions (Kusumastiwi & Krisnaputri, 2023). Behavioural planning interventions can be designed to effectively target and modify behaviour by understanding the psychological determinants, namely, attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control that influence individuals' intentions. For instance, this research intends to identify the individuals' challenges in their livelihood settings. In return, these shed light on the factors influencing their behaviours in adopting halal certification, such as perception, social pressure, and government support. Hence, necessary interventions can be designed to address the psychological factors effectively and strategies can be tailored to promote positive behaviour changes in obtaining halal certification. The knowledge gained from this study may have positive implications on behavioural planning, which plays a significant role in promoting the adoption of halal certification among MSMEs and facilitating behaviour change in the context of halal compliance.

1.8 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This introductory chapter provides an overview of the background, problem statement, research questions, objectives, scope, and significance of the study. The background section offers context and conveys the main concept of the research to the reader. The problem statement identifies the issues and research gaps the study aims to address. The research questions are specific inquiries that the researcher intends to answer, while the objectives outline the aims and goals of the investigation. The scope of the research defines its boundaries, focus areas, and expected outcomes. Lastly, the significance of the study highlights its contributions and implications based on the findings. In summary, this first chapter outlines the purpose and direction of the research, with

subsequent chapters dedicated to the literature review, methodology, results and findings, and ultimately, the conclusion.



CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter offers a comprehensive analysis of the literature relevant to the research topic, establishing the context for this study. It begins with an overview of the research area, detailing concepts such as *halalan-tayyiban*, Malaysian Halal Certification, challenges in halal certification, the competencies of SMEs involved in halal certification and an overview of halal manufacturing. Building on previous studies, it defines and reviews microenterprises and women entrepreneurs as well. Additionally, it explores various government programs and initiatives aimed at supporting entrepreneurs and the halal food industry in Perlis and identifies gaps in the existing literature. The Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) is discussed to create a theoretical framework for research. Finally, this chapter formulates an appropriate conceptual framework to guide the study. By addressing these critical areas, this chapter lays a solid foundation for research and enhances understanding of the topic.

2.2 THE CONCEPT OF HALALAN-TAYYIBAN

Halal refers to what is permissible or lawful in Islamic law and is widely used and recognised. It is a fundamental legal guideline that covers most facets of a Muslim's livelihood and has been addressed in the Quran and Hadith of the Prophet Muhammad (P.B.U.H) concerning food and drinks. However, there is a common misconception about halal in the halal market, where halal is often synonymised with *halalan-tayyiban*. Despite their superficial similarities, these terms have different connotations. The word halal originates from Arabic and refers to something permissible and legal under Islamic Sharia (Hanzala *et al.*, 2021). As described by the Department of Islamic Development Malaysia (2020), halal can be understood as the activities, actions, and events lawful and permissible according to Islamic law (Sharia) and ruling (fatwa). Halal encompasses more than food intake and dietary law; the principle permeates various

spheres. It extends to a broader life application, including interpersonal relationships, social and business transactions, fashion, trade, financial services, investments, Muslim-friendly tourism, and others (Shah & Yusof, 2014).

Moreover, *halalan-tayyiban* consists of the concept of *tayyib*. *Tayyib* is defined as good, wholesome, clean, and anything lawful and pure. Alzeer *et al.* (2018) presented that when it comes to food, the concept of *tayyib* refers to a procedure that the product goes through to attain both of the following goals: maximum cleanliness (clean) and minimal contamination (pure) without any potential hazardous elements such as *najs* (ritually unclean), or *khabith* (impure). *Tayyib* is often attributed to its nutritional value and benefits to health in food choices. Accordingly, *halalan-tayyiban* brings together these two concepts of halal and *tayyib*. The combination of halal and *tayyib* principles ensures a comprehensive way of attaining a proper Muslim life as expected under the Islamic religion (Mustaffa, 2019). The practice of *halalan-tayyiban* is encouraged by Islam so that entrepreneurs, manufacturers, and consumers can meet the safety and quality standards of a product and service (Mustaffa, 2019). Abdullah (2018) argued that the application of this concept is quite limited in Malaysia in terms of both public recognition and practical implementation within the industry. This implies that the idea is theoretical and has not been fully adopted by industry players.

Nonetheless, *halalan-tayyiban* is a comprehensive and holistic approach intended to serve as a benchmark for achieving excellence and all the characteristics of permissibility and goodness. It ensures that the food is not only allowed under Islamic law but also beneficial for well-being. It integrates ethical consumption that aligns with Islamic values (Mustaffa, 2019). Without a sufficient grasp of these concepts, applicants may experience frustration and difficulty, particularly throughout the halal certificate application procedure and their everyday consumption practices, production or operations. Hence, understanding of this concept is the road to understanding halal accreditation. This is because halal certification postulates the lawful consumption or usage of safe, clean, and wholesome things under Islamic law for mankind. Through the concrete comprehension of *halalan-tayyiban*, society will have no issues in conforming to the halal certification since it implements this concept through the documented evaluation that fulfils the requirements demanded by laws.

2.3 OVERVIEW OF MALAYSIAN HALAL CERTIFICATION

The halal certification system in Malaysia is well-regarded both nationally and internationally. According to Department of Islamic Development Malaysia (2014), Malaysian Halal certification is an official document that verifies the halal status of a product or service, issued by halal certifying authorities in accordance with the Malaysian Halal Certification schemes. It includes inspection of manufacturing at every level, beginning with the preparation of the product and continuing through the slaughterhouse, materials used, cleaning, handling, processing, shipping, and distribution stages (Mohd Daud *et al.*, 2023). It comprises certain conditions and requirements to be approved by the relevant certifying bodies, including the Department of Islamic Development Malaysia (JAKIM), the State Islamic Religious Council (JAIN) and the State Council of Islamic Affairs (MAIN). As a result of increased consumer awareness in the halal market, halal certification must be adopted for products and services (Ab Talib *et al.*, 2016; Ali & Ahmad, 2023). Businesses or manufacturers seeking halal certification must develop a comprehensive plan to ensure they can meet the requirements set out by the authorities and commit to their compliance.

Moreover, halal certification brings many advantages towards MSMEs. Firstly, it complements other Food Safety and Management Systems (FSMS) and enhances its assurance (Abd Rahman & Abu Dardak, 2021). Halal certification ensures compliance with Islamic dietary law and incorporates safety, quality, and ethical business practices. Companies that go for halal accreditation may improve their chances of attracting environmentally conscious consumers by aligning their business practices with ethical and sustainable operations (Abd Rahman & Abu Dardak, 2021). Secondly, halal certification is a marketing and innovation tool that enhances business in dominant Muslim countries (Hanim Yusuf *et al.*, 2016). Halal certification is imperative for businesses, particularly those aiming to expand their target market and niche. Moreover, as Ab Talib *et al.* (2016) explained, halal certification can pave the way to international markets, as it is recognized and valued by Muslim consumers worldwide. The belief that "only Muslim products are halal" is becoming increasingly outdated in the international food market, as the halal logo now serves as the definitive symbol of a product's halal status for tourists and global consumers. International buyers and tourists, who may not be familiar with the intricacies of halal certification, rely on the

presence of the halal logo to make informed purchasing decisions (Bashir, 2019). Furthermore, SMEs require certification and accreditation to establish the basis of economic sustainability. According to Ab Talib *et al.* (2017), halal certification can positively influence the operational and financial performance of the food manufacturing business. This is supported by Puspitasari and Urumsah (2021), where halal certification influences innovation and financial performance among food companies in Indonesia. Thus, halal certification can offer a competitive edge towards MSMEs in growing their business and market.

Micro and small enterprises intending to apply for halal certification in Malaysia must guarantee that all necessary requirements are fulfilled. They are outlined in the Malaysia Halal Certification Procedure Manual (MPPHM) Domestic 2020 in part II, clauses 5 and 6, which are required before application submission (Department of Islamic Development Malaysia, 2020). Based on the Malaysian Halal Management System (MHMS) 2020, companies or applicants under the micro and small categories must execute and implement an Internal Halal Control System (IHCS) to fulfil specific requirements of Malaysian Halal Certification (Development Working Committee, 2020). Jais (2019) highlighted that IHCS is a streamlined version of Halal Assurance Systems (HAS) tailored specifically to smaller enterprises. IHCS was designed to give micro and small enterprises a manageable framework to retain control over halal policy, raw material management, and traceability systems. IHCS involves methodical documentation and record-keeping to provide evidence and facilitate audits and reviews. The halal certification application procedure involves six specific stages of processing. Generally, the steps involve the submission, fee payment, auditing, panel validation meeting, issuance of Malaysian Halal Certificate, surveillance and monitoring (Pauzi & Man, 2018). The procedures have been standardised in all states while the application is submitted through the MYeHALAL system. A halal certificate is not mandatory in Malaysia (Saiman & Yusma, 2022). However, the authorities in Malaysia are urging these enterprises and companies to pursue and operate with a halal certificate to enhance credibility and marketability among consumers.

The Malaysian government has long realized that MSMEs play an essential role in the food industry and has implemented several policies and programmes to assist these enterprises, particularly on issues related to halal accreditation. For instance, to

increase Malaysia's focus on the halal sector and MSME engagement in this area, the government has implemented the Halal Sector Master Plan 2018-2030. This is to facilitate the optimisation of the entire halal ecosystem so that Malaysian SMEs can be global halal leaders. Another plan goal is to promote *Bumiputera*'s position in the halal sector (Kaur, 2023). However, the proportion of certified halal *Bumiputera* MSMEs is still smaller despite their participation in various industries (Hashim & Mohd Nor, 2022; Mat Puat *et al.*, 2024). Some Muslim business owners may not be aware of the benefits of complying with halal certification (Mohamad Hilmi *et al.*, 2021). Considering the importance of halal certification, Tawil *et al.* (2015) claimed that this accreditation is the first step towards expanding the product into the halal market to provide consumers with confidence in safe, healthy, and high-quality goods. To fully achieve the government's vision of making Malaysia a global hub for the halal industry, MSMEs must understand the significance of halal certification and initiate the steps to follow the certification process.

2.4 CHALLENGES IN OBTAINING HALAL CERTIFICATION

Obtaining and maintaining halal certification presents various challenges for enterprises, which have been thoroughly examined in previous literature. These challenges can be divided into external and internal factors. External factors encompass financial resources, government regulations, and competition. These elements can create obstacles related to financial investment, compliance with intricate regulatory requirements and staying ahead in a competitive market. Conversely, internal factors may involve a lack of knowledge, expertise, and the necessary workforce for value creation within the organisation (Ekberg & Hedell, 2011). This can be a disadvantage because halal certification is a complex process that demands extensive knowledge and adherence to the halal standards.

In addition, the determinants of halal certification can be divided into two theories. The theories are the theory of human capital and the theory of the firm (Rafiki, 2014). The human capital theory focuses on aspects of business experience such as education, training, motivation, and work experiences that aid in securing certification.

Meanwhile, the firm theory explains how networking, financing, the age of the firms, and ownership structure can impact the certification process.

Thus, reflecting the coherence between the two discussed theories regarding the challenges; this research explains the external and internal factors accordingly. External factors discovered include the presence of a middleman when applying for the halal certificate. Meanwhile, internal factors include the lack of knowledge of the halal principles, standards and regulations, perceived complex procedures, the lack of competencies in human resources and the capital shortage.

2.4.1 The Presence of Consultant in the Application of Halal Certificate

Several studies highlighted the role of the consultant as a significant barrier to the effective implementation of halal certification. Competitive enterprises in the halal market understand the need to invest in knowledgeable manpower to address the challenges in the halal certification process. As a result of the need for halal certification, several applicants prefer to use consultants to assist them in applying for the certificate online (Arif *et al.*, 2017). Additionally, Saiman and Yusma (2022) supported the notion that some business owners employ the services of third parties to help them with applications and paperwork. These studies also indicated that the owners found it challenging to manage the documentation, forcing them to seek a consultant's services (Arif *et al.*, 2017; Zainuddin & Syed Ismail al-Qudsy, 2020).

Unfortunately, cases such as unethical practices among consultants have been reported. A halal consultant recommends and assists companies interested in halal certification (Nordin *et al.*, 2022). In this regard, a halal consultant assists the potential applicants in applying for a halal certificate while monitoring their progress. However, there are some cases in which consultants exploit this need by charging excessively high fees for certification and do not fully follow the correct procedures (Dolah Aling, 2019; Hassan *et al.*, 2023). This puts a burden on the applicants, resulting in unsuccessful applications. Industry participants should engage in direct discussions with the authorities, such as JAKIM and JAIN (or MAIN), to receive accurate information and advice without the use of middlemen.

2.4.2 Lack of Knowledge of Halal Principles, Halal Standards, and Regulations

Knowledge is crucial in raising Muslims' awareness about halal, particularly in the context of halal certification, standards, and regulations. The level of knowledge the entrepreneurs possess is influenced by various factors such as upbringing, belief, culture, education, and social interactions (Mohamed Elias *et al.*, 2016). In this study, halal knowledge encompasses the understanding and practice of Islamic teachings regarding the principles of halal and *haram*. Meanwhile, awareness is described as a level of alertness or orientation among entrepreneurs to produce what is lawful. This knowledge and awareness are essential, especially for business owners, to understand their responsibility to provide their customers with halal goods and services.

Consequently, the issues within the halal industry on the obtainment and implementation of halal may have emerged from the lack of knowledge on halal principles, halal standards, and regulations related to food manufacturing. Some findings have shown that the lack of knowledge of halal concepts among Muslims and non-Muslim SMEs has contributed to their inability to adhere to halal standards (Bakar *et al.*, 2017; Ag Damit *et al.*, 2023). Revocation or suspension of certification has occurred in several circumstances when firms have used unauthorised halal logos, violated sanitary regulations, or engaged in diverse misconducts that do not adhere to the requirements (Mohamad Hilmi *et al.*, 2021). Companies seek halal certification for commercial promotion; however, they fail to understand the relevance of halal principles and practices because of a lack of knowledge. In addition, the relevance of halal knowledge within MSMEs has been highlighted in several studies related to MSMEs in halal certification (Arif *et al.*, 2021; Mohamad Hilmi *et al.*, 2021; Tamby Chik *et al.*, 2018).

Besides, entrepreneurs show disinterest and lack of concern in adopting halal certification. Mohamad Hilmi *et al.* (2021) and Hasan *et al.* (2020) discovered that due to the limited scale of their operations, some MSMEs overlook the significance of obtaining halal certification or other necessary accreditations for their products. Instead, they prioritise other aspects of their business. The lack of halal applicants among Muslims can be attributed to the comfort factor associated with being a Muslim, as mentioned by Saiman and Yusma (2022). Some business owners believe that their status

as Muslims is enough to attract consumers without the need for halal certification. This lack of understanding and awareness about halal products hinders their ability to comprehend and obtain the certification.

Lastly, MSMEs face technical problems because they are inexperienced in accessing the halal certification process. Small business owners are often unaware of each halal standard that a firm should meet, making it difficult to file documents and follow the strict procedure for certifying (Darmalaksana, 2023). In addition, MSMEs in rural or underdeveloped regions face challenges when using a digital platform such as the MYeHALAL portal because of low IT skills and knowledge (Abu Bakar *et al.*, 2023; Arif *et al.*, 2017; Arif *et al.*, 2019). This technical barrier also leads to delays or incomplete applications in the certification. Thus, the absence of knowledge of the required information is highlighted as a challenge in obtaining and implementing halal certification.

2.4.3 Perceived Complex Procedures

Meeting the halal standards and conditions is a necessary prerequisite for every applicant. They must adhere to the established procedures to provide significant and accurate results to qualify for halal certification. This requirement may include details of ingredients, sources, method of processing and labelling practices with halal standards for the fulfilment of the MPPHM (2020) requirements clause (part V) (Department of Islamic Development Malaysia, 2020). One of the reasons for the relatively small number of successful implementations is that JAKIM has strict criteria for granting halal certificates to companies, products, or services. Satisfying these requirements can be tough for some applicants, particularly those with fewer resources and inadequate information regarding the certification process (Mohamad Hilmi *et al.*, 2021).

Halal certification procedures are considered rigorous. In their study, Arif *et al.* (2021) revealed that microenterprises often encounter issues acquiring halal certification due to the formal and rigorous implementation processes. Furthermore, the limited duration of the halal certification, typically valid for two years in the food

product sector, can pose a challenge for applicants. Abdul Majid *et al.* (2015) mentioned that renewing the certificate consumes significant time, effort, and money. For this reason, some applicants may opt to continue using an expired certificate, thereby defrauding customers, rather than undergoing the renewal process. M. Muhammad *et al.* (2020a) discovered that the six-month waiting time for the halal certificate was a major demotivating factor for applicants to get the certificate. A contributing factor to this delay could be the difficulties experienced in obtaining raw halal ingredients from suppliers (Hassan *et al.*, 2023). Besides deterring their adoption of halal certification, these points have been mentioned as reasons for failing to meet the halal requirements and standards.

JAKIM has established a comprehensive and systematic approach to halal certification, which is crucial for maintaining the integrity of halal products in Malaysia. The process ensures that all candidates adhere strictly to Islamic dietary laws without deviations. The halal assurance system developed by JAKIM is accepted by many countries as a reference for halal certification (Ghazali *et al.*, 2023). JAKIM has dispelled the misperception that obtaining halal certification is difficult and time-consuming (Sinar Harian, 2021). Despite the time-consuming nature, financial implications, and continuous oversight required, these perceived complex procedures may exist due to a lack of knowledge and awareness regarding the requirements and standards (Arif *et al.*, 2021). Therefore, fostering the entrepreneurs' positive attitudes and mindsets through proper knowledge and training is crucial to minimize negative biases towards these procedures.

2.4.4 Lack of Competencies in Human Capital

Human capital efficiency and competencies are crucial in the performance of Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) seeking halal certification. The relationship between these factors and halal certification is multifaceted, influencing operational practices and performance in implementing the halal certification (Agus & Herminingsih, 2023; Nik Mohd Rosli *et al.*, 2022). Several studies revealed that competent management of halal certification and the human capital related to the practice of the halal standards affect the organisation's performance (Muda *et al.*, 2020;

Othman *et al.*, 2019). Qualified and experienced personnel who are aware of all halal aspects are necessary to implement halal practices effectively. Additionally, Abd Aziz (2022) underlined that the role of competent manpower is crucial to maintaining compliance with halal certification requirements. Without having the exact set of competencies, the company might risk non-compliance and jeopardise its halal status.

One of the biggest challenges from an operational viewpoint for MSMEs revolves around their in-house manpower. Being a food MSME is challenging because many in the sector may not have the infrastructure to meet the strict production standards required for halal certification (Saiman & Yusma, 2022). The same goes for halal certification, which can require one to keep a separate production line and prevent cross-contamination into other products that some MSMEs might not be able to afford. Moreover, MSMEs often lack manpower. Small businesses frequently experience a shortage of staff which can be problematic in the management of documentation and regulatory requirements for halal certification, especially when business owners assume multiple roles (Arif *et al.*, 2017; M. Muhammad *et al.*, 2020a; Nik Mohd Rosli *et al.*, 2022). As highlighted by Mohamad Hilmi *et al.* (2021), the absence of workforce competencies for adhering to halal standards and regulations is affecting business execution and performance. Companies entrusted to carry out halal certification have a responsibility that requires competency to comply with the requirements and regulations without breaching the trust that JAKIM has imposed on them. Industry players must familiarise themselves with the procedures and necessary guidelines to ease the certification process (Barakah, 2020).

2.4.5 Capital Shortage

Financial challenges are another factor that discourages MSMEs from applying halal certification for their businesses. The certification process has been slow as it is complex and costly to audit and upgrade infrastructure that small businesses cannot afford because they operate under too slim margins (Arif *et al.*, 2021; Hassan *et al.*, 2023; Mohamad Hilmi *et al.*, 2021). In addition, depending on the automation level or complexity, small and medium enterprises can find technology providers and consultants to help them with the certification, though at a cost (Arif *et al.*, 2017;

Zainuddin & Syed Ismail al-Qudsy, 2020). Microenterprises usually operate with limited annual (Ekberg & Hedell, 2011; Mohd Thas Taker & Mohammed, 2013). Microenterprises might face the trade-off that these costs outweigh the potential benefits of halal certification. Thus, it may be hard for them to justify this investment.

Micro-entrepreneurs predominantly rely on internal financing. Most micro-entrepreneurs rely on internal sources, such as savings and loans from family or friends, to fund their businesses (Abd Wahid *et al.*, 2021; Adonia *et al.*, 2018; Saiman & Yusma, 2022). Micro-entrepreneurs prefer internal finance since it is easier and faster than leveraging on debts. Nevertheless, some microenterprises take on loans from banks. However, the prolonged period of granting the loan and the lack of security or guarantors for microenterprises make it challenging to obtain a loan from financial institutions (Adonia *et al.*, 2018). Besides, the lack of information and documentation, the absence of any financial experience and history, the strict processes and external financing literacy were also mentioned as the challenges encountered by microenterprises when searching for institutional funding (Duasa & Mohd Thas Thaker, 2016). These are some of the reasons that lead to the failure to qualify for a loan. These financial factors greatly reduce micro-entrepreneurs' drive to expand their business.

Financial literacy is an essential component of achieving business financial self-reliance. Financial literacy is the knowledge and proficiency to make efficient decisions about finance, a key approach required for managing economic resources (Fatah Yasin *et al.*, 2020). Limited financial literacy may sometimes challenge women because of cultural and educational restrictions (Sundarassen *et al.*, 2023). Financial illiteracy can lead to financial insecurity and limited access to financial resources. The commitment and preparation required for halal certification, including securing finance, may deter many businesses from applying (Mohamad Hilmi *et al.*, 2021). Thus, increasing the financial literacy of women business owners can help improve their performance in capital management and investment for company development.

2.5 COMPETENCIES FOR MSMES IN HALAL CERTIFICATION

Competencies are employed more frequently today in assessing the development and advancement of professional careers because they provide benchmarks for screening candidates for a specific position. Competencies are skills, knowledge, and individual attitudes required to accomplish a given task or role (Arifin, 2021). Besides, competencies are associated with an individual's cognitive, emotional, and motivational characteristics (Nik Mohd Rosli *et al.*, 2022). Vazirani (2010) introduced that aside from knowledge and skills, the underlying characteristics of a person, namely their traits, self-concepts, and motivation, also represent their capabilities or competencies. Competencies, as defined above, are often articulated in terms of behaviour or expertise. Thus, competencies can be understood as the skills, knowledge, attitudes, and behaviours necessary for an individual to carry out their duties effectively in any given job or role. It comprises innate characteristics representing holistic conduct or thought patterns across diverse settings (Chouhan & Srivastava, 2014). Several studies pointed out that human capital is central to obtaining and applying halal certification. In this regard, human capital comprises valuable knowledge, skills, and character obtained from learning, training and experience, which allows them to perform practices conforming to halal standards (Mohamad Hilmi *et al.*, 2021; Othman *et al.*, 2019; Rafiki & Abdul Wahab, 2016). This indicates that halal competencies must include all the skills and expertise necessary for executing and implementing the principles and laws of halal standards and regulations. Ensuring the products meet Islamic dietary laws while being safe for consumption is crucial. Successful firms in the halal market rely on these professionals, who possess a unique set of halal competencies to carry out halal practices and maintain their halal status.

Competent individuals or workers are vital for overall success and productivity within an organisation or an enterprise. Studies have discussed that having competent individuals and halal personnel to manage and handle the procedure and activities of halal certification is crucial in ensuring successful implementation and compliance of halal standards (Ahmad Fauzi *et al.*, 2017; S. Muhammad *et al.*, 2020; Othman *et al.*, 2019; Che Hashim & Mohd Shariff, 2016). Muda *et al.* (2020) claimed that human competencies and training are essential for long-term success in the industrial market. Hanzala *et al.* (2021) supported that capable management and skilled employees are

essential to achieving business success in the halal industry. In another study, Ahmad Fauzi *et al.* (2017) mentioned that halal competency (the ability to understand and comply with Islamic principles and requirements in production activities) is required to facilitate the overall operation of the enterprise's halal production.

Having competencies is imperative to overcome unethical conduct within the halal market. Ab Talib *et al.* (2017) pointed out that simply displaying the halal logo without appropriate implementation is not an ethical business practice. Muda *et al.* (2020) supported that while halal certification can be essential for businesses operating in the halal industry, it would be incorrect to imply that certification documentation alone is sufficient for ensuring the enterprise's conformance. Halal certification alone does not guarantee that a business operates following halal standards. There have been instances of businesses using unapproved halal logos, violating sanitary laws, and engaging in other misconducts that resulted in the revocation or suspension of certification because the corresponding procedure or condition did not meet the standards (Mohamad Hilmi *et al.*, 2021). (Agus and Herminingsih (2023) pointed out the positive influence of competency on halal supervisors' performance. It indicates that enhanced competencies lead to better outcomes and may aid in preventing misconduct in this context. Therefore, businesses must uphold the integrity of owning the halal trademark by showcasing the necessary competencies and implementing the proper halal practices.

Consequently, the necessary competencies of entrepreneurs and SMEs have been the subject of research in various areas. The competencies required for SMEs are discussed within the scope of entrepreneurial (Mustapha *et al.*, 2020; Umar & Hashim, 2017; Ur-Rahman, 2014; Wu, 2009), marketing (Hensman & Vaikunthavasan, 2022; Kanibir *et al.*, 2014; Quaye & Mensah, 2019), innovation (Theodotou, 2022), and technological competencies (Hendri Gusaptono *et al.*, 2012). To illustrate, Ur-Rahman (2014) identified several competencies that entrepreneurs require: communication, product sales, information acquisition, team management, leadership, the ability to hire talented workers, and experience. Moreover, competencies such as team building, coaching, time and resource management, problem-solving, financial management, change management, leadership, communication, and negotiation were outlined by Tomal and Jones Jr. (2015) for supervisors and managers in the food manufacturing

industry. Continuing from an Islamic perspective, Suhaime *et al.* (2017) listed nine characteristics that Muslims must uphold: *taqwa*, halal as a top priority, economical, prioritising worship to Allah, showing outstanding moral character, trustworthiness, caring about others, being well-informed, and conserving the environment. Overall, the research underscores the multifaceted nature of competencies required for entrepreneurs and SMEs to thrive in a competitive landscape.

Furthermore, education and training are the keys to improving competencies. According to Szczepańska-Woszczyzna (2014), one's competencies may be fostered through education and training. Education and training may give individuals the knowledge, skills, and abilities they need to succeed in a particular job or career. Regardless of their background or socioeconomic status, everyone should have access to education and training programs that provide them with the skills and information needed to thrive in their personal and professional endeavours. In turn, this will foster the development of people with various skills that will assist them in solving the problems of modern society. Challenges accompany the promise of the halal industry, and businesses operating in this sector should be ready for anything that comes their way. As a result, competency-based education and training are essential for the people in the halal industry, including the halal food manufacturing sector.

2.6 HALAL FOOD MANUFACTURING

The increase in demand for halal food has been on the rise over the past few years, and this expansion is expected to bring an opportunity for the food manufacturing sector to produce even more halal-related goods. Thus, halal food manufacturers must be aware of the halal principles and standards to provide customers with goods and services that match their expectations. Malaysia is seen as proactive in terms of manufacturing halal products and services. In the Manufacturing Standard Industrial Classification (MSIC) 2000, manufacturing refers to transforming chemical or physical raw materials into a new product, including food, beverages, textiles, leather, apparel, paper, and so on (Department of Statistics Malaysia, 2000). In other words, the sector is responsible for transforming raw ingredients into consumable food products. This transformation involves several procedures: sourcing, preparation, manufacturing, packaging, and final

product distribution. For instance, raw textiles can be transformed into daily clothes, and plant-based sources can be used to make packaged food products.

Next, halal manufacturing is under the fundamental elements of Islamic manufacturing. Islamic manufacturing is highly influenced by Islamic beliefs and culture, emphasising Sharia and Islamic ethics in its operational practices. Mohamed *et al.* (2016) presented that Islamic manufacturing requires all parties to adhere to Islamic law and be compliant in all aspects to obtain abundant blessings from Allah S.W.T and to provide the most significant outcome for the benefit of humanity. In this regard, Islamic manufacturing is the balance between worldly matters and the hereafter that considers the public interest in its essence. Halal manufacturing employs the principles of the Quran and Sunnah. Mohamed *et al.* (2016) have listed the elements of *tawhid* (unification), khalifah (successor), Islamic ethics, and product quality optimisation as the main elements in Islamic manufacturing that differentiate it from conventional manufacturing. The key elements reflect the believers' deep faith and adherence, and cater to the interests of the premises, workers, product, and documentation throughout the process. As an example, Islamic manufacturing encourages employees' morality and integrity, which in turn aids the operation's efficiency and growth while guaranteeing that the final goods will be to everyone's benefit. Therefore, through the comprehension of halal, halal manufacturing can be defined as the integrated processes that ensure all the raw materials, tools, and equipment used are Sharia compliant, free from *najis* (unclean) elements from the overall operation, and benefit the community.

Moreover, manufacturing, which is an inbound activity to the supply chain, is one of the most critical activities within the halal food supply chain in the production stage. The halal food supply chain involves using and managing a halal supply network for food distribution, focusing on the principles of absolute integrity in running the supply chain (Rasi *et al.*, 2017). According to Islamic law, producing halal-compliant food products is essential in the supply chain, where all components and production procedures must be halal and *tayyib*. Abd Rahman and Abdul (2017) emphasised the importance of implementing the Halal Assurance System (HAS) among food manufacturers to ensure the integrity of their products and services. The HAS provides a systematic traceability framework throughout the supply chain, enabling manufacturers to identify potential non-halal contamination points and establish control

measures. Aside from halal certification, food manufacturers must implement specific food regulations and legislation for their products (Abdul Talib & Mohd Ali, 2009). For instance, Malaysia has been enforcing the food and beverages industry with food safety systems that assist industry players in managing food hazards to protect consumers. Improper food handling might lead to food-borne diseases and other food hazards. Examples of food safety management systems are Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point (HACCP), Good Manufacturing Practice (GMP), Food Safety Tangible Responsibility Industry (MeSTI) and other established quality assurance standards.

2.7 OVERVIEW OF MICROENTERPRISES IN MALAYSIA

It has been widely acknowledged that micro-sized businesses or enterprises are essential to the dynamics and growth of local businesses and organisations. Microenterprises account for most of Malaysia's micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) population. Microenterprises have significantly impacted economic growth, both in terms of employment and gross domestic product (GDP), compared to small and medium enterprises (Samsudin *et al.*, 2021). According to statistics, there were 803,702 (75.1%) microenterprises out of 1,069,831 MSMEs in 2022. This number shows an increment of 2.4% from 2015 (Department of Statistics Malaysia, 2024a). It highlights the significant presence of microenterprises within the MSME sector in Malaysia. MSMEs stand as one of the most affected sectors of the country's economy after the COVID-19 pandemic (Hasin *et al.*, 2021; Rashid *et al.*, 2022). There has been a drop in economic contribution to the GDP among MSMEs due to the absence of operation and the decline of sales during the Movement Control Order (MCO) lockdown (Rashid *et al.*, 2022). Even after the government formulated a recovery plan, the persistent increase in raw materials, energy, and logistics costs has eroded MSMEs' margins and slowed their growth.

Microenterprises are well-established across various sectors, contributing to Malaysia's local economy and livelihood. Microenterprises in Malaysia are businesses with less than five full-time employees and an annual revenue of less than RM 300,000 for manufacturing, services and other sectors (Al Mamun *et al.*, 2019). Micro-industries develop in various sectors, particularly service, manufacturing, urban agriculture,

construction, and trading sectors, which can then expand or remain the same size for the enterprise's life. These companies typically operate on a small scale, such as through home-based businesses (HBB), forest-based activities (rural enterprises), food stands, night market vendors, grocery store kiosks, small factories and e-commerce (Al Mamun *et al.*, 2019). Microenterprises are often owned by family members, solopreneurs, partnerships, or corporations (Wallstreetmojo, 2023). Moreover, microenterprises are among the business units that provide productive business operations and opportunities in human capital and job employment (Umar & Hashim, 2017). Microenterprises are known to be the sources of livelihood for local entrepreneurs, especially in rural areas. Studies have shown that the participation of entrepreneurs in entrepreneurial activities in their settlement areas to generate income indirectly contributes to improving their living standards and developing their localities (Talib *et al.*, 2012). In Malaysia, this industry is responsible for opening many employment opportunities. Although it focuses on low-productivity and income, engaging in entrepreneurial activities and business ventures may still improve people's economic well-being. Hence, the job openings created by microenterprises can lead to the overall development and prosperity of the local communities (Talib *et al.*, 2012).

Microenterprises are flexible and collaborative. Regardless of their background, many venture into this sector and launch their businesses since it is viewed as the most efficient income generation (Musa *et al.*, 2016). Furthermore, *Bumiputera*-owned microenterprises often dominate the food processing industry, given that it is both an accessible and demanding sector (Zakaria *et al.*, 2022). The food processing industry often caters to local markets and cultural preferences, which may align with the *Bumiputera* community's culinary traditions and preferences. Despite this, microenterprises' capacity to export goods and services is considered inadequate. Past studies noted that it is sometimes difficult for small companies to expand their businesses outside their immediate area (Musa *et al.*, 2016; Zakaria *et al.*, 2022). In addition to facing management issues and a lack of commercial experience, these businesses often struggle to market their products and employ the most appropriate medium (Wee *et al.*, 2019).

Accordingly, several studies have discussed halal certification among MSMEs in Malaysia. In the context of the adoption and implementation of halal certification, a

study by Abdul Basir *et al.* (2018) presented that the motivational factors that drive the adoption of halal certification among MSME entrepreneurs are associated with the need to gain consumer satisfaction and increase product quality, pressure from market competitors, government's regulations and policies, improvement of internal operation and performance. Rafiki and Abdul Wahab (2016) also described that a company's decision to pursue halal certification is affected by its employees' experience, training, motivation, and education. Therefore, motivation is crucial to entrepreneurs' intention and conduct in pursuing a halal certification. Moreover, halal microenterprises are considered the practice of *fardhu kifayah* (Hasan & Tanakinjal, 2020). This indicates that entrepreneurs are not only performing these activities to gain profits, but to preserve religion and life as in the principles of *Maqasid al-Sharia*.

2.8 WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS IN MALAYSIA

In a sense, entrepreneurship is affiliated with the capacity to create business opportunities. Most entrepreneurial activities cater to value creation and provide options to decrease unemployment in the areas where they are implemented. Sharma and Sahoo (2009) define an entrepreneur as a person who operates a modest business and undertakes all risks and rewards associated with a given business venture, idea, product or service offered for sale. Entrepreneurs are typically perceived as business executives and creators of innovative ideas and operations in businesses. In other words, they are the start-up of their own businesses, consisting of original concepts or products. Moreover, Cardella *et al.* (2020) claimed that entrepreneurs are often seen as assertive and risk-takers. The statements bring to an understanding that entrepreneurs are leaders, innovators and risk-takers who combine organising, planning, financing, managing, making significant decisions, employing additional workers, and assuming the risk that may arise from a business venture.

Women are becoming more involved in entrepreneurship. They are gradually becoming more common in this field with the help of education (Ahmadov *et al.*, 2021). Research has shown that women with higher education have higher self-esteem in entrepreneurship, enabling them to excel in entrepreneurial activities. It highlights the importance of promoting and supporting women's education to foster their participation

and success in entrepreneurship. Social transformations and advanced technologies have also changed women's perceptions and expectations, positively impacting business engagement (Choudhary *et al.*, 2020; Fadhilah *et al.*, 2021). Also, the necessity for women's employment in some areas allows them to enter the job market through their professional qualifications. This is evidenced by Dezső and Ross (2011), who claimed that women's presence positively impacts top management performance. By leveraging their experience, resources, and knowledge in the workforce on an equitable basis, the enterprise may reach its growth potential and contribute to a nation's social development.

Previous studies have revealed that several factors influence women's involvement in business and the support provided by the government. Some factors that have led to the increased participation of women in the business sector over the years include religious obligations, the need to provide for the family, and the pursuit of a healthy work-life balance (Musa *et al.*, 2016; Tahir & Abdul, 2013). Other motivational factors include the need for achievement, independence, financial issues, fame, and positive feedback from others (Sufian *et al.*, 2022). The results highlight the importance of external and internal motivators for women entrepreneurs to enter the business realm. Although the rate of women entrepreneurs has continued to rise in Malaysia, women's participation in businesses remains limited to microenterprises targeting women-related markets which operate locally (Abu Bakar *et al.*, 2020; Mohd Rhouse *et al.*, 2016). This constitutes significant barriers to expansion and broader market engagement. In addition, the Malaysian government has actively supported women's businesses. The government has developed many programs under the Ministry of Entrepreneur Development and Cooperatives (MEDAC), National Entrepreneurship Institute (INSKEN), SME Corporation Malaysia (SME Corp.) National Corporation Berhad (PNS), which offer training and development programs to women entrepreneurs (Ministry of Entrepreneur Development and Cooperatives, 2020).

Various researchers have described the challenges and drives of women entrepreneurs in various contexts. According to Jusoh and Latada (2020), during the COVID-19 pandemic in Malaysia, single mothers have encountered an increased level of emotional and psychological stress, financial difficulties, and extra workload at home. The studies by Abd Wahid *et al.* (2021) and Musa *et al.* (2016) also shed more

light on women's social, financial, and human capital challenges. They are challenged by marital status, competency to decide, childcare responsibility, raw material access, constrained capital base, lack of experience and skills, and use of inexperienced labour. Furthermore, Abu Bakar *et al.* (2020) listed that legal restraints, lack of training and education opportunities, and family obligations impact women entrepreneurs' growth. Moreover, other literature has discussed women entrepreneurs in their business activities from other angles, such as financial literacy in the halal business (Fatah Yasin *et al.*, 2020), women entrepreneurship in Islamic society (Mohd Rhouse *et al.*, 2016; S. Muhammad *et al.*, 2020), psychological empowerment of women (Fuad *et al.*, 2022), and the development of women's entrepreneurship policy (Teoh & Chong, 2008).

Islam encourages Muslim women to become active agents in developing the national economy, whether as innovators or entrepreneurs. Women are encouraged to be merchants among the roles in Islam, as stated by Ullah *et al.* (2013). However, it also stated that women must run their businesses in compliance with Islamic laws and should guard themselves against any form of harm that their business might occasion. This entails following the Sharia law and changing corporate governance structure to correspond to Sharia law standards (Fatah Yasin *et al.*, 2020). Therefore, the halal business provides an Islamic-based methodology and contributes to the society's welfare, making it a suitable option for entrepreneurs. Enhancing access to the labour market among women and improving their standing in societies should be deemed necessary for the progress of women entrepreneurs. Halal certification can offer the entrepreneurs added assurance and opportunities for growth. By understanding their experiences and motivations, policymakers and stakeholders can develop targeted policies and programs addressing women's specific needs and challenges in the halal industry, encouraging their participation in halal certification processes.

2.9 OPPORTUNITIES AND PREVIOUS INITIATIVES BY GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

Opportunities in a business may refer to external potential endeavours that could result in positive outcomes for the business. An opportunity allows individuals or organisations to take advantage of a favourable situation. Moreover, in business, a

support system can be understood as systemic activities aimed at enterprises to aid in their establishment and operation (Bush, 2016). MSME opportunities can manifest in various ways, including government policies, technological advancements, financial assistance, loan facilities, and market trends (Bux Marri *et al.*, 2011). Supportive governmental policies are critical in ensuring that MSMEs can avail themselves of the resources and structures for their growth and expansion. The supports include monetary grants, tax reductions and credits, and licenses and permits (Prasannath *et al.*, 2024). Moreover, the programs and training sessions for businesses provide the necessary information for MSMEs to succeed (Tumiran & Mohammad, 2024). These policies and supports assist MSMEs in overcoming barriers and developing means of utilising market opportunities.

Perlis has initiated numerous development projects to boost the local economy, including agriculture, tourism, and entrepreneurship. The Perlis state government has been driving projects via the Northern Corridor Implementation Authority (NCIA), such as the Chuping Valley Industrial Area (CVIA) in Perlis and Perlis Inland Port (PIP) (Bernama, 2022; NCER Malaysia, n.d.). It is anticipated that completing these megaprojects will create a considerable positive economic impact on the industrial and logistics sectors through job creation in various industries, hence benefitting the local economy.

The active involvement of government agencies assists in the sustainable growth of MSMEs. Several government agencies such as the Young Agricultural Development Board (MADA), Amanah Ikhtiar Malaysia (AIM), People's Trust Council (MARA), The National Entrepreneurial Group Economic Fund (TEKUN Nasional), SME Corporation, and Ministry of Entrepreneurship and Cooperative Development (KUSKOP) have been heavily involved in the development of MSMEs and entrepreneurs in Perlis (Usahawan Perlis Official, n.d.). The programs and initiatives target developing entrepreneurship in the region, assisting businesses, and encouraging individuals to take the entrepreneurial journey. It also incentivises *Bumiputera* SME entrepreneurs through financial assistance, education, and skills training to grow *Bumiputera's* entrepreneurship (Hassan *et al.*, 2023).

The initiatives and assistance that the Rubber Industry Smallholders Development Authority (RISDA) and the Malaysian Agricultural Research and Development Institute (MARDI) provide are pivotal in fostering entrepreneurship in Perlis. Through programs such as RISDA Family Open Day, Groom Big Program, and various training courses, these agencies aim to cultivate a comprehensive entrepreneurial ecosystem that supports individuals in their entrepreneurial journey. Additionally, RISDA's financial assistance and MARDI's technical advisory services are designed to empower young agropreneurs, ultimately enhancing the agricultural sector's potential and contributing to significant economic growth in the region (Usahawan Perlis Official, n.d.).

Several programs and seminars were established for MSMEs and women entrepreneurs in Perlis. The Perlis State Government, with the assistance from SME Corp., launched several programs for entrepreneurs, such as the Year of Entrepreneurs Gathering Programme and SME Corp's 2022 Perlis State Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprise Week (MSMEs) (Osman, 2022). These initiatives aimed to make market forums available for the entrepreneurs' promotion and marketing of the products. Additionally, MARA in Perlis has organised seminars and programs for women entrepreneurship. For example, the Seminar Women in Search of Excellence (WiSE) and Journey to The Top collaborated with the Foundation of Tuanku Fauziah (Osman, 2023) and the DanaNITA scheme for financial aid have contributed to developing and empowering entrepreneurs, particularly women, in Perlis.

In addition, Perlis is committed in their efforts to promote halal certification and further develop the state into a halal hub. Usually, halal certification implementation is overseen by the Halal Hub division under the Department of Islamic Religious Affairs Perlis (JAIPs) (Abdullah & Mukhtar, 2015). Some of their initiatives and programmes include Halal Awareness Programs, MyHalalRia under Social Entrepreneurship Foundation (YKS) and Perlis State Level Yakini Halal Malaysia Seminar. An initiative by Perlis Malay Religious and Ceremonial Council (MAIPs), the Perkampungan Sunnah program also provides opportunities for the government to promote halal awareness in society (Mohd Yusuf & Muhammad Asni, 2023).

2.10 GAPS IN PAST LITERATURE ON HALAL INDUSTRY IN PERLIS

The existing studies on halal and halal certification in Perlis reveal a significant gap in the documented data concerning the challenges faced by MIWEs. Abdullah and Mukhtar (2015) have researched the implementation of halal certification in Perlis in their study. However, this study only targeted the challenges experienced by the Halal Hub division of JAIPs, as the findings revealed that the division encountered a lack of awareness among entrepreneurs, insufficient staff members, and technical challenges experienced by clients. Therefore, this study provides further information on the challenges in implementing halal certification that are encountered by a specific group of entrepreneurs which are MIWEs in Perlis.

A study by Abdul Lateb and Md Yusof (2020) focused on the perception of the practice of the halal concept regarding hygiene among the food premises in Perlis. The study identified that most of the food operators in Perlis failed to address hygiene factors pertinent to the halal concept. At the same time, only a few enterprises considered it a priority. However, this study only highlighted and examined the halal concepts among the food premises in Perlis.

Afendi *et al.* (2014) examined the factors influencing the intention to purchase halal products and concluded that attitude, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control significantly impact consumers' intentions. These findings offer valuable insights for producers and stakeholders to better understand consumer demand, ultimately enhancing customer satisfaction and profitability. However, it is important to recognise that the research was limited to consumers shopping at supermarkets in Perlis, which may not fully capture the broader market dynamics or the diverse consumer behaviors present in different purchasing environments.

Kamal (2019) identified factors that influence halal food awareness among Muslim students in Perlis. It is indicated that those from extremely religious backgrounds emphasise the importance of halal nutrition. The study also found that students' awareness of selecting halal food was primarily influenced by their attitudes. However, it is worth mentioning that this survey was conducted from the viewpoint of UniMAP Muslim students, focusing on the variables that affected their purchase

intention. This limitation implies the findings' non-generalizability across different demographics, indicating a need for a broader research population.

Hashom *et al.* (2022) found that MSMEs in Perlis had a poor understanding of the need for halal value creation, particularly in logistics services, to cater to global and regional markets. Halal value creation practices, especially in halal logistics, are crucial for sustainable firms as they add value and enable effective end-to-end logistic services. However, it is essential to note that this study specifically discussed halal value creation in halal logistics. Therefore, the literature on MIWEs in the halal industry is relatively limited and has not specifically focused on the involvement and challenges women face in microenterprises. Regardless, the insights from the mentioned studies provide valuable information to address the involvement, challenges, and opportunities for regional microenterprises and women entrepreneurs in the halal industry.

2.11 THEORY OF PLANNED BEHAVIOUR IN HALAL CERTIFICATION ADOPTION AMONG SMEs

One of the most widely known models for predicting human behaviour is the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB), which highlights three essential elements: attitude, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control. It can be utilised to show how the anticipation of behaviour may enhance or hinder an SME's adoption decision related to halal certification (Nik Abdullah *et al.*, 2024). A neighbourhood with many Muslim populations, export markets, or food sector occurrences makes halal a dominant requirement for SMEs. However, various internal and external factors may also affect SMEs' halal certification practices (Hassan *et al.*, 2023; Mohamad Hilmi *et al.*, 2021).

The perception (attitude) of halal certification by SMEs plays a vital role in the adoption process. The type of entrepreneurs most likely to take this certification process are those who perceive halal certification as beneficial for widening market access, enhancing credibility, and responding to customers' demands (Anggarkasih & Resma, 2022). However, suppose the process is perceived as time-and money-consuming (challenging to engage with). In this case, it may present an attitude that impedes the adoption of halal certification among SMEs (Saiman & Yusma, 2022). Consequently,

the perceived benefits or drawbacks of halal certification can influence their inclination to have it done.

In contrast, the social pressures that business owners perceive (subjective norms) also contribute to the adoption of halal certification. Regarding what drives culture, norms are most frequently discussed in terms of the behaviours that a business, enterprise or supply chain performs regularly. The pressure on SMEs to adopt halal certification practices is driven by various cultural and market dynamics, particularly in environments where halal certification is critical for customer satisfaction or mandated by industry standards (Abu Bakar *et al.*, 2023). Conversely, in some (rural) areas where there is low demand for halal-certified products (Adham *et al.*, 2022), social pressure may have a lower impact. Therefore, SMEs' motivation to obtain the certification is less driven, compared to the regions with high demand for halal-certified products, such as Indonesia.

Perceived Behavioral Control (PBC) is a crucial component of the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), particularly in the context of SMEs seeking halal certification. PBC reflects SMEs' perception and confidence in their ability to navigate the certification process (Puspita, 2024), which are often hindered by several challenges. SMEs find it challenging to overcome financial constraints, lack of technical expertise and administrative issues in dealing with digital certification platforms, including the MYeHALAL portal (Abu Bakar *et al.*, 2023; Arif *et al.*, 2017; Arif *et al.*, 2021). As a result, SMEs seem to have reduced perceived control over adopting the certification process. Government support such as training and financial incentives can increase SMEs' perceived control of the process, which in turn helps facilitate the halal certification (Wijaya & Priantina, 2024).

Numerous studies have applied this theory in the context of halal certification adoption and determinants of purchasing intentions such as the ones by Ahmad and Mohd Salleh (2024), Hamid *et al.* (2024), Harun *et al.* (2023), Nik Abdullah *et al.* (2024), Nur Ardiyanto *et al.* (2024), and Puspita (2024). Some of the studies have also revealed that several new constructions have been added to the TPB model (Ahmad & Mohd Salleh, 2024; Hamid *et al.*, 2024; Nik Abdullah *et al.*, 2024), thus benefiting its usage in mapping out the factors that affect halal certification processes.

Using the TPB model, this study sought to determine how attitudes, perceived norms, and perceived control influence the intention to obtain halal certification among MIWEs. TPB enables an understanding of the psychological aspects of the behaviour towards halal certification (Ajzen, 2015). Therefore, incorporating the TPB to analyse the factors influencing the involvement, challenges, and opportunities in obtaining halal certification among MIWEs provided the foundation for understanding the underlying issue.

2.12 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Generally, a conceptual framework is an overarching concept that includes all the necessary parts to understand the whole scope of a topic. It helps the researcher plan the study's variables, methodology, and findings (Adom *et al.*, 2018). The literature on the involvement, challenges, and opportunities MIWEs encountered in obtaining halal certification is limited. Other previous studies established general issues and challenges related to MSME entrepreneurs in the halal industry and issues related to halal certification. Still, no specific guidelines were mentioned that may be used to address these problems. This gap in the literature calls for further research to develop guidelines that can assist MIWEs in overcoming the challenges they face in obtaining halal certification.

Several research works have described the conceptual framework or model concerning the development of the halal industry in the context of a particular field. For example, there are frameworks focusing on halal tourism (Bachri *et al.*, 2022), halal food products (Mohamad & Backhouse, 2014), and halal hotels (Razalli *et al.*, 2013). Establishing a successful entrepreneurial process and halal accreditation rely heavily on the interplay of various managerial roles, entrepreneurship activities, and support systems provided by governmental and non-governmental entities (Bachri *et al.*, 2022; Mohamad & Backhouse, 2014). Understanding these elements is essential for fostering an effective entrepreneurial environment within the halal industry. The existing models help to explain the requirements and approaches for further development and legal certification of the halal industry field in various spheres. To illustrate, Figure 2.1 shows

the conceptual framework generated for Acehese women’s entrepreneurship in halal tourism by Bachri *et al.* (2022).

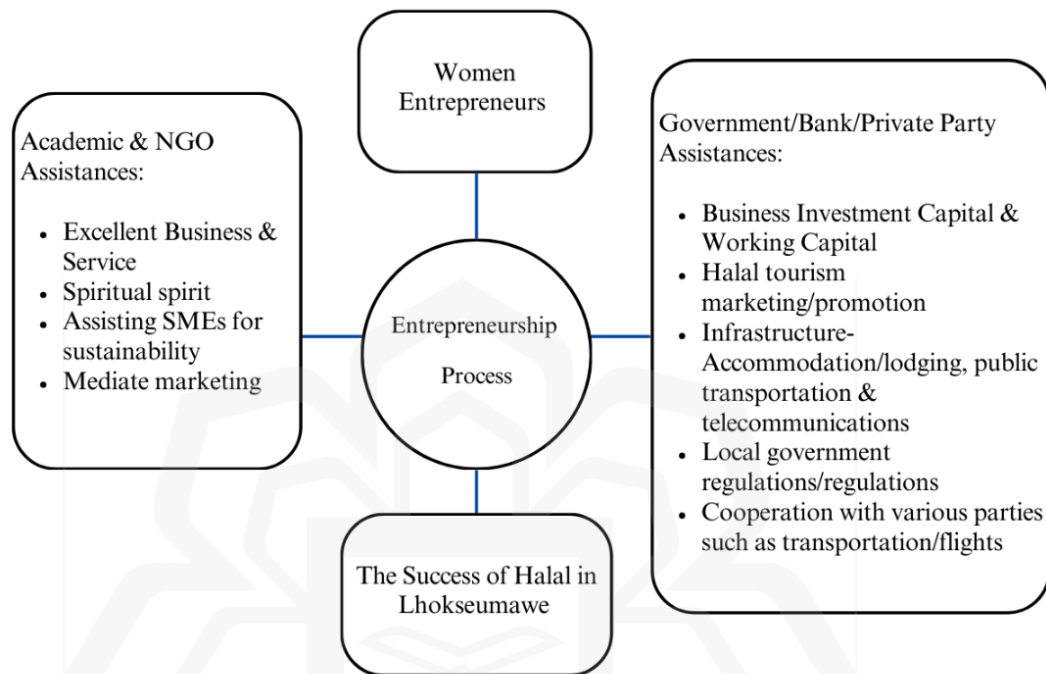


Figure 2.1 Integrative Model for Women's Entrepreneurship in Aceh
(Bachri *et al.*, 2022)

Thus, this study attempted to establish a guideline for MIWEs in obtaining halal certification. This guideline is intended to assist entrepreneurs who aspire to obtain halal certification for their company’s products or services, specifically in Perlis. The conceptual framework encompasses TPB variables such as perception (attitude), social pressures (subjective norms), and government support (perceived behavioural control) (Abu Bakar *et al.*, 2023; Anggarkasih & Resma, 2022). These elements are crucial in understanding the intentions behind obtaining halal certification and the challenges faced by MIWEs in this process. Incorporating TPB variables into the analysis of halal certification provides valuable insights into MIWEs’ intention and challenges for halal certification.

Several fundamental steps must be undertaken to establish a stable and successful business within the halal industry. This includes thorough preparation, strategic planning, registration with the appropriate authorities, and securing the necessary capital. (Department of Information Malaysia, 2018). Additionally, entrepreneurship involves creating value, identifying market opportunities, managing risks, and coordinating resources (Sugito *et al.*, 2020). Entrepreneurs in the halal industry can significantly benefit from actively seeking business opportunities and leveraging available support systems to overcome barriers (Pahwa, 2023). In addition, women entrepreneurs who participate in training programmes experience fewer difficulties in the early stages of their ventures (Higuchi, 2020; Omar *et al.*, 2014). This finding suggests that a comprehensive company plan and regular business and halal training can increase the likelihood of a business's success. Finally, the next step towards achieving an objective is implementing that plan using the resources and capabilities acquired (Richards-Gustafson, 2019). Proper implementation must be included in the business strategic plan, including the full implementation and compliance of halal standards and certification processes.

Moreover, entrepreneurs face several challenges in halal certification, which include external factors such as the presence of a consultant in the application of a halal certificate (Saiman & Yusma, 2022) and internal factors such as the lack of knowledge of halal certification (Mohamad Hilmi *et al.*, 2021), perceived complex procedures (Arif *et al.*, 2021), lack of human capital competencies (Hassan *et al.*, 2023; Mohamad Hilmi *et al.*, 2021), and lack of capital (Arif *et al.*, 2021). These challenges impact their successful obtainment of halal certification. Thus, governmental support is suggested, such as financial incentives, training, and technical assistance, which can mitigate both internal and external challenges and make it easier for MIWEs to embark on the journey in the certification process (Wijaya & Priantina, 2024). Figure 2.2 shows the conceptual framework developed for this study.

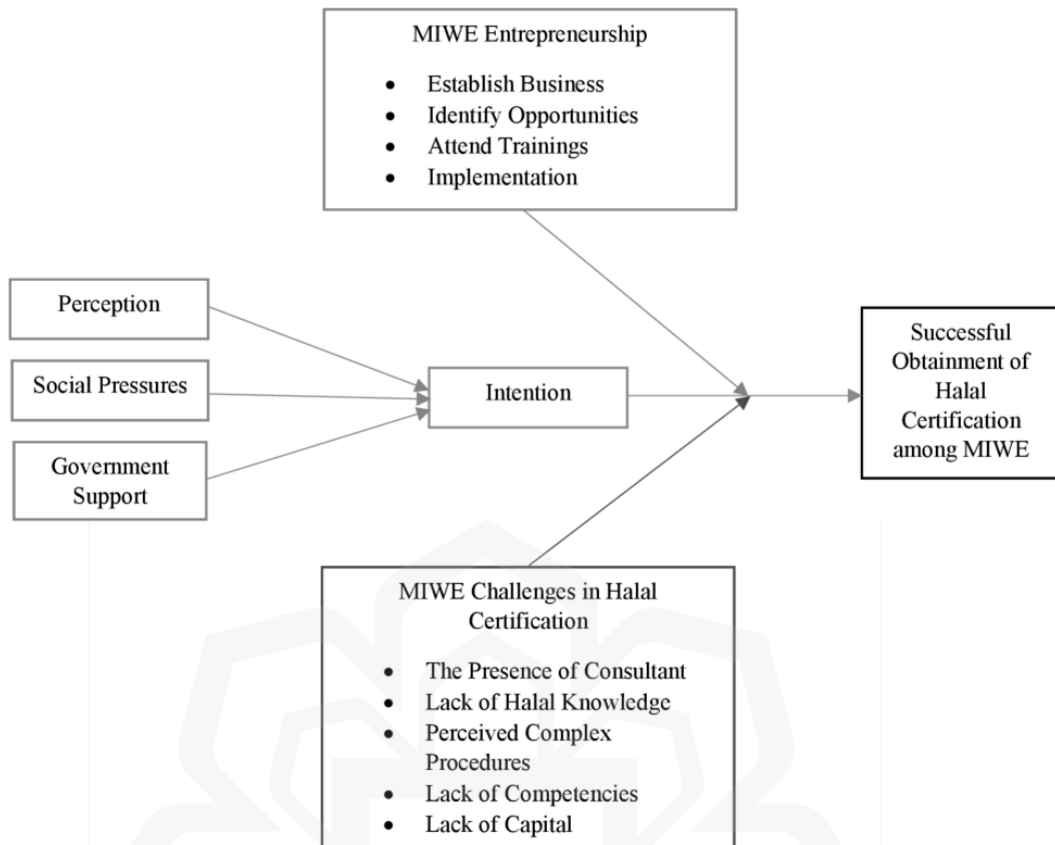


Figure 2.2 Conceptual Framework for MIWEs in Obtaining Halal Certification

2.13 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter presents the background of relevant concepts, including the definition of *halalan-tayyiban* and an overview of halal certification in Malaysia. This foundational information is crucial for comprehending the context of the study and addressing the common challenges entrepreneurs face in the halal sector. The chapter also explores the competencies of SMEs involved in halal businesses, halal manufacturing, microenterprises, and women entrepreneurs, as well as opportunities and previous government initiatives within this field. Literature reviews on the halal industry in Perlis are provided to highlight key points and identify gaps in current research. The Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) is incorporated to provide the theoretical foundation for this study. These reviews serve as a basis for the conceptual framework developed to illustrate the relationships between variables and visually represent the research. The conceptual framework ensures that the study is organised and serves as a practical

guideline for further exploration. Therefore, this chapter presents the necessary literature and gaps to ensure the study is grounded on existing knowledge and guide the subsequent chapter on research methodology.



CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter outlines the research methods and provides comprehensive details about the methodology used in this study. It discusses the research paradigm that underpins the work, particularly focusing on the interpretive approach, research design, sampling procedures, population, and sample size. Furthermore, the chapter describes the research instruments utilised, including the interview protocol. It also emphasises data collection methods, information about the informants, and the procedures for data analysis. Finally, this chapter addresses the verification processes and ethical considerations implemented throughout the study.

3.2 RESEARCH PARADIGM AND PHILOSOPHICAL ASSUMPTION

A research paradigm refers to a framework that helps to conduct research. It includes the researchers' beliefs and attitudes regarding the environment, the constructed image of the world, and the activity in it (Abdul Rehman & Alharthi, 2016; Abdullah Kamal, 2019). This framework guides the decisions that are to be made during the research. Thus, a research paradigm entails a set of philosophical beliefs that guide the researcher. On the other hand, philosophical assumptions are the foundational beliefs in research that guide the researcher's approach and influence their methodology and findings. Britannica (2023) describes philosophy as the understanding of the world and the key part of human existence and experience from a rational, formal, and systematic perspective. Based on the literature, philosophical assumptions refer to a researcher's assumptions about reality and how they determine the methodologies they will use while conducting research and data analysis (Sapkota & Paudyal, 2021). These assumptions shape the researcher's understanding of knowledge, their relationship with the participants, and the overall purpose and importance of the research. Researchers can acquire knowledge and address the research questions or gaps identified in their

studies by utilising philosophical assumptions. These assumptions also play a crucial role in establishing the credibility of the research.

A scientific research paradigm has three key philosophical dimensions: ontological, epistemological, and methodological assumptions. According to Abdul Rehman and Alharthi (2016), ontology concerns the researcher's beliefs about the nature of reality and the existence of objects or events. Epistemology entails the researcher's beliefs about the nature of knowledge and his or her stance towards the subject of study. Meanwhile, the methodology consists of the assumptions made by the researcher regarding the most suitable strategies, methods, and techniques for data acquisition and analysis. Botha and Taylor (2022) summarised that the ontological and epistemological beliefs of the researcher determine the paradigm to be adopted and help identify the appropriate methodology. For instance, if a researcher defends the idea that reality exists outside of people's awareness and can be quantified, the person will have to choose a positivist paradigm and quantitative approach, whereas if the first stance is that reality is a social construct, the most accurate choice will be interpretive paradigm and qualitative study.

There are different paradigms or approaches to research, including positivism (quantitative), interpretivism (qualitative), and pragmatism (mixed methods). Positivism is connected to quantitative approaches, emphasising empiricist theory, numerical data, and objectivity. In contrast, interpretivism uses a qualitative approach that is subjective and interpretive, which involves the interpretation of reality (meaning) and comprehension and manifests through social construction (Abou-Assali, 2014). Like pragmatism, mixed methods amalgamate quantitative and qualitative research methodologies to achieve maximum meaningful insights from the research problem (Nugrahanti, 2018). The existing literature and the underlying theory will inform the choice of research paradigm (Loan Nguyen, 2019). Every paradigm will have its own assumptions, procedures, and methods for collecting and analysing data. The research paradigm indicates the researcher's perspective on the subject and forms the foundation for any study by providing philosophical assumptions regarding its topic.

3.2.1 Interpretive Paradigm

The interpretive paradigm is adopted to achieve this study's objectives. Interpretivism examines individuals' beliefs, behaviours, and attitudes to cultural processes within their culture and social backgrounds (Pervin & Mokhtar, 2022). Abou-Assali (2014) cites that this approach relates to the norms and values belonging to or upheld by distinct populations within specific contexts. Interpretive researchers are more concerned with the search for meaning that is not captured by positivist research methods based on measurable facts or experimented upon in a laboratory. Therefore, interpretivism is subjective and relies on individual understanding rather than objective explanation (Zulfakar, 2015). The applicants obtaining halal certification are projected to encounter challenges and opportunities. Thus, an interpretive study is deemed suitable for understanding the factors that create obstacles among MIWEs while understanding the benefits they could obtain from the accreditation through the meanings and people related to the phenomenon.

Relativist ontology is the philosophical assumption that people's perceptions define numerous real realities. In the interpretative research approach, one holds a relativist philosophical stance, meaning there is no absolute truth (Loan Nguyen, 2019). Reality is external and is regarded as socially constructed by individual experiences within their social situations. Different social constructions of reality are recognized, and people may view these realities differently. In this context, it implies that different individuals or stakeholders face different experiences that could influence their realities of the halal certification process based on their backgrounds, beliefs, and contexts. Since each of the informants might have a different opinion and experience in the halal certification process, they offer the opportunity to generate rich data interpretation.

The epistemological orientation of interpretive studies is subjectivist. Knowledge is assumed to originate from interpreting and giving meaning to individual experiences and perceptions. Interpretivists rely on the facts gathered through reasoning and cognitive processes, informed by their interactions with participants to draw meaningful conclusions (Loan Nguyen, 2019). This perspective emphasises that knowledge is constructed rather than discovered, arising from social interactions between the researcher and informants. Furthermore, interpretivism focuses on

understanding how people make sense of social phenomena rather than seeking an objective representation of reality (Abdul Rehman & Alharthi, 2016). The subjectivist approach highlights that knowledge is context-dependent; for instance, the challenges faced by MIWEs in obtaining halal certification may vary based on cultural, social, and economic factors specific to Perlis. This underscores the necessity of recognising that these contextual elements shape knowledge.

Interpretivism is associated with qualitative data collection to gain descriptive data on multiple views and experiences regarding halal certification. The study occurs in the natural environment where participants experience life, focusing on documenting their behaviour with others within a specific sociocultural setting (Pervin & Mokhtar, 2022). Inductive approaches are commonly used to derive meanings from the findings and understand the phenomena (Abdul Rehman & Alharthi, 2016). Hence, the data collection and analysis are adaptive, flexible, and iterative, which allows the researcher to build new ideas or themes. Thus, qualitative research methods are preferred to gather data to understand individual experiences and meanings (Abdullah Kamal, 2019). Some of the common methods include interviews, observations, content analysis, case studies, action research, and grounded theory. Unlike quantitative data, which involves numerical values, qualitative data is gathered to provide a precise account and explanation of the investigated phenomenon (Abdul Rehman & Alharthi, 2016). This approach allows for an exploration of the diverse perspectives on halal certification.

To conclude, the interpretive study approach is considered appropriate for uncovering and capturing the involvement, challenges, and opportunities among MIWEs in attaining halal certification. This enabled the researcher to evaluate the meaning and perceptions of people based on sociocultural contexts, thereby offering a better apprehension of the situation. In addition to gaining knowledge from the literature reviews, interpretive research subjectively constructs socially real phenomena as a foundation for developing new data. This is because, through the interview process, the researcher obtained multiple perspectives and gained more insights into the issue. This study covered the different stakeholders in implementing halal certification, which produces a high level of descriptive and elaborated data. In analysing the collected data, the researcher had a firsthand account of how social, economic, and other factors impact the entrepreneur's business and actions in pursuing halal certification. Additionally, the

qualitative data collection method enabled the researcher to capture the richness of people's experiences and understand their interpretations of social phenomena in halal certification.

3.3 QUALITATIVE RESEARCH DESIGN

Research design functions as a systematic framework that directs the entire research process. It acts as a comprehensive plan or blueprint that details the study's methods for data collection, analysis, and interpretation (Khanday & Khanam, 2019). In Asenahabi's (2019) study, the research design illustrates the approaches and methods the researcher should follow to achieve the research objectives. It connects conceptual research problems with empirical research and allows the conversion of research problems into analysed data to answer the questions appropriately. Moreover, it outlines the type of data to be collected, how it will be collected and analysed, and the role of the data when responding to the study's research questions, as highlighted by Khanday and Khanam (2019). This entails a strategy to show how the collected data and results would be interpreted to arrive at logical conclusions that form a part of the research.

There are three principal types of research design: quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods. This study used a qualitative research design to examine the phenomena and meanings as they exist in real-life contexts, attitudes, perceptions, emotions and actions. Qualitative research is concerned with providing extensive information about the subject matter under study (Moser & Korstjens, 2018). Tenny *et al.* (2022) underlined that this type of approach is common in the field of social sciences and enables to delve deeply into personal and complex issues, resulting in rich qualitative data. It includes collecting data in the natural environment of the informants, such as observations of participants, interviews, and focus groups. The emphasis is placed on collecting data that can offer a deeper understanding of people's attitudes and perceptions of the subject of investigation. Qualitative data collection fundamentally differs from quantitative approaches in its goals and methods. Qualitative data collection aims not to produce a sample statistic representing the entire population but to better understand the phenomenon of interest (Tenny *et al.*, 2022). In addition, qualitative research is inductive and exploratory, focusing on understanding complex

human behaviours and experiences through rich, contextual data. Conversely, quantitative research is deductive and structured, concentrating on testing specific hypotheses through numerical data (Asenahabi, 2019).

The inherent value of personal data collection through interviews underscores the necessity of face-to-face interactions in qualitative research. Agazu *et al.* (2022) pointed out that face-to-face interactions with informants, a feature of qualitative analysis, are needed to obtain personal data to contribute to a richer understanding of the informant's perspective on the topic. Open-ended questions are commonly used in qualitative research, where data is gathered and analysed to develop a hypothesis (Tenny *et al.*, 2022). Interviews capture the informant's attitude, knowledge, and sentiment on a particular topic. Gestural communication, including facial expressions, vocal intonation and non-verbal communication patterns, offers additional insights into the feelings or perspectives that the informants have regarding a given issue. It enables the researchers to investigate and assess the established themes and patterns from the gathered data, resulting in relevant conclusions and solutions.

The qualitative research method was employed for this investigation to gain a deeper understanding of the involvement and challenges faced by Micro-Industry Women Entrepreneurs (MIWEs) in obtaining halal certification and to explore the opportunities available in Perlis. Given the limited existing research on these challenges, qualitative methods were deemed essential for providing an in-depth analysis of the subject. This approach is particularly valuable as it can yield practical insights that entrepreneurs can apply to their situations based on their perceptions and experiences.

Semi-structured interviews were utilised to gather data, allowing for a flexible yet focused dialogue between the researcher and informants. These interviews included questions designed to elicit MIWEs' perspectives on halal certification, their specific business goals, relevant training or education they pursued, and the internal and external constraints they encountered before obtaining the certification. Additionally, experts such as halal personnel, agency officers, and academicians involved in the Perlis halal industry were interviewed to assess their experiences with halal certification implementation and their views on quality, strategy, and training programs.

This qualitative approach facilitated personal interactions that encouraged candid responses from informants, leading to more authentic findings. The insights from these interviews provided clear evidence of the involvement, challenges and opportunities associated with halal certification for MIWEs in Perlis. By employing this method, the study effectively captured the nuanced realities of stakeholders' experiences within this sector, contributing valuable knowledge to an area that has previously received little attention in research.

3.4 SAMPLING

Sampling is the act of choosing a certain number of people from a large group to use them to represent the population in a study. This technique is vital because it is often impossible to census an entire population because of limitations like time, cost and access to the target population (Tuovila, 2024). This means the researchers can generalize the results through a well-selected sample size. Sampling methods can be categorized into two main types: probability sampling, a type in which each element in the population has a known line of possibility and is randomly selected, and the other type of sampling, which is not based on chance and has criteria, is non-probability sampling (McCombes, 2019). Sampling is an essential factor to consider in research as it reduces prejudice while increasing the reliability of conclusions from the collected sample data.

3.4.1 Research Population

In research, the term "population" refers to all units of analysis that share specific characteristics relevant to the study. For this particular research, the population included women entrepreneurs who operate microenterprises, a halal auditor in Perlis, agency officials in Perlis, and academics engaged in halal research within the region. The population represents a complete group of individuals, objects, or events that share at least one common characteristic within a defined demographic, geographical area, or timeframe pertinent to the study (Willie, 2022). Characteristics such as age, ethnicity, economic status, education level, marital status, and employment status can describe

the population of interest (Majid, 2018). The target population includes all specific traits or criteria the researcher intends to examine to address the research questions effectively. This target population is a subset of the larger population from which researchers aim to draw conclusions and generalise their findings to a broader interest audience.

Perlis was selected for its significant population of *Bumiputera* and active SMEs (Department of Statistics Malaysia, 2023b; Hassan *et al.*, 2023). Additionally, Perlis has the potential to be positioned as a Northern Halal Hub in Malaysia, offering strategic advantages (Rafie *et al.*, 2021; Yusuf *et al.*, 2018). This study concentrated on locations such as Arau, Kangar, and Simpang Empat, characterised by high economic activity and accessible infrastructure (NADI, n.d.; Sharif, 2023). Furthermore, the potential for Perlis to develop as a tourism destination, as noted by Ibrahim and Ahmad (2020), could create additional opportunities for SMEs to showcase their products and services across various sectors. As one of Malaysia's least developed states with a low GDP contribution (Shahabuddin *et al.*, 2022), focusing on this region enabled a deeper exploration of local stakeholders' unique involvement, challenges, and opportunities in the halal certification landscape.

This research specifically targeted the group of MIWEs from the food manufacturing sector, halal personnel, agency officials, and academicians involved in the halal industry. This focused population enabled the researcher to collect in-depth insights into these stakeholders' distinct experiences and viewpoints regarding the halal certification processes. Hence, the population consists of Micro-Industry Women Entrepreneurs (MIWEs) in Perlis, the Department of Islamic Religious Affairs Perlis (JAIPs), Perlis People's Trust Council (MARA), the Young Agricultural Development Board (MADA Region 1), Perlis State Department of Agriculture (Pertanian) and SME Corporation. Three academicians from the Northern University of Malaysia (UUM) and Perlis Islamic University College (KUIPs) were selected to participate. By concentrating on these specific stakeholders, the researcher can probe into their backgrounds and roles, uncovering their distinct challenges within the halal certification framework. This approach is crucial because it allows for a nuanced understanding of the operational dynamics and regulatory environment influencing halal certification in Perlis, thereby enhancing the overall quality and relevance of the research findings.

3.4.2 Sample Size

A sample size of approximately 15 to 20 informants for this qualitative research study was justified by data saturation, which is pivotal in qualitative inquiry. The sample size is the number of informants or sampling units utilised in a study. According to Vasileiou *et al.* (2018), qualitative research typically does not adhere to fixed sample size guidelines, as the focus is on achieving a depth of understanding rather than generalisability. Data saturation describes the extent to which newly collected data are repetitive of what was found in previously collected data (Saunders *et al.*, 2018). The researcher attempted to continue sampling until no new information emerged, ensuring that the data collected sufficiently addressed the research questions regarding halal certification's involvement, challenges and opportunities in Perlis. This approach aligned with Marshall *et al.* (2013), who noted that sample sizes in qualitative studies are often based on practical considerations rather than strict numerical justification. By adopting a medium size sample of 15 to 20 participants, as claimed by Arif *et al.* (2021), the study can effectively gather rich, nuanced insights from key informants, including MIWEs, a halal auditor, agency officers and academicians, while avoiding redundancy in data collection. This strategy emphasises the importance of depth over breadth in qualitative research, allowing for a comprehensive exploration of the subject matter.

3.4.3 Sampling Procedures

For this study, the researcher utilised two non-probability sampling techniques, a combination of purposive and snowball sampling methods, to recruit informants. Purposive sampling is selecting a sample based on the study's objectives. According to Tongco (2007), purposive sampling, or judgment sampling, involves selecting an informant based on predetermined criteria. Etikan (2016) mentioned that purposive sampling involves identifying and recruiting qualified people or groups concerning a specific interest phenomenon. Besides knowledge, availability and willingness to participate are essential in choosing the informants (Tongco, 2007). Thus, purposive sampling allows the researchers to answer their research questions and fulfil their objectives by focusing on a specific population subset that meets those criteria.

The selection criteria for informants in this research are crucial for ensuring the relevance and depth of the data collected regarding the halal certification landscape. The focus on women entrepreneurs who own microenterprises in the food manufacturing industry is justified by the requirement that these individuals possess a workshop, small factory, shop, or similar establishment, as stipulated in the JAKIM manual procedure for halal certification (Arif *et al.*, 2021). This criterion ensures that participants have firsthand experience with the halal certification process, which is essential for gathering authentic insights. Women entrepreneurs running small enterprises were included to participate as informants to provide more insights from their perspectives.

Including halal certificate holders and non-holders among MIWEs is particularly important for comparative analysis. This allowed the researcher to compare the challenges faced by those who have successfully obtained certification with those who have not, thereby enriching the understanding of challenges and opportunities within the industry.

Furthermore, selecting officers from relevant government agencies—such as JAIPs, MARA Perlis, MADA Region 1, the Perlis State Department of Agriculture and SME Corporation—ensured that informants possess the necessary experience and knowledge regarding halal certification. Their roles in agencies that support entrepreneurs in entrepreneurial activities and halal certification procedures further enhanced the credibility of their insights. Including academicians with expertise in halal research from institutions like Northern University of Malaysia (UUM) and Perlis Islamic University College (KUIPs) added a scholarly perspective to the study, grounded in their research experience and knowledge of local halal practices.

Finally, considering additional characteristics such as age, marital status, education level, and work status for data analysis helped to contextualise responses and identify potential demographic influences on perspectives regarding halal certification. Age can influence an individual's experience and attitude towards halal certification, as different age groups may have varying levels of exposure to halal practices and regulations. For example, younger entrepreneurs might be more open to innovative halal compliance practices than their older counterparts, who may rely on traditional methods

(Musa & Hashim, 2022). Marital status may also affect women entrepreneurs' entrepreneurial journey and decision-making processes. For example, married women might face different challenges than single entrepreneurs, in balancing family responsibilities with business operations, as highlighted by Syed Salleh and Mansor (2022). Understanding these dynamics can shed light on the support systems and barriers that women face in the halal industry. Education was also considered based on its influence on understanding halal concepts and requirements (Musa & Hashim, 2022). In addition, work positions among experts were included to capture a broader spectrum of insights regarding the research objectives.

Overall, the criteria listed below were designed to ensure that the data collected reflects a rich tapestry of experiences and viewpoints, ultimately enhancing the study's relevance and depth in understanding the halal certification landscape in Perlis.

Table 3.1 Criteria of Informants

Informant	Characteristic
Entrepreneurs	Gender (female)
	Size of business (micro and small)
	The sector of the business (food manufacturing)
	Business establishment (workshop, small factory, or shop)
	Status of halal certification (holders and non-holders)
	Location of business (Arau, Kangar and Simpang Empat)
Agency Officers	Have expertise and experience in halal certification at Perlis.
Academicians	Have knowledge and experience in halal research/industry in Perlis.

	Other relevant characteristics for all informants (age, marital status, education level and work position).
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On the other hand, the snowball sampling method was used because it is particularly useful when searching for individuals who are difficult to locate. This technique relies on existing informants to refer new participants, creating a "chain-referral" effect that can significantly expand the sample size (Naderifar *et al.*, 2017). In this study, initial informants were sourced from lists provided by JAIPs and MADA; however, due to limited information regarding Micro-Industry Women Entrepreneurs (MIWEs) in Perlis, locating additional informants proved challenging. The snowball sampling method facilitated the referral process, enabling the researcher to identify potential informants through existing participants until an adequate sample size was achieved.

Moreover, using non-probability sampling methods like snowball sampling inherently limits the generalisability of the findings to the broader population (Etikan, 2016). This is because such methods do not involve random selection; instead, participants are chosen based on specific criteria and their ability to refer others within their networks. Consequently, while the results may not represent the entire population, they will provide valuable insights into the experiences and challenges faced by MIWEs to obtain halal certification in Perlis.

3.5 RESEARCH INSTRUMENT

Generally, a research instrument can be understood as a tool to collect and analyse data. Research data is the evidence used to back up claims made by the researcher about the study's findings and conclusions (Sathiyaseelan, 2015). These instruments can take various forms, including questionnaires, surveys, interviews, and observational checklists, and are essential for gathering evidence. Interview, as defined by Moser and Korstjens, (2018), is the interaction that takes place between the researcher and the informants based on the interview questions. Interviews allow the researcher to collect

in-depth data and explore the participants' perspectives on the Perlis halal certification's involvement, challenges, and opportunities.

3.5.1 Semi-structured Interviews

Semi-structured interviews were used as the primary data collection method for this study. The rationale for using semi-structured interviews as this study's primary data collection instrument is its reliability in generating qualitative, in-depth discussions, open-ended questions and information. As such, it encourages the flow of conversation and leaves the informants more inclined and able to share their experiences, especially when discussing sensitive issues (Moser & Korstjens, 2018). Thus, it provides new information about the informants' perspectives on halal certification which were not covered in previous studies (Yeong *et al.*, 2018). This demonstrates the flexibility of semi-structured interviews, which allow the researcher to focus on the main topic while being responsive to every informant. Thus, the informant may spontaneously jump from one topic to another on the researcher's question checklists, and the researcher will mark each topic off without asking the corresponding question.

Semi-structured interviews were employed as the main method for data collection in this study. This approach was chosen due to its effectiveness in facilitating qualitative, in-depth discussions through open-ended questions. It fosters a conversational atmosphere, encouraging informants to share their experiences more freely, particularly when addressing sensitive topics (Moser & Korstjens, 2018). Consequently, this method yields new insights into the informants' views on halal certification that have not been explored in previous research (Yeong *et al.*, 2018). The flexibility of semi-structured interviews allows the researcher to concentrate on the central theme while remaining adaptable to each informant's responses. As a result, informants may naturally transition between topics based on the researcher's prompts, and the researcher can note these topics without necessarily following the predetermined question order.

The interview questions for this study were developed based on insights gathered from previous research regarding the challenges faced by small and medium

enterprises (SMEs) and women entrepreneurs and the opportunities associated with obtaining halal certification in Perlis. Relevant information was also sourced from key documents such as the Manual Procedure of Malaysia Halal Certification (MMPHM Domestic 2020) and the Malaysian Halal Management System (MHMS 2020). These sources provided essential details on current standards and processes that microenterprise entrepreneurs must navigate, ensuring the interview questions were tailored to their needs.

Before conducting the interviews, the questions underwent a review process by supervisory committees, allowing for feedback and suggestions to refine the questionnaires further. This iterative approach ensured that the questions were relevant, clear, and effectively designed to elicit meaningful responses from informants. The finalised questions for both entrepreneurs and key personnel are included in Appendix II.

Face-to-face interviews were employed to gather informants' detailed perceptions, feelings, opinions, and experiences by relying on the established interview protocols. Yeong *et al.* (2018) observed that this format encourages informants to speak freely and share their insights in a comfortable environment. Each interview lasted between 20 to 60 minutes, allowing ample time for in-depth discussions. Before the interviews, a questionnaire developed from various literature reviews was used as an interview guide to ensure that all relevant topics were covered. The interviews were conducted in the informants' mother tongue (Malay) to facilitate communication, particularly for those who may have difficulty understanding English. The responses were later translated into English for analysis.

In situations where face-to-face interviews were not feasible, the researcher adopted online interviews. Khan and MacEachen (2022) suggested that this method is particularly beneficial when informants are difficult to reach offline or when geographical constraints exist. Online interviews offer increased flexibility, reduced time and costs associated with travel and can help alleviate any apprehension informants may feel about participating in the study. Additionally, online formats can enhance self-disclosure and provide anonymity that might encourage more honest responses. Social apps such as WhatsApp and Google Meet facilitated these online interviews. Before

conducting the online interviews, the researcher established a systematic ethical framework to address all ethical considerations, including informed consent, confidentiality, and data security.

3.5.2 Interview Protocol

To collect high-quality interview data, having a dependable interview protocol is essential. According to Yeong *et al.* (2018), the interview protocol can be defined as the procedural guideline that dictates how an interview is conducted, including how the question will be asked, the consent from the informants, the tone and behaviour, and the timing of the interview. It is to ensure that the interview is standardised to produce more reliable and valid results. Hence, based on the findings by Castillo-Montoya (2016) and Yeong *et al.* (2018), the protocols followed several stages as below:

A reliable interview protocol is crucial to gathering high-quality interview data. As noted by Yeong *et al.* (2018), an interview protocol serves as a procedural guideline that outlines the conduct of the interview, including how questions are posed, obtaining consent from informants, the tone and demeanour of the interviewer, and the timing of the session. This standardisation is necessary to achieve more consistent and valid results. Therefore, drawing on the findings of Castillo-Montoya (2016) and Yeong *et al.* (2018), the protocols were structured in several stages as outlined below:

a) Collecting Consent from the Informants

The initial step in the interview process involved obtaining informed consent from the informants. This included asking their willingness to participate in the study and seeking permission to audio-record the session. To ensure that informants feel comfortable and informed, five minutes were allocated at the beginning of each interview for them to ask any relevant questions regarding the study, its purpose, and their involvement. Confidentiality is of the utmost importance in this research; therefore, all informants will be assured that their responses will be treated with the highest level of secrecy (Wiles *et al.*, 2008). This commitment to confidentiality is essential for building trust

between the researcher and the informants. Additionally, the informants were informed they had the right to withdraw from the study without any negative consequences. This transparency was to respect their autonomy and foster a supportive environment where informants feel safe to share their insights openly.

b) Constructing a Conversation Based on Inquiries

The next stage involved designing interview protocols with a good mix of questions and free-form discussion. The aim was to conduct the interviews using everyday conversational language based on the formally proposed questions that had been formulated. An example of this is as below:

Question draft: Can you share your opinion on halal certification?

Question during the interview: I was wondering if you could explain how you came to learn about halal certification. Can you share about it?

The researcher used a script to open and conclude the interviews, starting with basic or introductory questions regarding the interviewee's educational and career background and then progressing to transitional questions that connected the introductory inquiries to the key questions. It should be noted that the key questions were those most relevant to the research questions and the study's objectives. Then, the researcher wrapped up the interview with questions designed to give closure to the informants. At the end of the session, the researcher expressed gratitude for the opportunity and provided time for any questions that arose. Additionally, the researcher spoke appropriately and respectfully, using a comfortable language style for the interviewees. The questionnaire script is attached to Appendix II, while the interview script is included in Appendix III.

c) Managing Time and Emotion

When developing the procedure, keeping the allocated time of around 20 to 60 minutes for the interviews in mind was important. This consideration helped prevent placing an extra burden on the informants and avoided excessive conversation. The researcher had to consider who was being questioned; for instance, the time allotted for a busy officer should not exceed the stipulated limit to avoid causing vexation. Therefore, it was essential that the questions formulated and asked were relevant and appropriate to the context. Furthermore, the researcher was mindful of the tone used during the interviews and avoided being swayed by strong emotions that could lead to provocative or invasive questions. For example, the researcher remained polite, friendly, and approachable in actions and words while demonstrating self-composure when faced with unfamiliar situations or unexpected responses from informants.

d) Piloting the Interview Protocols

The pilot phase assessed the interview protocol's feasibility, applicability, and validity. Additionally, the pilot phase helped fine-tune the questions and approach of the interviews themselves. The pilot test was administered to friends, family members, and supervisors to confirm comprehensible questions. Sample interviews were used to better understand the amount of time required for the interviews and whether the informants could effectively answer the questions. Through pilot testing, the researcher obtained useful feedback to improve the questionnaires, making them clearer and more conversational. The critiques provided valuable insights and demonstrated the interviewees' body language and facial expressions. Thus, when conducting interviews for data gathering, it was beneficial to go through a series of mock interviews to familiarise oneself with the questions and their sequence.

3.6 DATA COLLECTION PROCEDURES

This research used semi-structured interviews to determine the involvement, challenges, and opportunities of obtaining halal certification in Perlis among MIWEs.

Thus, the researcher began the fieldwork once the pilot study concluded. Following the study by Griffiee (2005), several steps were considered in conducting the semi-structured interviews.

a) Selecting Informants

Informants were selected using the purposive sampling technique, which considered certain characteristics (Syafril & Yaumas, 2018). The chosen informants were able to provide the researcher with the necessary information about the study. Office visits were made to the Department of Islamic Religious Affairs Perlis (JAIPs) and the Young Agricultural Development Board (MADA) to obtain a list of potential informants. Consequently, the researcher selected informants based on established characteristics and location, specifically targeting micro-industry women entrepreneurs in the food manufacturing sector. Several entrepreneurs were chosen based on suggestions from locals and families and are well-known in the community. Next, the experts included officers from JAIPs, MARA, MADA, Pertanian, SME Corporation, and academicians from UUM and KUIPs, with relevant experience and expertise in halal certification matters. These experts were chosen as informants based on recommendations from acquaintances in the food industry and individuals from government agencies.

b) Gathering the Contact Information

The second step required the researcher to gather their contact information to convey the message. In addition to the provided lists, some entrepreneurs' contact information was collected through social media, shop banners, JAKIM's directory, and the agency's database. Meanwhile, emails and contact numbers of official agency representatives and lecturers were collected through their agencies or organisations, either via phone calls or office visits.

c) Contacting the Informants

They were contacted by email or phone number to inform them of the researcher's intentions to conduct an interview session and to provide a referral letter from the institution. The researcher also visited the government agency headquarters to interact with officials in person and learn more about agency programs and halal certification while informing them about future interview sessions, should they consent.

d) Determining the Appointment with Informants

After obtaining their agreement and consent to interview through emails or messages, the appointment was determined, and the informants finalised the time, date, and location according to their availability and willingness.

e) Conducting the Interview Session

During the interview, the researcher structured the session into three phases: introduction, key questions, and closing. At the outset, consent was sought from the informants to confirm their approval to audio record the session. The researcher dedicated five minutes to explaining the procedures, objectives, and transcription process that would follow. Informants were encouraged to ask any relevant questions beforehand. They were assured they could omit any personal or confidential information and had the right to withdraw from the study anytime. Confidentiality of the data was emphasised. The interviews were recorded using a standard smartphone with the informants' consent to ensure comprehensive data capture. Each interview lasted between 20 to 60 minutes, although a few informants opted not to be recorded. The researcher followed a set of interview questions and protocols to facilitate a smooth discussion. Written notes were taken during the sessions to capture new ideas and track the conversation topics. One informant from SME Corporation was interviewed while the researcher attended a seminar organized by the SME Mentoring Program, titled "Jom Apply Halal," hosted by the Halal Development Corporation (HDC), Nestlé Malaysia, and SME Corp. Malaysia in Petaling Jaya, Selangor. This interview was

conducted due to the officer's availability, which provided an opportunity for participant inquiries. After the session, the researcher expressed gratitude for the chance to conduct the interview.

f) Obtaining Interview Referrals

The second method applied in this study was snowball sampling. This approach involved chain referrals, where previous informants recruited new informants to be interviewed. At the end of the session, the entrepreneurs or officers were asked to suggest potential informants who could be interviewed in the future. These interviews lasted for about six months until the researcher reached data saturation.

3.7 INFORMATION OF INFORMANTS

Information regarding the informants interviewed was presented in Table A of Appendix IV. Fifteen informants participated in this study, including seven MIWEs from the food manufacturing sector. The other informants included one halal auditor from the Department of Islamic Religious Affairs Perlis (JAIPs), four officers from the Perlis State People's Trust Council (MARA Perlis) who also served as a Halal Executive, the Young Agricultural Development Board (MADA Region 1), the Perlis State Department of Agriculture (Pertanian Perlis), and SME Corporation. Additionally, three academicians from Northern University of Malaysia (UUM) and Perlis Islamic University College (KUIPs), who are also halal executives, participated in the study.

Table A in Appendix IV provides the demographic details of the informants and details about the interview process, including the informant's name, educational level, position, geographical location, company information, and interview date. However, the identities of two informants are withheld upon their request to be omitted from the list. This practice adheres to the ethical research guidelines to safeguard the sensitive data of participants (Wiles *et al.*, 2008). Regarding the description code, the letter 'E' represents Women Entrepreneur, whilst 'H' represents Halal Auditor. Meanwhile, the letter 'O' indicates Agency Officer, while 'A' stands for Academician.

Consequently, seven MIWEs, one halal auditor, four agency personnel, and three academicians were selected based on their characteristics, willingness, and availability to participate as research informants. The informants generally come from diverse educational backgrounds and areas of expertise. It is important to note that all entrepreneurs involved were engaged in the microenterprise manufacturing of food products, such as packed food, pastries, cakes, cookies, chips, and multipurpose cooking paste. The entrepreneurs are located at Arau (E1, E2, and E3), Kangar (E4, E5, and E6) and Simpang Empat (E7). Additionally, three entrepreneurs—E2, E4, and E7 have experience acquiring and implementing halal certification, whereas others do not. These women entrepreneurs demonstrated dedication and commitment to their businesses and maintained a positive attitude towards adopting halal certification. Moreover, two informants were interviewed based on the snowball sampling recommendations from previous informants (E3 and E7). Meanwhile, E2 and E7 are small business owners with firsthand experience in halal certification, who previously operated their businesses on a micro scale. Their experiences transitioning from micro to small businesses and the halal certification procedure are extremely beneficial in this study.

Several experts from government agencies in Perlis, including halal auditors from JAIPs (H1), and personnel from MARA, MADA, and Pertanian (O1, O2, and O3), are officials with diverse expertise in entrepreneurial activities and experiences related to the implementation of halal certification and the halal industry in Perlis. The decision to select these individuals was based on the active involvement of these agencies in entrepreneurial activities and development within Perlis. Meanwhile, O4, an officer from SME Corporation, was interviewed during the researcher's visit to a program established by HDC, Nestlé, and SME Corporation Malaysia. The officer's extensive knowledge and firsthand experience provided valuable perspectives on the involvement, challenges, and opportunities of halal certification among entrepreneurs in Malaysia. Three academicians who are also halal executives and have knowledge and experience with the halal industry and certification process were selected as experts. Although one academician was not based in Perlis, which may have limited the representation of the subject study, the study clarified and identified inputs and factors that might be common or specific among entrepreneurs in the halal industry. While this study did not involve a large sample size, the selected informants had significant

responsibilities and firsthand experiences in Perlis's halal industry and entrepreneurial activities.

3.8 DATA ANALYSIS PROCEDURES

A research study is incomplete without data analysis, a process carried out once the data collection procedures are completed. According to Arif *et al.* (2021), data is evaluated by managing and synthesising the data, then examining the results and interpreting the findings.

3.8.1 Deductive-Inductive Analysis

Therefore, this study adopted a holistic deductive and inductive methodology to analyse the data collected. The deductive approach focuses on validating an existing theory. As such, an assumption or hypothesis is used to support a conclusion in a deductive approach. When there is a well-defined hypothesis or collection of research questions, a deductive method might be helpful to test it in a new context (Cho & Lee, 2014). Research is conducted by considering a broad concept or theory and applying it to a particular situation. In other words, it concludes the general idea to the specific. It usually begins with creating a set of codes or categories based on relevant past literature concerning the topic. Then, it evaluates and compares the data from various cases to see whether it fits those codes and to draw conclusions.

The inductive approach is guided by a specific research objective to generate concepts, themes, or a model through the researcher's interpretation of unprocessed data and is thematic. It is appropriate for studies in which prior knowledge of the investigated event is limited (Cho & Lee, 2014). The inductive approach relies heavily on the experiences provided by informants or observations to identify the patterns to construct a hypothesis from the collected data (Azungah, 2018; Streefkerk, 2019). To simplify, the inductive approach proceeds from the specific to the general, beginning with collecting data through interviews or observations, doing a comprehensive review of the transcribed data, designating codes to contexts, and lastly, drawing general

conclusions. Thus, this paper presents both deductive and inductive approaches to the procedures.

a) Deductive Data Analysis

This paper first applied a deductive approach to examine SME entrepreneurs' critical challenges in obtaining halal certification. Following the deductive procedures by Cho and Lee (2014), the initial step was to select the data unit. This was the selection of relevant past literature on the challenges SMEs face in halal certification. Data selection is meant to be data reduction. The data were familiarised to determine the main aspects of the study. For instance, the theme derived was halal certification's unique challenges and benefits for MIWEs.

The next step was data coding. Coding can be defined as the process of organising and classifying data collected for a research study according to themes or issues (Medelyan, 2023). For this study, data collected from a series of literature reviews and interviews were organised into categories based on the research questions formulated for the investigation. The previous interviews were transcribed into written form, as suggested by McMullin (2023). The researcher repeatedly listened to the audio recordings to ensure no critical data was left behind and to transcribe it into contextual content. The language of the data was translated from Malay to English. Any information that can breach the confidentiality of informants was also omitted from the context.

From a deductive standpoint, the data was coded first and categorised into the core concepts based on the research questions such as the factors that posed the challenge to the implementation of halal certification and the opportunities provided by related government agencies. This process required meticulous reading and reviewing to identify the core concepts from the data. The core concepts acted as the checklist which became the study's initial focus in identifying other themes or patterns related to the research questions (Azungah, 2018). After that, the checklist was divided in smaller categories to minimise the data size.

b) Inductive Data Analysis

After developing the data category from deductive analysis, the researcher utilised an inductive approach to gather data and look for themes or patterns that either support or disprove the hypothesis. As explained in Azungah (2018), the researcher must read texts slowly, line by line and assign codes to the significant paragraphs or passages. Consequently, each interview transcription was examined and revisited multiple times to identify patterns or themes relevant to the research questions of this study. To make it easier, the researcher lined the text or designated relevant words or sentences to identify and group identical text parts in transcripts in an open coding method.

After the coding process was completed, the researcher developed the themes and grouped them in an organised manner, using tables or graphs. In this case, the core concepts and themes were identified through the lenses of research questions (Cho & Lee, 2014). Microsoft Sheets also compiled the themes and connected the primary checklist to newly occurring themes.

The summaries of the themes informed the subsequent inductive analysis, which aimed to reveal the involvement, challenges, and opportunities faced by MIWEs in obtaining halal certification and finalising the guidelines. This method was selected to identify participation factors and relevant concepts based on the informants' experiences and perspectives in addressing the research questions. The inductive approach focused on uncovering themes that had not been previously discussed in the literature. However, it is worth noting that some deductive elements may also appear in the inductive analysis. For instance, if there are established theories or hypotheses related to these challenges, researchers might use them as a framework to compare data across themes within these categories. This process enhanced the researcher's understanding of the connections between the data and the concepts. The final step involved drawing conclusions based on the interpretation of the data, which either supported or contradicted the existing framework or theory.

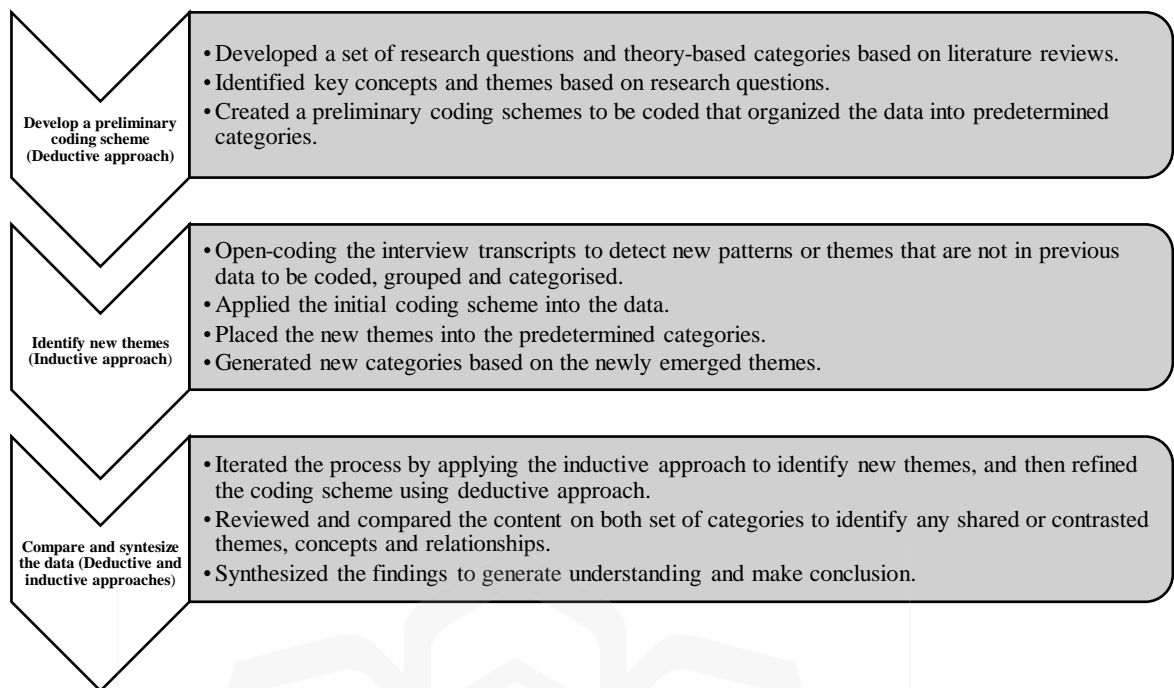


Figure 3.1 Data Analysis Procedures Using Deductive and Inductive Approaches

3.9 VERIFICATION STRATEGIES AND ETHICAL ISSUES

The actions of checking, affirming, and assuring are included in the verification process. In qualitative research, the term ‘verification’, as from Lincoln and Guba’s concept, aims at determining the trustworthiness of a study which is equivalent to reliability and validity and therefore, reflects the strength of the study (Morse *et al.*, 2002). The verification process is conducted to yield the most accurate results in research. On that account, this study exercised verification through several measures to ensure trustworthiness: credibility (triangulation), transferability (thick description), confirmability (audit trail) and dependability (peer examination).

Data triangulation refers to an approach used to increase the credibility and validity of research findings by establishing identifiable patterns from multiple sources of data (Stahl & King, 2020). Therefore, the data were gathered through several informants with shared characteristics.

Transferability can be defined as the ability to use the results in similar settings, and this can be done by offering a detailed and clear methodological account (Stahl & King, 2020). Thus, this study provided a rich, clear, and accurate picture that gave beneficial insights for other researchers who were conducting comparative studies.

Confirmability means the data are rechecked thoroughly to ensure they are free of biases by providing an audit trail that demonstrates each step of the data analysis (Nyirenda *et al.*, 2020). This was performed by summarising each question asked during the interview, in which the informants could confirm or clarify their answers. In addition, feedback and evaluations were also acquired from other master's students with similar experiences in the same study on the interpretation of data.

Dependability refers to the assurance that the findings can be reproduced and whether researchers have a consensus when using many observers (Nyirenda *et al.*, 2020). A graduate student or PhD candidate in INHART or other universities acted as a peer reviewer. The themes were sent and discussed with the supervisor to check the suitability of the themes to be adopted in this study before writing the findings.

Next, the principles of confidentiality, anonymity, and consensus from the informants were also practised throughout the research to demonstrate the proper ethics. Confidentiality demonstrates cooperation between the researcher and the informants based on their agreement to maintain the secrecy of information. In addition, anonymity refers to anonymising the participants' information so that it cannot be used to identify them (Wiles *et al.*, 2008). Consequently, the consensus of informants was secured beforehand through appropriate notification. They were only included in this study after the researcher obtained their complete agreement and consent, and they were allowed to withdraw from the study. In addition, the informants were asked for their consent before the interview was recorded so that they were aware of their privacy rights.

3.10 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter focuses on the methodology that is considered appropriate for this research. An introduction to the research paradigm and philosophical assumptions is presented,

which includes an elaboration on the interpretive paradigm. This justifies the chosen sampling methods, including the research population, sample size, and sampling procedures. The chapter also describes the research instruments, specifically the semi-structured interviews and the interview protocols. Additionally, it specifies how data were collected and analysed through relevant procedures. Information regarding the informants who participated in the interviews is also included. Finally, the chapter highlights the verification and ethical strategies implemented throughout the study. Next, the fourth chapter will showcase the data gathered using the methodology and procedures outlined in this chapter.



CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter details the data analysis and the implications of the results. Based on the research questions and the methodology presented in previous chapters, the collected qualitative data were transcribed, processed, and summarised into a coherent format before they were coded and reported. Next, recurrent themes and patterns were identified and extracted from the research findings. This chapter also discusses prior studies and literature, where possible and relevant, to compare the similarities and differences between the present study and earlier research. In this chapter, responses provided by the informants relevant to this study's research objectives were discussed. To reiterate, this study aims to focus on MIWEs' involvement in the halal food industry by identifying the challenges that hinder them from obtaining halal certification and exploring the opportunities of having halal certification and related government agencies for MIWEs. Additionally, this chapter includes the proposed guideline in the form of Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for MIWEs to obtain halal certification in Perlis.

4.2 MICRO-INDUSTRY WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS (MIWEs) INVOLVEMENT IN RELATED HALAL INDUSTRY IN PERLIS

The involvement of MIWEs in halal certification is crucial for economic development and ensuring the continuous production of halal products. The data collected through interviews with MADA demonstrated that most enterprise proprietors in Perlis are women entrepreneurs who predominantly operate home-based businesses. Perlis is a state primarily focusing on agro-food production in its economy. It is renowned for its quiet way of living and its appeal to nature. Consequently, the tourism sector in Perlis has been greatly impacted by the popularity of local cuisine and beverages among tourists. Considering this, the demand for food and beverages has created significant

potential for entrepreneurs, particularly in the food manufacturing sector. Micro and small firms possess a market edge that enables them to effectively promote their products to meet consumer expectations of halal products.

Moreover, the data from JAIPs indicated that there were 53 halal certification holders in Perlis in 2023. Looking into this, Hassan *et al.* (2023) pointed out that halal certification holders in Perlis are relatively low compared to other states. To identify the involvement of women in micro-industries in halal certification in Perlis, it is essential to highlight the demographic background of women entrepreneurs, including their socioeconomic conditions and geographical areas, to determine the quality of livelihood that impacted and contributed to their engagement and empowerment in this industry. This subtopic also addresses their participation in halal training, understanding of halal concepts, and readiness for halal procedures and requirements. Therefore, the discussion underlines the responses related to the first research objective of this study.

4.2.1 MIWEs Demographic

Seven interviews were conducted with women entrepreneurs. Each informant was interviewed based on their availability. All informants, namely E1, E2, E3, E4, E5, E6 and E7, are women business owners. Their ages span between 32 and 59, falling within the adult and middle-aged age groups. Moreover, most women entrepreneurs are married, with only E3 being single, and most are the breadwinners of their families.

Furthermore, the educational background of the entrepreneurs varies, with the majority having completed SPM as their highest education. However, it is noteworthy that E7 holds a Diploma while E3 holds a bachelor's degree. Most pursued employment after secondary education to earn a livelihood and carry on the family business or legacy. This highlights these women's important role in providing income to sustain their families, showcasing their significant contribution to the household and economic well-being, as highlighted by Yaacob @ Ramli and Yusof (2023). It also suggests a strong connection to family traditions and a desire to continue and preserve family businesses, which may have influenced their decision to become entrepreneurs.

Most entrepreneurs in the food sector operate micro and small-scale factories or workshops. Their product offerings encompass traditional cakes, cookies, pastries, multipurpose cooking pastes, and packaged foods. This trend strongly emphasises traditional and homemade food products, likely influenced by cultural and regional preferences (Yaacob @ Ramli & Yusof, 2023). The shortest duration of business operation is 6 years, while the longest spans 23 years. This variation indicates that some women have gained substantial life and work experience, which may positively impact their entrepreneurial pursuits.

Entrepreneurs primarily operate in their hometowns, especially in urbanised areas such as Arau, Kangar, and Simpang Empat. Their activities often occur in workshops close to or adjacent to their residences in the village. This proximity fosters a solid connection to their local communities and traditional practices, significantly influencing their business operations and products to improve living standards (Ahmad *et al.*, 2023).

Given the location and geographical areas of these MIWEs, their product marketability varies from one area to another. For instance, the marketability of products within the villages in Padang Siding is quite low and confined to the local area. However, informants are more likely to reach a larger market in the town of Kangar due to the presence and rise of numerous retail outlets, infrastructures and facilities (NADI, n.d.). Considering this, the enterprise's location and retail strategy are essential to promote its products. Thus, many businesses offer goods at eating establishments and grocery stores to broaden their product distribution.

MIWEs in Perlis deal with significant challenges in generating revenue due to their limited daily outputs and local market constraints. Due to their small scale, limited lifespan, and low demand for their products, they seldom expand beyond the local region and are apprehensive about entering the global market, as Abd Wahid *et al.* (2021) claimed. Furthermore, the population and demand for halal goods in Perlis might be relatively modest compared to other states, primarily since most of its residents are Muslims and *Bumiputera*. Consequently, this may contribute to their reluctance to expand beyond regional boundaries.

Microenterprises have lower economic turnover rates than other enterprises. The annual income of the entrepreneurs varies from below RM 100,000 to over RM 300,000. The higher earnings are primarily associated with businesses classified as small enterprises (E2 and E7) rather than microenterprises. This distinction highlights how the scale of operations can significantly impact revenue potential, with small enterprises benefiting from greater market reach and production capacity than their micro counterparts. The categorisation of businesses into microenterprises and small enterprises is often based on criteria including the number of employees, annual turnover, and assets (Al Mamun *et al.*, 2019). When narrowly defined in the context of Malaysia, microenterprises can be further distinguished based on their number of employees and their annual turnover being lower than that of a small enterprise. This classification is vital since it can influence these businesses' funding, financial assistance, and market opportunities. In this regard, many of the MIWEs interviewed in this study are linked to low income. As a result, it affects their economic performance and any associated revenues.

In conclusion, the demographic background of the women entrepreneurs in Perlis, Malaysia, is a complex assortment of individual characteristics in terms of age, education level, and types of businesses. Thus, as breadwinners, their businesses focus on traditional food products and their organisational affiliations with their hometowns and urbanising regions. However, they also engage in various entrepreneurial strategies in the food production industry and implementation of halal certification.

4.2.2 MIWEs in Halal Training

Halal education implies the knowledge and skill required to make products and services halal as per the Islamic Sharia. Certified halal trainers and other institutions, such as universities, private sectors, and NGOs, conduct halal training and education courses that benefit the personnel involved in food industries and the whole food supply chain. Halal training is according to the JAKIM syllabus and is provided by certified halal training providers from the Halal Professional Board (HPB). The modules have different durations, course contents, and course curricula. They also encompass a range of 1) Sharia and *Fatwa*, 2) Malaysian Standards (MS), 3) Malaysian Halal Certification

Procedure Manual (MPPHM) domestic 2020, 4) Malaysia Halal Management System (MHMS) 2020, 5) Related Halal Law and Regulation and others (Harun *et al.*, 2021).

To gain halal awareness and knowledge, the participation of food manufacturers in halal training and educational programs is essential. These initiatives significantly ensure that food manufacturers and industry professionals practise and comply with halal requirements. A¹ mentioned that companies interested in implementing halal certification must first undergo halal awareness courses to ensure compliance with halal standards. This is further affirmed by Oemar *et al.* (2023), who stated that halal awareness training can enhance knowledge concerning the halal-product intention and certification of the organisation. By participating in training programs offered by accredited entities and seeking guidance from local halal certification bodies and industry experts, companies can acquire the knowledge and skills necessary to obtain and maintain halal certification successfully.

“Presently, for a firm to obtain a halal certificate, it is mandatory to participate in halal awareness courses and training. We received several invites for halal awareness classes, which overwhelmed us. During the training, their level of interest was notably high when we provided an overview of the idea of halal, along with the distinctive features of halal cuisine, among other topics. Upon inquiring about their insights on the difficulties encountered in the halal industry, many individuals expressed their lack of knowledge about halal.” (A¹)

Based on the interviews conducted, several informants have engaged in halal awareness training (E², E⁴, and E⁷). Meanwhile, other entrepreneurs do not participate in specialised halal training. However, they have gained knowledge about halal through educational programmes such as halal talks, online seminars, and exhibitions held by agencies and exposure on social media platforms. Most informants mentioned their interest in halal certification and its implementation as something they will achieve sooner or later. This supports the notion that the lack of knowledge and efforts in understanding the halal concepts would greatly hinder micro-industries from having the interest and initiative to obtain halal certification (Arif *et al.*, 2021).

Moreover, competent and well-informed staff can lead to enhanced execution and maintenance of halal standards and practices inside the organisation. This aligns with the findings of Abd Aziz (2022), which indicated that incompetent workers significantly hinder the successful implementation of halal certification. Halal training and programmes are crucial for MIWEs in the halal food manufacturing industry. They should be necessary for all entrepreneurs and staff to ensure they are well-versed in the standards, rules, and laws. After all, if the informants possess prior knowledge of halal, it will be easier for them to undergo the halal certification process.

4.2.3 MIWEs Understanding of Halal Concepts

Comprehension and knowledge of halal certification, especially about its concepts and fatwas, are essential for food manufacturers due to their significant impact on various aspects of food production, marketing, and consumer behaviour. Islam prioritises the intake of halal food for adherents of the faith. Halal food consumption may significantly impact a Muslim's character and spiritual devotion (Othman *et al.*, 2020). Today, in the age of globalisation and mass consumption, Muslims have been confronted with many doubtful processes, materials, and ingredients that go into halal products. This poses a great challenge for the followers of this faith as in Islam, it is imperative for Muslims to consume halal food.

Halal certification confirms that the product is free from non-halal ingredients and is prepared in full compliance with the Islamic Sharia legal structure. As highlighted by Tamby Chik *et al.* (2018), halal personnel must have adequate knowledge to ensure that the highest forms of quality assurance and execution are maintained. Halal, *haram*, and *tayyib* are familiar principles to Muslims, and they play a role in different stages of food production, from procurement to preparation. This involves procuring raw materials that are halal and *tayyib*, and the processes that follow until the final food product is achieved must also be free from health risks.

The findings of this research demonstrate that the informants possess a reasonable yet somewhat basic comprehension of halal, particularly regarding the concepts of halal and *tayyib*. Their knowledge is primarily focused on the importance

of raw materials used in production, which is essential for gaining the trust and confidence of their customers. Although most entrepreneurs have not participated in formal halal training, their foundational understanding of halal principles demonstrates their awareness of the religious obligations associated with the consumption and preparation of halal food. This situation highlights the need for enhanced educational initiatives to effectively reach and support entrepreneurs in comprehending and implementing halal principles within their businesses (Szczepańska-Woszczyzna, 2014; Rafiki & Abdul Wahab, 2016). Such initiatives could empower them to align their practices with the formal and credited halal standards, benefiting their enterprises and customers.

“According to my understanding, halal certification pertains to the principle of halalan and tayyiban in all aspects, including the minor aspects in the manufacturing and sales.” (E³).

“Halal certification is basically concerned with the aspect of raw materials that must be halal. Halal consumers will have greater confidence in our products when they observe the presence of the halal logo on the packaging. To acquire it, we must adhere to the strict standards set by JAKIM for our manufacturing and infrastructure.” (E⁴).

4.2.4 MIWEs Readiness on Halal Certification Procedures and Requirements

The study's research problems previously described the lack of awareness and knowledge of halal certification requirements among SMEs. To answer these questions, a notable discussion emerged during the interviews on the awareness of MIWEs in food manufacturing in Perlis regarding halal certification's requirements and standards. Most MIWEs have moderate awareness of the implementation requirements.

According to several experts (H1, O3, A2, and A3), the entrepreneurs in Perlis realise the significance and influence of halal certification towards their businesses. However, they have inadequate knowledge of the procedures and requirements involved. The requirements of halal certification indicate that the applicant must comply

with the Manual Procedures Halal Certification Malaysia (MPPHM) (Domestic) 2020, Malaysian Standard MS1500:2019- Halal Food (general requirements) and Malaysian Halal Management System (MHMS) 2020, among others. In particular, Mohamad Hilmi *et al.* (2021) noted that the absence of awareness and neglect of the significance of halal accreditation resulted in unethical halal practices, including the use of expired certification logos, issuing logos on their own accord instead of JAKIM, and offering food, which does not qualify to be halal. These acts might erode the authenticity of halal certification and mislead consumers who are dependent on the halal logo as a reliable symbol. Some responses are quoted below.

"The companies acknowledge the significance of halal certification in enhancing product value and building customer trust. However, they do not understand the necessary procedures and requirements." (A3).

"All entrepreneurs possess a level of awareness regarding halal certification. Nevertheless, there are certain limitations regarding comprehension, time limits, and other obstacles when meeting the requirements, conditions, and regulations for obtaining a halal certificate from JAIPs. They can follow our instructions without the assistance of a consultant." (O¹).

Furthermore, despite the government's efforts to implement halal programs, seminars, and workshops, entrepreneurs' engagement level remains inadequate. This might lead to their ignorance and cluelessness regarding this topic (Arif *et al.*, 2021). Without active involvement in these educational opportunities, many entrepreneurs miss out on crucial information that could enhance their understanding and performance of halal principles in their businesses.

"Halal awareness is still at a moderate level. Recently, we organised a course involving 350 entrepreneurs, in which we launched a one-product, one-halal campaign. We encourage a company to market only one product that will receive halal recognition. However, many entrepreneurs still do not want to apply for a halal certificate. We have provided much enlightenment about halal certification through courses,

seminars, etc., and then we can see that everything is up to each individual's consciousness." (H¹).

H1 and A2 agreed that the entrepreneurs are likely to employ intermediaries in their application to perform it in their stead. This leads them to rely on middlemen, which could cause failure in fully understanding the specific requirements and observing the practice earnestly. A study by Dolah Aling (2019) mentioned that unethical consultants can damage the halal integrity of the certification process. This dire situation may further impact the company's ability to proceed with halal certification. Furthermore, according to H1, many mistakenly believed the procedures to be costly and stringent, which may result in the mindset that the halal certification process is burdensome and less appealing, which is aligned with the study by Arif *et al.* (2021).

The findings of this research suggest that while MIWEs intend to obtain halal certification, there are challenges related to knowledge, awareness, and the practical aspects of obtaining the certification. These resources underscore the importance of increasing knowledge, awareness, and practical training to support micro-business owners, particularly women entrepreneurs, in their readiness for halal certification procedures and requirements. The intention to obtain halal certification is evident. However, there is a clear need for accessible and targeted educational initiatives to address the challenges and empower micro-industry women entrepreneurs in this domain. Quotes below highlight the results that support these findings.

"Typically, firms hire consultants to handle the filing and documentation process on their behalf. That is why their understanding of the processes and prerequisites is still poor." (A²).

We encountered a situation where certain individuals sought our assistance due to their lack of knowledge on how to access MYeHALAL, as they had never done so before. Formerly, the task was carried out by the consultant." (H¹).

“Entrepreneurs must possess knowledge and understanding of halal certification. The cost of halal certification is attributed to the fees charged by agencies or consultants who facilitate the certification process. The agency or consultant serves as an intermediary, but in reality, individuals just need to approach JAIPs directly for assistance.” (H¹).

“We must provide the documentation and halal file to JAIPs for the certificate renewal process. Usually, we will hire personnel to perform this task as we are not that knowledgeable in this matter. It is hard for us to complete it by ourselves, and we feel burdened by it.” (E⁴).

4.3 MIWEs CHALLENGES ON HALAL CERTIFICATION

The interviews were conducted to explore and identify the challenges that hinder women in the micro-industry from obtaining halal certification based on the informants' firsthand experience and understanding. This aligns with the second research objective in this study. Based on the analysis of the interviews, seven themes have been constructed to explain the challenges of obtaining halal certification. The themes were categorised into external and internal factors. The external factors consist of (1) limited employees for handling halal certification, (2) limited facilities to meet halal requirements, (3) limited product marketability, and (4) lack of demand for halal-certified products among consumers in Perlis. On the other hand, internal factors are (5) lack of IT skills in handling the MYeHALAL portal, (6) lack of positive attitude among MIWEs in Perlis, and (7) lack of MIWEs initiative and proactive involvement in government agencies.

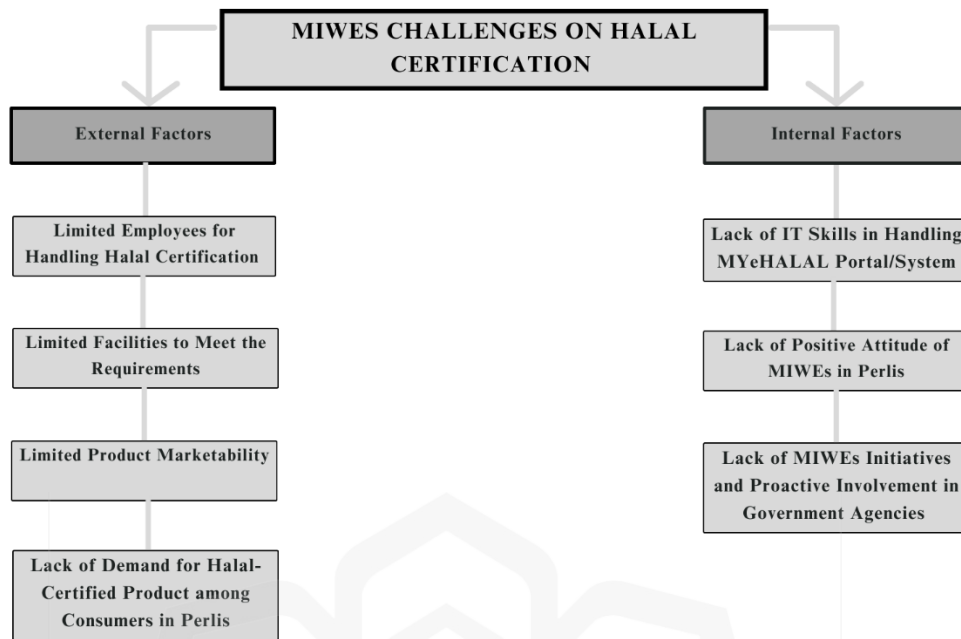


Figure 4.1 Chart MIWES Challenges on Halal Certification

4.3.1 Limited Employees for Handling Halal Certification

Employees play a crucial role in the success and sustainability of micro-industries. For instance, their responsibilities in the food manufacturing sector encompass various tasks, including production, quality control, packaging, distribution, customer services, marketing, etc. Sabrina (2023) posited that a halal company or organisation must possess the necessary resources to propel its operations effectively. Human resources play a vital role among these resources, as they must be adequately staffed with individuals possessing the requisite qualifications and competencies that align with their assigned tasks. Obtaining a halal certification involves various steps and requirements, including compliance with specific standards, documentation, and inspections.

Thus, a workforce specialising in halal knowledge is needed to fill this post. Razalli *et al.* (2013a) pointed out that halal certification involves a thorough procedure requiring specific human qualities and competencies. It includes managerial accountability for the proper and efficient conduct of certification, employee qualities like precision and halal compliance, and adherence to policies that reflect compliance

with halal standards. Without a dedicated workforce to fulfill these requirements, companies may struggle to meet the demands of halal certification within the stipulated time frame. Thus, the availability of competent employees or human resources is vital to the business's performance and success during certification and implementation.

According to the data analysis, companies face difficulties committing to and implementing halal certification due to a lack of staff or employees. E2, E4, and E6 have described that they do not have enough time and help to assist them with obtaining and implementing halal certification. They manage everything by themselves throughout the whole business ordeal, starting from the production process until the distribution, with minimal help from others.

E4 with halal certification also expressed challenges in maintaining daily records and completing halal paperwork for the renewal of halal certification and auditing process due to the need to handle all tasks independently with limited time availability. In other words, without proper help, their daily tasks have overwhelmed them, causing less time and motivation for them to implement halal certification. Multiple studies have shown that small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) struggle to complete the necessary documentation and records (Arif *et al.*, 2017; Saiman & Yusma, 2022) and fail to meet the requirements of the application procedure (Zainuddin, 2022), which leads to the rejection and delay of their certificate acquisition. The application and paperwork processes for gaining halal certification are perceived as arduous and intricate due to the absence of clear instructions and understanding of the prerequisites. Having competent and knowledgeable halal workers would not only lift the burden of MIWEs but also guarantee the accuracy and dependability of the certification process.

“These individuals (higher-ups) are unaware of our entrepreneurial activities. We have much work to do, and we cannot record (for audit purposes) daily. As entrepreneurs, we are also exhausted from recording by ourselves since our workers only do their designated work and go home afterward. I am responsible for maintaining every record since it must be completed daily.” (E²).

“Due to insufficient staff, we are required to handle all tasks alone. The halal certification is burdensome, particularly regarding the preparation required during auditing. As part of the audit process, it is necessary to create daily records. Nevertheless, we are unable to perform this task daily; hence, we only document it every week. Our work is exhausting, and we don't have employees to settle the records and audit files. Young people are not interested in business like us.” (E⁴).

“The fact that I am the sole employee at my company means that I do not have any other hands to help me compile all of the information and complete the documents necessary to go forward with the halal certification process.” (E⁶).

The presence of at least two Muslim employees is one of the halal certification conditions that must be met before the companies can proceed with the application. In addition, the scarcity of staff also significantly impacted their availability, particularly in participating in halal training sessions and entrepreneurial activities (A2). According to MHMS 2020, micro-companies seeking a halal certificate must possess a minimum of one permanent Muslim employee who is a Malaysian national and adheres to proper sanitary protocols (Hassan *et al.*, 2023). The absence of Muslim workers may result in their inability to complete the MYeHALAL system, leading to a delay in obtaining a halal certificate. Having Muslim employees as a mandatory qualification may benefit the enterprise if viewed positively. Muslims are more aware of the concerns of Islam than others; thus, they will be more reliable and attentive to any signs of violation of Sharia laws by the management during the process of production.

“They do not have enough staff/workers to fulfill the halal certificate requirements. There must be at least two Muslim staff in the halal committee. The workers must attend Halal training and have typhoid injection for food services.” “With less than four people in the company, not everyone will attend halal training. If some of them attend the training, this may disrupt their daily production.” (A²).

As noted by informants E4 and E6, the struggle to find suitable candidates for permanent roles is significantly contributing to the current high unemployment rates. For instance, many workers are employed part-time, which limits their availability and commitment, as they often work only during their free time. This reliance on part-time labour can adversely affect the production processes of micro-industries, particularly in ensuring compliance with halal requirements (Sabrina, 2023). The scarcity of qualified full-time workers may lead to inefficiencies and difficulties in maintaining the standards necessary for halal certification, ultimately impacting the overall success of these enterprises.

“We are hesitant to hire staff due to concerns that if they fail to prepare this cake, it will negatively impact production outcomes, then we must redo everything again. Not only that, but many of them are also incompetent in the production process. Thus, we prefer to do everything ourselves to avoid customer complaints. It seems like having added workers is not as helpful.” (E⁴).

“I am having a hard time finding workers. We used to have permanent employees, but they have quit because they managed to get more lucrative jobs. Our product has a shelf life of only one day, so we must make it daily. In addition, our production starts from 3 am until 7 am. Then, we will start to sell and submit the customers’ orders. No one can commit to working such hours. As for the halal certification, we would be very grateful if someone would be willing to help us since I know it requires quite a lot of preparation and documents.” (E⁶).

4.3.2 Limited Facilities to Meet the Requirements

The constraint in implementing halal certification is linked to the inadequate availability of physical resources. A separate building or facility from the residence is one of the prerequisites specified by JAKIM in MPPHM (domestic) 2020 (Department of Islamic Development Malaysia, 2020). The tangible assets, encompassing equipment, property, raw materials, and infrastructure, are paramount, particularly in business manufacturing

and operations. This challenge is particularly relevant for micro-industries, which often operate from home and may not have the necessary resources to meet the requirements for halal certification (Al Mamun *et al.*, 2019). E5 expressed the challenges encountered in renovating the premise process, due to their inadequate understanding of the specifications. Previous studies by Arif *et al.* (2021) and Mohamad Hilmi *et al.* (2021) asserted that some entrepreneurs faced problems in their facilities due to lacking capital and knowledge of requirements. It is supported by E2 and A3, where unexpected expenses are involved in the process, which becomes a problem for entrepreneurs. This lack of expertise led to errors in the premise's remodelling. The scarcity of resources can lead to inaccuracies and inadequacies in the implementation process, acting as a challenge for micro and small enterprises in the food manufacturing industry to obtain halal certification and comply with the criteria mandated by JAKIM.

“Prior to submitting our application for the MeSTI certificate, we had already constructed this workshop. On the other hand, they informed me that certain specs would not be approved. As a result, there is a slight obstacle to continue with it.” (E⁵).

“To obtain a halal certificate, we must pay a fee and follow the specified specifications. Most of the specified specifications require capital to improve the existing workshop. If we are a small business, we may be unable to cover the cost of changing the workshop according to this halal certification specification. For example, windows need to be fitted with nets. The net needs money. The door should also be closed so flies or insects cannot enter. All the raw materials can't be placed under the floor, and we must put them on top where we have to buy shelves. So, we see, all this requires much capital. This is one of the constraints faced by entrepreneurs who do business on a small scale. They have problems with these halal certification specifications.” (E²).

“One of the problems faced by our entrepreneurs is the facilities and the hidden costs required for renovation, etc.” (A³).

The enterprise's operation from home is another challenge for micro-industries in obtaining halal certification. According to O3, entrepreneurs usually operate without registering licenses from the Malaysian Companies Commission (SSM) or other government agencies or possessing a Local Authority (PBT) business license. Mohamad Hilmi *et al.* (2021) pointed out that, due to non-compliance with the PBT license standards and the processing facility being a home-based company, JAKIM did not approve the application to get a halal certificate among *Bumiputera*. A home-based business is an informal enterprise that typically operates without the necessary licenses or compliance with official regulations and is primarily aimed at sustaining the livelihood of its owners (Arif, 2021). The informal nature of these businesses, combined with the limited commitment and status as a secondary income, underlines the need for tailored support and education. Such initiatives are essential to assist these entrepreneurs in growing their businesses and navigating the requirements for halal certification while ensuring compliance with relevant regulations.

"Not all products produced are their main source of income. Some women (entrepreneurs) run their businesses as a side income and part-time. Therefore, they find this (halal certification) as not crucial.... Women entrepreneurs or microenterprises face constraints in meeting the criteria set by JAKIM, which must be followed before applying. Among the conditions of Malaysian halal certification that entrepreneurs must comply with is registration with SSM, the Malaysian Cooperative Commission, and other government agencies." (O³).

4.3.3 Limited Product Marketability

Product marketability, also called saleability, is the extent to which the product can be marketed and sold. The marketability of a product is crucial for the success of micro and small-scale industries, as it directly impacts their ability to generate revenue and sustain operations (Chron Author, 2020). The marketability of a product is heavily influenced by its competitive position, which encompasses aspects such as product uniqueness, quality, distribution, cost, consumer demands, functionality and

performance compared to competing goods (Spacey, 2017). In this regard, MIWEs' product marketability influences its success in the market.

One of the challenges MIWEs face in maintaining halal certification is their lack of product marketability. According to the data, most entrepreneurs produce short shelf-life goods without proper Research and Development (R&D) to enhance their formula, quality, and packaging. According to the analysis, the products sold by E1, E2, E3, E6, and E7, which are cakes, cookies, Asian madeleines (bahulu), and other traditional cakes, are freshly made daily. Dry products with sealed packaging tend to have a short shelf life according to the type of ingredients used. Puspitasari and Urumsah (2021) pointed out that to maintain customer loyalty, it is crucial to prioritise innovation. By improving product innovation, the company can effectively compete with other competitors in the market. Product innovation may affect certification in creating new halal products and processes. Some of the results are quoted below:

“This is due to the rapid expiration and short-shelf life of the bahulu and peneram I am selling. Regarding the packaged bahulu, the quantity is relatively small. Additionally, I refrain from selling my bahulu abroad or to supermarkets due to the short shelf life of these products. Consequently, the halal certification is unnecessary, as I intend to sell this bahulu fresh. Sold out today, sell today. Muslims will indeed prepare it halal; however, a halal certificate will increase the consumer's confidence. A halal certificate is required if a product wants to be marketed in supermarkets or abroad. There are also other products in my store. However, those are made by other people (vendors). Thus, I cannot seek halal certification for their products since we don't know how they make them.” (E²).

“There are currently no plans to export our products in the foreseeable future. Consequently, I currently fail to perceive the necessity of pursuing halal certification. Nevertheless, I am inclined to apply for the opportunity to offer our products at supermarkets like Giant and Hafifah in the future. Due to the perishable nature and limited shelf life of our bakery and patisserie products, marketing them effectively is a challenge

compared to larger brands. I believe it needs additional elements, such as doing research and development. Everything needs funds.” (E³).

Moreover, as microenterprises, their product market tends to be limited and confined to local areas. The limited ventures and marketing of products by microenterprises outside their local areas can be attributed to various factors. According to the informants, the factors are attributed to small production, small demand, production costs, and geographical area. As mentioned by H1, the condition of halal certification is that the production must be continuous. However, due to the small demand, especially after the previous MCO, the industry has faced problems in production and sales. Furthermore, the poor purchasing power of consumers, which is a result of the MCO, and the increase in the price of ingredients are other factors that led to the low demand (E6). These economic factors can significantly impact consumer consumption patterns and purchasing behaviour. Additionally, affordable options online can influence the demand for halal products. To ascertain the demand for halal products, these economic factors must be considered in light of consumers’ buying behaviour and purchasing capability.

“Among other reasons, it is related to production. Sometimes, the production of their products is reduced, in addition to this MCO time. Previously, no one released a product every month. Some are once every three months; then there is production. It's not that they don't have awareness, but this is due to their small production of products. We know that the conditions of halal certification state that product production must be continuous and cannot be stopped. If a product has been discontinued for two or three years, they need to inform us so that we can cancel the product in the system. Entrepreneurs in Perlis mostly consist of micro and small industries. There are also not many factories in Perlis; the existing ones are only small. That's why not many people take the halal certificate. The profit obtained is only enough for them to support their livelihood.” (H¹).

“Many individuals now take the simple route and resale yesterday's goods for the next day. This is because the cost of supplies is becoming

more costly. After all, customers' purchasing power is dwindling because of inflation and the availability of inexpensive items on the internet.” (E⁶).

Most productions occur in rural and urban areas, such as within the village and as home-based businesses (O³). These enterprises primarily operate with low wages and without adequate facilities, equipment, and human resources necessary to continue production in larger markets while attempting to implement halal certification. This clarifies the underlying cause for the limited ability of Malaysia's small and medium enterprises (SMEs) to export halal products despite their considerable potential (Alagesh, 2022). Ahmad Fauzi *et al.* (2017) further highlighted that the contribution of halal exports among SMEs is notably inadequate. Because of this, the obstacle that must be considered is the small and medium-sized enterprise (SME) industry's limited access and resources to the global halal market.

Venturing into larger markets can be daunting for many companies due to their limited resources and ability to meet future demands (A¹). This constrained capacity and mindset often hinder entrepreneurs from advancing their businesses by implementing halal certification. Despite the potential for expanding operations into lucrative markets, such as the halal sector, many entrepreneurs remain unaware of these opportunities due to their limited understanding of marketing strategies and product development (A²). Thus, these limitations pose a challenge to MIWEs in pursuing halal certification. The lack of awareness of marketing strategies, product development, small production, demand, and geographical area further hinders their ability to expand and implement halal certification.

“In the state of Perlis, the Department of Agriculture focuses more on agricultural development services such as extension programs for agriculture. The advantage of the halal industry in Perlis is still low, with a few halal products. We have a challenge to add halal products from entrepreneurs in Perlis because most are micro-businesses that are more concentrated in village areas and from home bases and have not yet reached the level required to obtain halal certification. Nevertheless, they have the potential to get this certificate.” (O³).

“Occasionally, these business owners are apprehensive of the broader market out of concern that demand will exceed their capacity. This attribute renders these individuals unsuitable. For instance, we once organised a program to export these enterprises' products; consequently, they lack courage due to their machinery's limited capacity and size. For this export, we must continue manufacturing the product. We cannot simply issue many products at once and then not release any at other times. To ensure consistent production and marketing of the product, exporting necessitates a substantial capacity in terms of personnel, machinery, raw materials, and other aspects. This can be a challenge for micro and small entrepreneurs at times.” (A¹).

“They are not aware or know the capability of their product in the market (i.e., how far their product can be sold in bigger market).” (A²)

4.3.4 Lack of Demand for Halal-Certified Products Among Consumers in Perlis

There are considerable opportunities associated with halal certification, as it attracts not only the Muslim community but also non-Muslims who choose halal products for reasons such as hygiene and ethical business practices. However, several factors impede the adoption of halal certification in food production and sales. A significant challenge is the insufficient awareness among food producers about the importance of providing halal-certified products, as supported by Oemar *et al.* (2023).

The interviews revealed several challenges faced within the food micro-industry, particularly the lack of consumer awareness regarding halal certification. This issue arose from the perception that consumers equate Muslim products with being ‘halal’ and ‘Sharia-compliant’ (A2), which implicates business owners who are looking to implement halal certification in their operations. Furthermore, most consumers in this context are Malay and Muslim, who form the largest ethnic group according to Malaysia’s demographics. Research by Ag. Damit *et al.* (2017) confirmed that for halal goods, consumers tend to be cautious in their selection and purchasing decisions, often preferring products from their own country or nations with predominantly Muslim

populations. This can lead to misconceptions, as consumers may erroneously assume that countries associated with Islam are the primary producers of halal products. It is essential to recognise that the production of halal goods is ultimately in the hands of manufacturers responsible for ensuring compliance. Therefore, the mere presence of a Muslim label does not guarantee adherence to JAKIM's standards or other food safety regulations.

“Some Muslim consumers are not conscious or prioritise the manufacturing method of the products they purchase. For instance, the hygiene practices in producing ‘belacan’ include drying the prawn on an iron wire fence. Consumers continue to make purchases despite the circumstances because the sellers are Muslims. Entrepreneurs believe they may forgo applying for a halal certificate to allocate funds towards repair and modification.” (A²).

The responses of E2 and E3 indicated that, as a manufacturer of Muslim products, they ensure that their products use only halal ingredients in production. Apart from that, they already have a loyal consumer base that believes in them and buys their products regularly. Hence, for this reason, businesses often deem it unnecessary to apply for halal certification since they already have the trust and loyalty of their customers (Rafiki & Abdul Wahab, 2016; Saiman & Yusma, 2022). The cases of E2 and E3 exemplify how businesses catering to Muslim consumers can build a strong foundation of trust and loyalty by prioritising halal integrity in their products. This customer confidence often leads these businesses to question the necessity of formal halal certification, as their established reputation for halal compliance is a testament to their commitment to meeting the expectations of their clientele.

“Some others fail to comprehend my decision not to accept it. They should know that my product has a short lifespan, and I sell it while it is fresh. Coffee or milk products packed and stored for 6 months are eligible for a halal certificate. If I sell this today, it will be completed today. I believe the halal certificate is unnecessary. Furthermore, customers are aware that my items are halal and tayyib.” (E²).

“As a Muslim entrepreneur, I always check that everything I use is halal and has a logo so that customers are confident in my products.” (E³).

Previously, the “Buy Muslim First” (BMF) campaign was a hit in Malaysia. The campaign promoted Muslim products to boost the Muslim economy in Malaysia. Nevertheless, according to Hassan *et al.* (2022), Muslim customers' preference to purchase BMF goods is overshadowed by their halal conscience. Muslims are urged to purchase Muslim-owned goods that have been certified as halal, according to the research by Mhd. Khotib and Syarifah (2022). This demonstrates that, ultimately, customers use halal logos and certifications as a standard for their purchasing decisions.

Accordingly, A2 indicated that the continuous demand for their products, coupled with the absence of pressure from consumers, gives business owners a sense of comfort and safety, leading them to feel no urgency to pursue halal certification. This observation aligns with the findings of Sudarmiati *et al.* (2020) and Abu Bakar *et al.* (2023), which suggested that businesses are more inclined to seek halal certification when there is high customer demand for their products. Customers' indifference can significantly influence business decision-making, directly affecting their willingness to produce halal goods and the potential market for these products. Therefore, consumers must understand halal principles, as this awareness can motivate entrepreneurs to pursue the certification.

This finding also supports the notion put forward by Adham *et al.* (2022), who perceived social pressures (subjective norms) as influential in affecting people's intentions to obtain halal certification. In regions with low demand for halal-certified products like Perlis, the impact of social pressure may be less pronounced, resulting in diminished motivation among MIWEs to obtain certification compared to other states. It shows that social pressures impacted their decision-making in the accreditation process.

They do not have to sacrifice their money to apply for a halal certificate since customers always demand even though they are not certified.... If consumers choose halal-certified products, this will urge the

entrepreneur to apply for a halal certificate to attract more consumers.”
(A²).

4.3.5 Lack of IT Skills in Handling MYeHALAL Portal

IT proficiency refers to the competence and capability of entrepreneurs in utilising information technology (IT) tools and resources to support their business operations. The importance of IT proficiency for micro-entrepreneurs is underscored by its potential to enhance operational efficiency, facilitate access to markets and information, and improve overall business performance (Werber *et al.*, 2015). Effectively managing IT systems, such as the MYeHALAL portal, is crucial for microenterprises that seek halal certification. The application process requires comprehensive documentation and paperwork that must be approved by JAKIM. MYeHALAL was developed to streamline the certification application process across Malaysia.

E2 and E4, who have successfully implemented halal certification in their operations, indicated that one of the prominent challenges they faced during the certification process was the stringent nature of the system. Users of the MYeHALAL system have encountered challenges in navigating and utilising the platform, which has been recognised as a factor contributing to the difficulties in obtaining halal certification. Studies by M. Muhammad *et al.* (2020a) and Arif *et al.* (2017) have highlighted that the inefficacy of the MYeHALAL system presents obstacles to the efficient use of online halal certification. This challenge is further compounded by a widespread lack of awareness and understanding of the halal certification process, especially among microenterprises and stakeholders engaged in halal certification. To overcome these barriers, it is crucial for microenterprises and other businesses that aspire to enter the halal market to receive improved training and support, especially in effectively implementing the MYeHALAL system and attaining halal certification. Enhancing the usability of the MYeHALAL system will be essential in facilitating a smoother application process for halal certification.

“I obtained this halal certificate quite a long time ago. After the government introduced the online system, it was difficult for me because

I am not good at using these systems. In the past, it was not difficult to obtain this halal certification, as they only wanted to know the origin of the raw materials we use. In the past, I just went to the office and filled out the necessary forms after they audited my company. But now, all applications are done online. I have yet to put it to the test.” (E²).

“In addition, renewing the halal certificate was easy in the past. We only need to submit the form to JAIPs, and the officer will call us if there are any problems or deficiencies. But now everything is online, and we are unfamiliar with using computers. Thus, we had to ask for help from other people to fill it out” (E⁴).

Some responses indicate that many entrepreneurs generally lack proficiency in IT and find using computers tedious, particularly among older generations (E², E⁶, and E⁷). This lack of IT skills has been recognised as a significant challenge in managing the MYeHALAL system (Arif *et al.*, 2017). Werber *et al.* (2015) emphasised that microenterprises must embrace computerisation to enhance their operations. The importance of IT proficiency for microenterprises seeking halal certification cannot be overstated. Technological literacy is essential for streamlining the certification process, addressing existing knowledge gaps, and leveraging digital platforms for market access. Improving IT literacy and skills among microenterprises is crucial for fostering their participation in the halal industry and ensuring compliance with halal standards. By enhancing their technological capabilities, these businesses can navigate the certification process more effectively, ultimately facilitating access to the growing halal market.

“I obtained this halal certificate a long time ago. After the government introduced the online system, it was a bit difficult for me because I am not good at using these systems.” (A²).

“Although we own and can utilise a laptop for work purposes, we are not particularly fond of it. There are instances when we find it challenging and would rather use the phone as a work platform only.” (E⁶).

“When I seek halal certification, I like to do everything myself, including the documentation and halal filing. I declined MARA's free offer to engage a consultant since I prefer to learn the procedure independently. For your knowledge, the Halal and MeSTI processes are identical. All we need to do for halal certification is to include a halal certificate supplier for the raw ingredients we use and then attach them. Because I have too many items (now 30), I must first do the halal file for each product one by one. When I complete the MeSTI file, it is very easy since we only must key in manually. However, one of the issues I face in halal certification submission is the system we must use. We must key in the system from the beginning to the end to key in every detail. It is among the deterrents for small entrepreneurs today to pursue halal certification applications. They fear having to start over from scratch if they enter incorrect information. If they performed it by hand, I believe I could obtain the halal certification more quickly. Some entrepreneurs detest facing computers and performing computer tasks.” (E7).

4.3.6 Lack of Positive Attitude of MIWEs in Perlis

A positive attitude and strong attributes are essential for entrepreneurs in the food industry, significantly influencing their business success. Historically, the process and requirements of halal certification have been fraught with challenges and difficulties. One notable challenge is the lack of a positive attitude among entrepreneurs regarding the implementation of halal certification, which needs to be addressed.

The analysis shows that the level of preparedness and commitment put into planning and implementing halal certification impacts entrepreneurs' motivation to engage in the application process. Interviews with E2 and E4 revealed that more effort is required during the preparation phase. Additionally, the perception that the halal certification process is stringent has negatively influenced entrepreneurs and hindered their participation (E3 and E4). This reluctance may stem from a lack of understanding of the benefits associated with halal certification and misconceptions about its complexity. The findings align with the research of Arif *et al.* (2021) and the theory of

Anggarkasih and Resma (2022), which emphasised that entrepreneurs' perceptions (attitudes) significantly influence the halal certification process. Specifically, individuals with negative perceptions shaped by their beliefs can directly affect their attitudes, impacting their intentions and willingness to obtain halal certification. When entrepreneurs harbour negative beliefs regarding halal certification procedures, they often lack motivation or intention to pursue them.

“To be granted this halal certificate, one has to make some payments, and secondly, one has to meet certain standards. Proposed specifications: Most of the specifications call for investing in expanding the existing workshop. If we are a small business, we may be unable to cover the cost of changing the workshop according to this halal certification specification. We do business on a small scale. A day's sales are not many. So, it is quite a burden for these entrepreneurs. We need to be prepared with any given specifications that require much capital. Therefore, I have not renewed the halal certificate for a long time.” (E²).

“Having applied for MESTI, I am familiar with and have encountered the challenges involved in the procedure, particularly filing, documenting, and other related activities. Due to being understaffed, I find it rather challenging. Furthermore, there are no plans to export our products in the foreseeable future. Consequently, I fail to perceive the necessity of pursuing halal certification now.” (E³).

“Initially, we operated this business purely for enjoyment. However, once we pursued MeSTI and Halal certifications, we acquired additional responsibilities and tasks to manage.” This caused us to experience distress and discomfort. But still, we have to reap what we sow.” (E⁴).

A2 and A3 noted that proactive measures that entrepreneurs must take before the application stages are crucial for ensuring a smooth and successful halal certification process. However, challenges arise when entrepreneurs exhibit idleness and negligence during the procedures (O1 and A3). Many tend to take their status as Muslims for granted, operating under the assumption that all Muslim products are inherently halal.

Consequently, these entrepreneurs may view halal certification as trivial. Several studies have indicated that some micro and small-scale enterprises disregard the importance of halal certification, believing their operations can thrive without it (Mohamad Hilmi *et al.*, 2021; Oemar *et al.*, 2023). The research conducted by Darmadi *et al.* (2022) underscored how a lack of concern and negligence during the halal certification process can lead to non-compliance and hinder the attainment of halal certification. These findings underline the need to address entrepreneurs' negative perceptions and intentions regarding halal certification, particularly the tendency to underestimate its significance.

“One of the reasons is the attitude in which Malay entrepreneurs have a perception that any product produced by Malay/Muslim is always halal. Hence, they neglect the procedure. Therefore, sometimes, we can see that their halal certificate is being revoked. In contrast, non-Muslims will always follow the procedure. For Malay entrepreneurs, it is easy to obtain a halal certificate, but it is difficult for them to maintain it because they must have a halal committee and internal audit.” (A²).

“Before a successful implementation of halal certification, it cannot be denied that the procedures require effort from the applicant, especially in managing the documentation and files. However, our people (the entrepreneur) usually are quite ‘pampered’ when it comes to something difficult.” (A³).

“These entrepreneurs understand halal, but at the execution level, they discover they do not completely comprehend the needed requirements. They do not know and are negligent in such topics. Everything depends on the mindset and will of the entrepreneurs. Thus, they need to improve in terms of their knowledge, teamwork, and their attitude.” (O¹).

Moreover, the analysis provided that halal certification holders often face more challenges maintaining compliance than in the initial obtainment process (A2 and A3). While acquiring halal certification is essential, the ongoing commitment to upholding halal standards is equally critical, as it requires integrity and dedication from businesses

in their operations. Several issues have emerged within the industry, leading to the revocation of halal certificates due to non-compliance with established requirements. For example, issues such as non-certified products and fraudulent activities have been identified (Hanzala *et al.*, 2021). The prevalence of fake halal logos and halal fraud has raised global concerns within the halal industry, jeopardizing consumer trust and perceptions of halal products. Food manufacturers hold a significant responsibility to prioritise consumer health and well-being. Recognising this, it is vital to emphasise the positive attitudes among entrepreneurs, particularly those in the food sector, as they are obligated to ensure the maintenance of consumer health. Entrepreneurs who cultivate a strong sense of responsibility regarding halal practices will likely demonstrate greater commitment to adhering to the halal principles in their business operations.

“For Malay entrepreneurs, it is easy to obtain a halal certificate, but it is difficult for them to maintain it because they must have a halal committee and internal audit.” “Some entrepreneurs have problems in maintaining GMP and facility hygiene. Most Malay entrepreneurs did not have the proper facilities which must follow Good Manufacturing Practice (GMP).” “They did not prioritise the hygiene of their facilities. For example, some of Malay slaughterhouses are less hygienic than Chinese.” (A²).

“When discussing the concerns, it is critical to emphasise the three stages required in attaining halal certification. First is the pre-implementation phase, followed by the implementation phase, and lastly by the post-implementation phase. Typically, acquiring it is straightforward, but sustaining it after implementation is the most difficult.” (A³).

Business growth and strong performance are often linked to the competencies and personal qualities of the workforce. Wu (2009) identified self-efficacy, innovative startup goals, and an entrepreneurial attitude as critical factors influencing entrepreneurial behaviour and success. People’s motivations and actions regarding the application and maintenance of halal certification can be significantly affected by their attributes. In their study, Machmud and Hidayat (2020) emphasised the importance of Muslim entrepreneurs adhering strictly to Islamic teachings and values

in their daily operations, which includes maintaining a strong work ethic and honouring commitments. Robust traits and competencies are essential for entrepreneurs to ensure the success and integrity of their businesses in halal practices. A food producer who complies with halal standards demonstrates a strong work ethic by maintaining self-discipline and ensuring consistency in their operations. The commitment to producing high-quality goods and earning customer trust exemplifies the importance of MIWEs upholding their principles, building a solid reputation, and achieving sustained prosperity. To conclude, positive attitudes enhance a person's resilience and adaptability when facing obstacles. Entrepreneurs who maintain a positive perspective are more likely to seek information and support, thereby overcoming barriers to obtaining the halal certification.

4.3.7 Lack of MIWEs Initiatives and Proactive Involvement in Government Agencies

Another challenge MIWEs face in obtaining halal certification is the limited engagement of entrepreneurs with government agencies, particularly those responsible for implementing halal certification. This engagement can take various forms, such as reporting to relevant government bodies, registering with them, seeking assistance or services, and dedicating time and effort to establish partnerships with these agencies. Agency affiliation in this context can be understood as the role of government entities in endorsing, supporting, or regulating the halal certification process for entrepreneurs and related industries (Wijaya & Priantina, 2024). This involvement can provide guidance, resources, and support to help MIWEs navigate the certification requirements and procedures effectively. Enhanced collaboration with these agencies facilitates a smoother certification process and ensures that MIWEs can successfully meet halal standards.

E3 mentioned that several micro and small enterprises (MIWEs) operate independently of government entities. O4 further noted that entrepreneurs often had limited knowledge of the existing agencies supporting entrepreneurial endeavours. This lack of affiliation results in a diminished flow of information regarding the assistance and resources available through these agencies. The Malaysian government has been

actively supporting entrepreneurship through various policies and programs to nurture and empower entrepreneurs. A study by Amirul *et al.* (2017) identified several key factors influencing individuals' participation in entrepreneurship programs, including a lack of awareness about available programs, public sentiment, reliance on government support, commitment levels, and a general lack of initiative to participate. These findings highlight significant barriers that individuals face when considering engagement in entrepreneurship, underscoring the need for improved communication and outreach from government entities to enhance awareness and participation among MIWEs.

I have known several owners/entrepreneurs in Perlis. However, they did not join or participate in any agencies, so they don't receive much about this (agency support). Typically, the decision to join these agencies rests with the entrepreneurs since they have the option to do so or not" (E³).

"Most companies still lack awareness (halal certification), and they do not even know that there are agencies that provide them help for their business." (O⁴).

Another contributing factor to the lack of initiative and proactivity among MIWEs is that many of these businesses serve as secondary sources of income. According to O1, E5, and A2, some women operate microenterprises primarily to supplement their income, which adds to their overall responsibilities and workload. The time and commitment required to engage in entrepreneurial activities ultimately influence their decision and intention to invest in halal certification. This situation reflects a broader trend where the dual roles of entrepreneurship and other responsibilities can limit the capacity of MIWEs to pursue additional certifications.

"Women frequently have additional responsibilities such as childcare, spouses, and household chores, significantly restricting their behaviours. However, the realm of business is not exclusively confined to males. Both genders get equal benefits, including access to courses, training, and funding. Ultimately, everything boils down to their dedication and awareness." (O¹).

“After this, I must take care of my children (at home), especially when my child is sick. If I have time, I can take care of other things (related to the business venture), or I have to ask my husband to do it for me.” (E⁵).
“Several women are bound to seek consent from their husband first before doing the activities (halal training, etc.).” (A²).

According to E2 and E7, entrepreneurs benefit from their affiliation with specific agencies that actively assist in enhancing their understanding of halal certification. These agencies provide support and guidance from experienced officials, which can be invaluable when acquiring halal certification. For instance, entrepreneurs can access financial assistance through grants offered by SME Corporation, such as the Micro MADANI Strengthening Program (Micro MADANI). Additionally, the MADA Change Upgrade Product (CUP) program provides financial and infrastructure support to facilitate business growth. These programs are designed to enhance the proficiency and capabilities of micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) by enabling them to acquire the necessary machinery and equipment, upgrade their business premises, improve product quality, and implement promotional campaigns to boost sales.

“The Perlis governance frequently organises talks on halal matters. Due to my affiliation with multiple agencies, I regularly attend halal talks provided by several entities, including JAIPs and government agencies.” (E2).

“I am deeply involved with the agencies in Perlis.” As entrepreneurs, it is imperative that we actively engage with agencies as they play a key role in marketing and sponsoring our firm. Subsequently, they provide a wide array of programs and training opportunities.” (E7).

Several agencies, such as the Department of Agriculture, MADA, and SME Corporation, have organised halal education programs for entrepreneurs as their initiatives to promote halal certification and halal awareness (O2 and O3). These initiatives aim to enhance the understanding and specific intentions of micro and small-scale food manufacturers regarding halal certification, focusing on their knowledge, comprehension, and actual compliance with halal quality management systems (Oemar

et al., 2023). These initiatives reflect a concerted effort to address the challenges and promote understanding and adherence to halal certification and standards within the industry.

“MADA primarily focuses on providing educational courses to enhance entrepreneurs' skills and knowledge. We will organise a course in partnership with the State Government Department, inviting their officials to provide lectures to businesses. They will provide counsel during the discussion. MADA also offers courses on halal certification.” (O2).

“Our department is not directly involved in the implementation of halal certification. However, the Perlis Agriculture department helps entrepreneurs increase their knowledge by holding courses/training related to halal certification and bringing entrepreneurs to attend seminars or expos organised by any party to give them exposure. In addition, the department also conducts product promotions to increase consumer awareness of halal products.” (O3).

4.4 OPPORTUNITIES OF MIWEs IN HALAL CERTIFICATION

The opportunities for MIWEs related to halal certification are significant and multifaceted. In this context, opportunities refer to various favourable conditions and possibilities that women can leverage by obtaining halal certification. Fairlie and Fossen (2018) and Sugito *et al.* (2020) underscored the significance of women entrepreneurs possessing the essential skill to recognise and seize opportunities, emphasising the core role of opportunity in entrepreneurship. This concept is associated with the creation of businesses that prioritise growth and development. The capacity to identify and take advantage of opportunities is vital for the success of women entrepreneurs across various sectors, including the halal industry. Thus, this sub-topic discusses the third research objective: opportunities and relevant government agencies for MIWEs to obtain halal certification.

Informants were requested to provide insight into the opportunities associated with halal certification based on their involvement in the implementation process and their perspectives on the potential benefits of halal certification for their business performance. The findings revealed five themes that highlight the significance of halal certification and the support from agencies in fostering business growth. These themes include (1) global demand in the halal industry market, (2) halal certification as a critical market for the local and international halal industry, (3) customer satisfaction on acceptance of halal certification, (4) the active government agency on coaching halal certification among MIWEs, and (5) the value of halal certification on business performance.

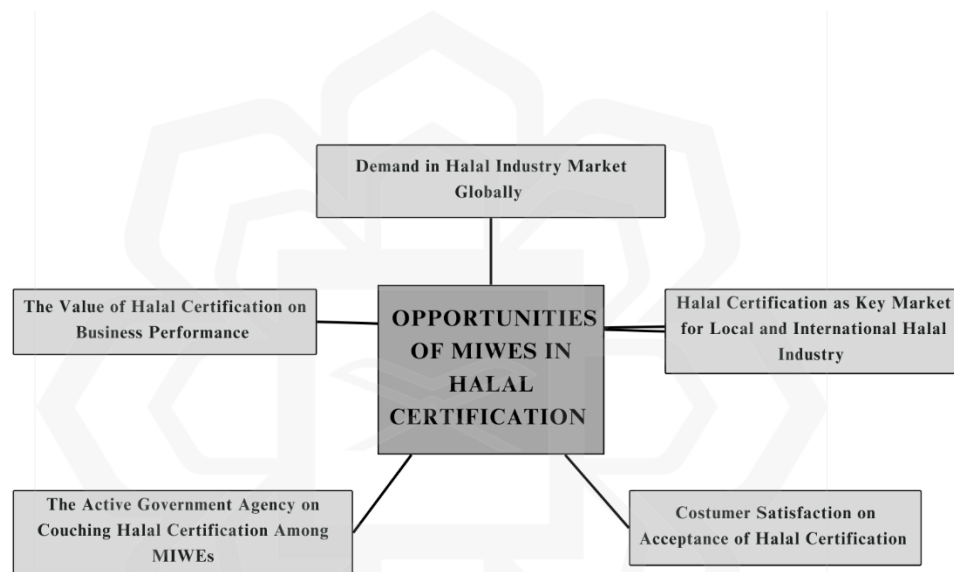


Figure 4.2 Mind Map Opportunities of MIWEs in Halal Certification

4.4.1 Demand in the Halal Industry Market Globally

The Malaysian government recognises the halal industry as a crucial area for potential growth and has developed a comprehensive agenda to establish the country as a leading global halal center. In a public statement, Datin Paduka Hajah Hakimah Binti Mohd Yusoff, the director of the Department of Islamic Development Malaysia (JAKIM), highlighted that Malaysia has been acknowledged globally as a premier halal hub over the past decade.

Malaysia achieved the top ranking in the Global Islamic Economic Indicators (GIEI) 2023 for the halal food sector, as reported by Dinar Standards. This achievement signifies Malaysia's rapid expansion in the halal industry compared to other nations. Furthermore, it highlights Malaysia's position as the leading country out of 81 for the past decade. (JAKIM, 2024, p. 1).

This accomplishment demonstrates Malaysia's ongoing leadership and expansion in the global halal food sector, underscoring its crucial role and influence in the international halal market. The Malaysian government views the halal industry as a significant opportunity for economic development, leading to increased investments in this area. They substantially support SMEs in producing halal goods and obtaining accreditation (Kaur, 2023). Halal certification is essential for Muslim consumers to identify products and services that comply with Islamic standards in the marketplace. This also creates opportunities for microenterprises to enhance their business and increase their market share within the halal sector.

The growth of the halal sector has opened substantial opportunities for international trade and collaboration, particularly within Southeast Asian and Asia Pacific markets. By 2050, the Muslim population is projected to exceed 2.8 billion. Additionally, there is an increasing consumer preference for halal options, especially in Asia (Hancock, 2023). According to the HDC, the global halal market is approximately RM12 trillion. The rising demand for halal products and services has been a critical factor driving the expansion of the halal industry, establishing it as a significant and growing sector in the global economy. This heightened demand has created a need for halal-certified products and services, particularly in Muslim-minority countries where finding authentic halal options can be challenging.

The halal industry has transformed into a vibrant sector marked by innovation and product differentiation, extending well beyond its traditional emphasis on food and food production. According to Azam and Abdullah (2020), this growth now includes a wide array of industries such as pharmaceuticals, cosmetics, health products, toiletries, medical devices, and various service sectors like logistics, marketing, media, packaging, branding, and financing. This trend underscores the potential for the halal industry to

enter new markets and regions beyond the Muslim-majority countries, catering to an expanding consumer base that prioritises ethical and compliant products across multiple sectors.

The culture and awareness surrounding the production of new halal-certified products are increasingly shaped by advancements in technology and globalisation, which cater to consumers' evolving preferences. For example, many young people in Malaysia have developed a taste for Chinese, Korean, and Japanese cuisines. Additionally, the trend towards loose-fitting garments and hijabs among Muslims has led to the rise of modest wear as a fashionable choice. These trends highlight the diverse range of products within the halal industry and the trading opportunities available, particularly for micro and small enterprises (MSMEs) across borders.

4.4.2 Halal Certification as Key Market for Local and International Halal Industry

Halal certification is a key market driver for minority Muslim countries. Research has shown that consumers' purchase intentions have been affected by halal certifications (Lim *et al.*, 2022; Mahliza & Aditantri, 2022). This certification is valuable not only for the Muslim people but also for non-Muslims interested in quality and compliance with halal standards. Previous literature indicated that halal certification positively influenced purchasing behaviour among consumers as a mark of quality and safety (Mhd Khotib & Syarifah, 2022). Halal products have been associated with perceived health and ethical considerations, especially among non-Muslim consumers who prefer halal-certified goods. In this regard, halal certification can drive the growth of halal industries in exporting their goods to other non-Muslim and developing countries to fulfil this demand, as seen in the case of Thailand (Mohd Nawawi *et al.*, 2020). After all, halal certification enables consumers to identify halal products and services through their logos, especially among tourists and foreigners in local and international regions.

Halal certification is central for market expansion for the local industry, especially in regions with a predominantly Muslim population, including Perlis. Halal food demand offers a promising market for manufacturers of food commodities. Given

that the market for micro-industries in Perlis is small and bounded by geographical areas, the significance of having a good location and market accessibility cannot be overstated when promoting local products internationally. According to H1, products made in Malaysia have long had dedicated supporters, demonstrating the ability to rival prominent brands with effective marketing. Furthermore, O2 mentioned that a well-defined target market and strategic planning are essential for micro-industries to enhance company growth. Thus, businesses must study the local market thoroughly, paying attention to details like packaging and desired goods, to deduce customer habits and develop goods that adhere to local regulations, cultural norms, and certification criteria.

“Entrepreneurs can promote and sell their products both within Malaysia and beyond. Our industry has companies that promote products internationally that acknowledge the halal logo of Malaysia, which is mostly a Muslim country. As we can see, Chinese products with a halal certificate are highly regarded and trusted by Muslim buyers.” (H1).

“It is up to the entrepreneur to decide what market level they wish to target. For instance, if a business owner decides that RM2,000 in profit is sufficient, they may concentrate their marketing efforts at the village level. Looking at Mokti's, we can see that they are certain that their products will be in demand nationally and even globally. Consequently, they would undoubtedly strive to gain all the required recognition to promote their products if they are confident in their potential to expand.” (O2).

O³ has highlighted the pivotal significance of halal certification for micro-industries, namely in promoting their products outside their local vicinity since it is a prerequisite for gaining access to larger markets such as malls and supermarkets. Collaborating with regulatory bodies such as GMP, HACCP, and SIRIM, which are essential in the international market, may enhance the marketability of products to a level comparable to large corporations such as Nestlé. Nonetheless, acquiring halal certification and other international credentials can facilitate the expansion of micro-

industries into larger markets, allowing them to tap into lucrative opportunities and effectively promote their products to prospective international customers.

"The halal industry in Perlis can open up opportunities for entrepreneurs to market their products in a better local or overseas market. In addition, with the availability of halal products (certified products), they can enter supermarkets and hypermarkets as well as being able to compete with other branded products in the market." (O3).

Therefore, the increasing global concern and demand for halal products have created significant opportunities for micro-industries to export their goods through halal certification, facilitating trade and business development. As the halal market expands, businesses that obtain halal certification can access a broader range of international markets, enhancing their competitiveness. For instance, Thailand has emerged as a prominent exporter of halal-certified food and products in Southeast Asia (Jaelani *et al.*, 2021; Mhd Khotib & Syarifah, 2022) shows that halal certification can open up trade markets worldwide. O3 elaborated that Perlis shares its border with Thailand, creating the potential for the export of Malaysian brands. The region's proximity to Thailand, a neighbouring country with a large Muslim population, makes it an ideal location for halal-certified products.

"Perlis' position as a border state can also open the export market for halal demand to neighbouring countries." (O3).

Perlis's focus on enhancing cross-border trade and promoting halal industries, along with establishing the Perlis Inland Port (PIP), can contribute greatly to the growth of the halal industry in Malaysia and increase trade between the two countries. Aside from that, halal certification makes it easier for entrepreneurs to collaborate with external parties or other stakeholders. To expand their commercial partnerships, many exporters and business partners want to work with companies with halal certification certified by reputable organisations such as JAKIM (Abdul Fazmin, 2023). Thus, halal certification streamlines the establishment of partnerships and the management of the food supply chain, facilitating better market performance and greater cooperation.

4.4.3 Customer Satisfaction on Acceptance of Halal Certification

Halal is significant to Muslims as it is associated with faith and belief in their Islamic practices. In the Islamic faith, Muslims are obligated to consume halal food and beverages while avoiding the *haram*. The notion of halal and *haram* encompasses more than what is permissible and forbidden. It aims to safeguard the five fundamental objectives of Sharia, which include the protection of religion, life, intellect, lineage, and property (Zaini & Abd Rahman, 2020). By adhering to halal standards, Muslims demonstrate obedience and devotion to religious obligations while upholding their religious identity by safeguarding Islamic values in their daily lives.

Satisfaction can be defined as the overall positive experience that consumers feel after purchasing and using a product or service. It is a measurement of consumers' satisfaction level concerning the products or services provided by a firm (Szyndlar, 2023). In this case, the halal logo and certificate are perceived as an indicator of excellence, cleanliness, and commitment to religious obligation, which leads to total acceptance and trust in brands. For instance, A1 mentioned that the availability of halal products at 7-Eleven in Thailand has contributed to the satisfaction of Muslim consumers, as it allows them to enjoy a variety of food and beverage options that adhere to their dietary requirements. This, in turn, has helped to increase customer satisfaction and trust among Muslim visitors to Thailand. By placing customer satisfaction as a top priority, companies can enhance their products and services, foster customer trust, and guarantee long-term customer retention.

“Thailand is one example for Southeast Asia. We see that Malaysian visitors visiting Thailand will undoubtedly take advantage of their 7-Eleven's halal selection.” (A1).

A halal certificate and logo indicate that a product or service complies with Islamic law, especially among Muslim consumers. This highlights the importance of halal certification in the food market and its role in enhancing customer satisfaction. Muslim consumers are particularly attentive to halal issues, and the halal logo and certification play a crucial role in purchasing decisions. This is in line with Fahmi *et al.* (2017), Sumadi (2022), and Yusuf *et al.* (2017), who also established that halal

certification plays a central role in boosting consumer satisfaction. Aside from that, Malaysian Muslims are fortunate to reside in a nation with a predominantly Muslim population, which facilitates the accessibility of halal products and services. Occasionally, customers show complete trust and support for businesses run by other Muslims. However, halal status can still be compromised by irresponsible individuals who violate the rules of halal and halal certification (Jaapar *et al.*, 2021).

The existence of halal frauds and the uncertain status of online halal goods could significantly diminish customer faith in the authenticity of halal products. Instances have occurred in Malaysia when non-halal meat has been deliberately mislabelled as halal, thereby misleading Muslim customers who depend on these certificates (Mohd Daud *et al.*, 2023). This deceitful approach not only infringes upon religious rituals but also gives rise to apprehensions regarding the safety and morality of food inside the halal sector. Aside from that, the existence of an online market that has become the leading platform for online shoppers raises concerns about the halal aspect of the products. In 2021, the sale of cheap and viral ‘soft gummy’ products from China, which contained gelatine, on TikTok has generated concerns among Muslims over their halal status since they have gained popularity among many followers (Mohd. Noor, 2021). Nevertheless, the product's halal status cannot be verified. Hence, the prevalence of these issues may brew a climate of doubt and scepticism among consumers regarding the authenticity of halal goods and halal authorities.

4.4.4 The Active Government Agency on Coaching Halal Certification Among MIWEs

One of the opportunities for halal certification is the active involvement of government agencies in coaching halal certification among micro-industry women entrepreneurs (MIWEs). The affiliation and relationship of microenterprises with government agencies play a pivotal role in shaping their success and sustainability. JAKIM and JAIN (or MAIN) are the prominent government agencies responsible for implementing and enforcing halal certification in Malaysia. These entities play a crucial role in setting and formulating policies, overseeing the certification process, monitoring, and enforcing with other government agencies to ensure the effective implementation and

enforcement of halal status (Anis Husna *et al.*, 2022). Hence, the enterprise must adhere to the requirements and standards outlined by JAKIM during the certification process.

However, from the problem statement in the first chapter, the participation of *Bumiputera* entrepreneurs in obtaining halal certification has shown a significantly slower growth rate compared to non-Muslim applicants, even though the majority of *Bumiputera* entrepreneurs are Muslims who should possess a greater understanding of the significance of halal (Abdul Fazmin, 2023). This can be attributed to the various challenges MIWEs encountered in the previous section of sub-topic 4.3. Thus, to counter this issue, many government agencies such as MARA, MADA, Department of Agriculture, SME Corporation, and other related agencies have provided halal awareness programs, seminars, training, coaching, and entrepreneurial assistance to encourage more entrepreneurs to implement halal certification.

According to the informants E2, O1, O2, O3, and O4, agencies like MARA, MADA, KUSKOP, SME Corp., etc., provided these businesses with financial aid, training, and other support through their grant programs and initiatives, as illustrated in the findings. To facilitate the halal certification process, the authorities are shown to provide their full support and guidance to those businesses that demonstrated dedication and collaboration during the implementation. The training and coaching programs these agencies provide ensure that the respective entrepreneurs gain sufficient knowledge and insight regarding the guidelines of the halal certification, navigate the certification process, and effectively operate within the halal industry. These efforts and dedication empower more MIWEs to gain support and assistance in entering the halal industry and enhance overall business growth. In other words, these government agencies are highly supportive and offer various incentives for MIWEs to take up halal certification. According to Wijaya and Priantina (2024), government support and incentives help increase entrepreneurs' perceived control (perceived behavioural control), which aids in the certification process. This finding aligns with previous research that emphasised the importance of perceived behavioural control in influencing entrepreneurial intentions and actions within the halal sector.

"All the agencies I have collaborated with have significantly contributed to the growth of my business and facilitated the process of obtaining a halal certificate." (E²).

"MARA has its module in helping entrepreneurs obtain a halal certificate. For instance, we provide Business Enrichment Standardization and Transformation, which includes a halal certificate program" (O¹).

"MADA also runs courses related to halal certification for entrepreneurs." "MADA offers grants such as Program Change Upgrade Product (CUP) to help entrepreneurs improve their products and renovate their workshops." (O²).

Our department is not directly involved in implementing halal certification. However, the Perlis Agriculture department helps entrepreneurs increase their knowledge by holding courses/training related to halal certification and bringing entrepreneurs to seminars or expos organised by any party to give them exposure" (O³).

"We have many agencies for entrepreneurs. The role of SME Corp., in general, is to help with businesses. SME Corp. aids entrepreneurs, especially in their business development and financial aid. Government agencies are obligated to operate within the budget allocated by the government. There are two forms: operating expenditure (OE) and development expenditure (DE). We can only provide DE to enterprises, not for our operating operations. SME Corp. usually receives DE. However, to run this DE, we require awareness among entrepreneurs." (O⁴).

4.4.5 The Value of Halal Certification on Business Performance

The outcome of the findings has revealed that halal certification does bring benefits towards business performance. Firstly, halal certification can help businesses build a

positive brand image and reputation among Muslim and non-Muslim consumers, increasing transparency, consumer confidence, and trust. The certification ensures that products and services comply with Islamic dietary laws and are permissible for consumption according to Islamic principles. The emphasis on cleanliness, product quality, and safety throughout the procedure gives the product some leverage in the marketplace and makes it more appealing to consumers (Saaey, 2019). As a result, companies that obtain halal certification can enhance their brand image and reputation among Muslim consumers, leading to increased trust and loyalty. In the interview, A1 described Nestlé as the largest halal food manufacturer. The enterprise's decision to obtain halal certification for most of its products in Malaysia reflects its recognition of the importance of halal accreditation in predominantly Muslim markets. By offering halal-certified products in Muslim countries, Nestlé could effectively tap into the purchasing potential of Muslim consumers and enhance its market competitiveness by accommodating their specific needs locally and globally.

Aside from that, considering the explanation from O1, halal certification provides additional value for the products due to innovation and product variation to accommodate consumer demands and preferences. The global halal market is growing rapidly, with consumers demanding more halal-certified products due to religious concerns, health, and ethical issues. This increasing trend for halal food and beverages indicates potential growth in this market, which will benefit companies by adding value to their products by diversifying in this market segment.

“Nestlé is also the largest halal food manufacturer. However, not all products are halal in non-Muslim countries. In Malaysia, most food products have a halal logo. Although they are not from a Muslim country, they see this halal as a step to expand the market for their products.” (A¹).

“The company's products have added value. The impact is derived from innovative packaging, ingredients, labelling, and marketing strategies. The product can also be varied by creating a new product or SKU to capture consumers' attention.” (O¹).

Secondly, halal certification can positively impact business performance, particularly in terms of financial capital. Based on the findings, O³ and A¹ agreed that halal certification enhances business revenue and increases growth, as mentioned in the studies conducted by Ab Talib *et al.* (2017) and Yusuf *et al.* (2017). Based on their analysis, it can be understood that a halal certificate can positively impact sales performance after displaying the logo on the products. However, E² mentioned that the halal certificate brought no direct impact or sales increase to the company. Accordingly, it is essential to acknowledge that the sample size for this study is limited and cannot be generalised to the entire industry to draw a definitive conclusion.

"Entrepreneurs with halal products have higher production and income than other entrepreneurs." (O³).

"As far as non-Muslim business owners are concerned, this halal certification presents a golden chance for advertising their products. They might expect a significant revenue increase after obtaining a halal certificate. Non-Muslim nations like the US and Brazil export halal items at a higher rate than any other. Business owners looking to increase their earnings by 100% should take advantage of this halal certification. Businesses that fell under the "small industries" category in the past were among those who had participated in our training sessions. Executive halal training becomes mandatory the year after an assessment places them in the medium industry category. This is because they have gone from a small to a medium-sized firm." (A¹).

"For me, there are no changes (sale) for my business by halal certification both in the past and present." (E²).

Halal certification brings Islamic values to a business, leading to increased business performance. Yusuf *et al.* (2017) found that businesses are aware that adopting halal certification for food premises would mean there are gains in business performance in terms of halal value and not just functional value. Islamic values in business are best understood in their emphasis on ethical conduct, sustainability, and

social responsibility to generate value for the business and the society by following Islamic injunctions. The primary goal is to seek the blessings of Allah.

E7, the informant, stated that halal certification aligns with the Sharia law, which means it serves as a *fardhu kifayah* (community responsibility) and may manifest Islamic values in business activities. This coincides with the research by Ali and Ahmad (2023), which defined Islamic marketing as a concept of business where firms incorporate Sharia-compliant strategies into operations and decision-making processes, giving particular attention to the ethical principles of the Islamic religion. This approach is widely utilised to address consumers' needs while ensuring both spiritual and material benefits despite the diverse cultural backgrounds and varying experiences of individuals in their faith.

“Halal certification guarantees that the items are verified as halal, hygienic, secure, and compliant with Sharia principles, thereby instilling trust in buyers. The production process will enhance its reliability and contribute to the added value of the products. (E⁷).

Additionally, halal certification appeals to non-Muslim consumers who look for ethical and sustainable products. Aspects like the method of slaughtering, environmental concerns, acculturation, and taste preferences are some of the hallmarks of halal that make consumers demand more certified food (Abu Bakar & Ahmad, 2020; Lim *et al.*, 2022; Saleh & Rajandran, 2024). These requirements for competent attributes and characteristics are more appealing to consumers and stakeholders, improving their business ethical standards and performance.

4.5 GUIDELINES FOR MIWEs ON OBTAINING MALAYSIAN HALAL CERTIFICATION

This part of the chapter demonstrates the final research objective formulated based on the literature and research findings presented in earlier chapters. The suggested guideline adopts an inductive-deductive research approach to accommodate new variables into the framework. The following guidelines are intended to assist MIWEs, especially those in micro and small enterprises, in understanding the process of

achieving halal certification and fulfilling all relevant specifications established by JAKIM and other organisations. Furthermore, this section details and explains various activities in the implementation process to the entrepreneurs. These guidelines also extend to collaborations with assisting agencies that focus on entrepreneurs in their business scaling and development processes, taking into account the challenges and opportunities discussed previously. By doing so, the women entrepreneurs or startups within the micro and small-scale industries have a higher chance of receiving the Malaysian Halal Certification, which will help improve the overall satisfaction, loyalty, and sales of their products, aside from portraying a good image in the market. Figure 4.3 shows the flowchart for the guideline.



**STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURE (SOP) FOR MIWES IN
OBTAINING MALAYSIAN HALAL CERTIFICATION IN
PERLIS**

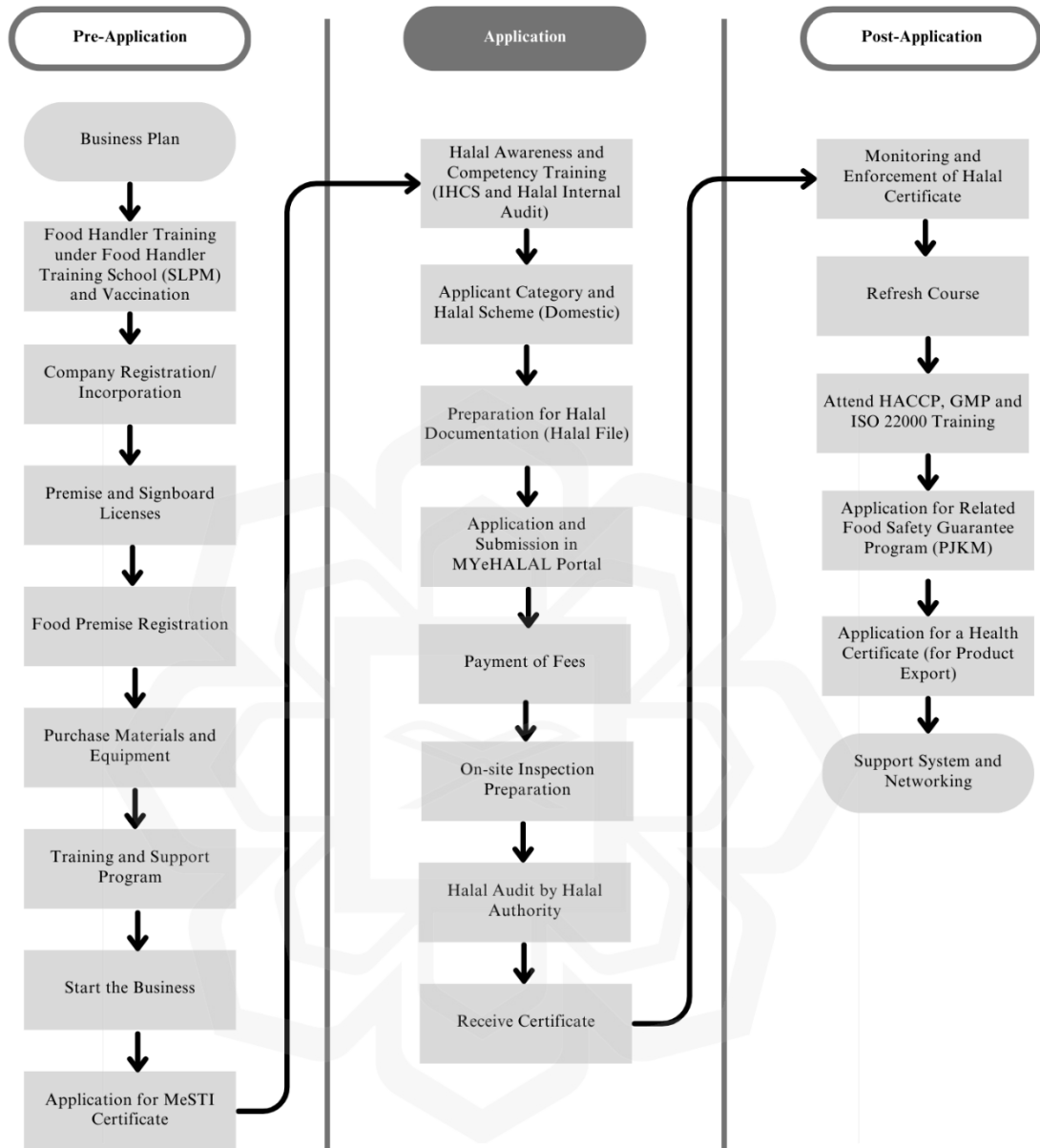


Figure 4.3 Flowchart Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for MIWES in Halal Certification

Table 4.1 below outlines the guidelines proposed for MIWES in obtaining Malaysian Halal Certification through Standard Operating Procedure (SOP). This section provides a comprehensive framework for acquiring Malaysian halal certification, detailing essential steps from pre-application to post-application. The SOP

encompasses processes ranging from business establishment planning to building connections and networks and outlines the specific procedure that needs to be taken. It emphasises a systematic approach to ensure businesses secure halal certification, maintain compliance, and succeed in the marketplace. Various literature sources have been referenced to guide the establishment of this SOP. Consequently, MIWEs can use this SOP as a reference and checklist throughout their accreditation process.



Table 4.1 Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for MIWEs in Obtaining Malaysian Halal Certification in Perlis

	STEP/PROCESS	PROCEDURE/DETAIL	REMARK
Pre-Application	1. Business Plan	<p>a) Collect Business Ideas and Make Evaluations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Discuss business missions, visions and objectives. ii. Do market research and list existing competition, skills or passions related to the proposed business. iii. List a product or service with potential in the area and the available institution or facility that can become the target market. iv. Consider workspace, equipment, provisions, where and how to sell the product/service. v. Evaluate the ideas and their feasibility based on market demand, competition, personal interest, and available resources/skills. <p>b) Discuss the ideas with the family/partner/development staff</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Engage with development staff, mentors, or experienced individuals to discuss and help refine the gathered ideas. <p>c) Identify the available resources</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Time, ii. Budget/allocation, iii. Traditional skills, iv. Knowledge and education, v. Basic equipment, vi. Land and facilities (water supply, electricity, etc.), vii. Raw materials, viii. Communication and transportation, ix. Staff/employee, x. Nearest market/retailer, xi. Agencies, training and support programs. <p>d) Develop a complete plan and organization and business agreements.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Preparation steps to start a business, 	(Committee PUANDESA & Japan International Cooperation Agency, 2004)

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ii. Executive summary, iii. Products and services, iv. Marketing plan, v. Operation plan, vi. Financial plan, vii. Create an organizational chart, including the type of business and roles and responsibilities, viii. Establish business agreements between partners/shareholders, ix. Business timeline. <p>e) Identify the initial cost</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Inventory (facilities and equipment), ii. Utilities, iii. Administrative expenses, iv. Operating expenses until profit is gained, v. Marketing expenses, vi. Rent or lease payment, vii. Insurance (if necessary). <p>f) Project sale (capital and profit)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Estimate sales revenue and profit. ii. Identify networks and sale channels. <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; margin: 10px auto; width: fit-content;"> $\text{Sales revenue} - \text{Expenses} = \text{Profit}$ </div>	
	<p>2. Food Handler Training under Food Handler Training School (SLPM) and Vaccination</p>	<p>a) Select an accredited training provider</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. The list of SLPMs can be obtained from the BKKM official website or the FoSIM website (www.fosim.moh.gov.my). <p>b) Register for the training course</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Registration can typically be done online through the training provider's website or by contacting them directly. ii. Participants may need to provide personal details and payment information. 	<p>(Salehuddin, 2023)</p>

		<p>c) Attend the training session and complete assessment</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> i. Participate in the training session, which usually lasts around three hours. ii. At the end of the training, participants may be required to complete quizzes or assessments to demonstrate their understanding of the material covered. Successful completion is necessary to receive certification. <p>d) Get Anti-Typhoid vaccine</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> i. Locate a vaccination provider such as government clinics, private clinics or hospitals. ii. Schedule an appointment. iii. Receive the vaccine. iv. Follow up on booster every three years. v. Keep the records for proof or inspections. 	
	<p>3. Company Registration/Incorporation</p>	<p>Registering the company with the Companies Commission of Malaysia (SSM).</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) Identify the business type (sole proprietorship, partnership or private limited company [Sdn Bhd]). b) Choose a company name (list several of them to avoid duplicating existing registered companies). c) Register or log in to an account at https://ezbiz.ssm.com.my/. d) Prepare required documentation/information (application can be done online or in person at the SSM office). <p>Select New Business Registration Form (Form A).</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> i. The business name, ii. Business start date, iii. The type of business conducted, iv. A copy of the identity card (IC) or passport, v. Details of the company's directors and shareholders, 	<p>(MISHU, 2024; Hafiz, 2022)</p>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> vi. A registered office address, vii. The company's constitution (if applicable), viii. Declaration of compliance, ix. Declaration by a director(s) or promoter(s). <p>e) Pay registration fees</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Pay the necessary registration fees, which vary depending on the type of business entity being registered. <p>f) Receive a certificate</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. The successful application serves as proof of registration. <p>g) Maintain compliance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Ensure ongoing compliance with SSM regulations by maintaining proper records and submitting annual returns as required. <p>h) Open a corporate bank account</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Search for a suitable bank and prepare the documents. 	
	<p>4. Premise and Signboard Licenses</p>	<p>Apply for the business premise and signboard licenses from the Local Authority (PBT)</p> <p>a) Prepare necessary documents (for all business types)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. SSM registration documents, ii. Tenancy or sale agreement (proof of ownership or rental of the business premises), iii. A copy of your identity card or passport, iv. Clear images of interior and exterior business locations, v. A layout plan for the business premises, vi. Certificate of Completion and Compliance (CCC) OR Certificate of Fitness for Occupation (CFO), vii. Quit rent (<i>Cukai Tanah</i>) and assessment (<i>Cukai Taksiran/Pintu</i>) receipts, viii. Fire department approval letter (Bomba certificate), ix. Signboard visuals (designs, colours, dimensions of the proposed signboard). 	<p>(MISHU, n.d.; MISHU, 2024)</p>

		<p>b) Specific requirements</p> <p>i. The nature of the business, the company name, and the license number must be displayed on the signboard in Malay (70% bigger than other languages). This content should be first approved by the Institute of Language and Literature (Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka) before submitting.</p> <p>c) Submit application</p> <p>i. Visit the local authority office in Perlis that manages business licenses, which is Kangar Municipal Council (<i>Majlis Perbandaran Kangar</i>).</p> <p>ii. Submit your application along with all required documentation. Ensure that you fill out any specific forms required by the local authority.</p> <p>d) Pay applicable fees</p> <p>i. Fees may vary depending on the type of business and specific local council requirements. Be prepared to pay any application fees upon submission.</p> <p>e) Await approval and inspections</p> <p>i. The duration of the approval process may vary, but it typically takes several days to weeks. Follow up if you do not receive feedback within a reasonable timeframe.</p> <p>ii. Local authority inspectors may inspect the premises and proposed signboard; if necessary, the premises must be modified.</p>	
	<p>5. Food Premise Registration</p>	<p>a) Food premise registration with the Ministry of Health (MOH) through an online application (For food manufacturers) http://fosim.moh.gov.my/</p> <p>i. The four (4) classification categories are as follows:</p> <p>P1 – All food premises involved in food manufacturing</p> <p>P2 – All food premises involved in catering and mass catering,</p>	<p>(Ministry of Health, n.d.-a)</p>

		<p>P3 – Food "Outlets" such as restaurants, food trucks, stalls, canteens and so on, where food is prepared, processed, stored and served for sale</p> <p>P4 – All vehicles used to sell ready-to-eat food.</p>	
	6. Purchase Materials and Equipment	<p>a) Determine the specific ingredients/materials and equipment needed for the production or services.</p> <p>b) Look for reliable suppliers (halal-certified ingredients for food production) through online searches, industry directories or entrepreneurs' recommendations.</p> <p>c) Request quotes and compare prices from several credential suppliers.</p> <p>d) Place orders and keep records of the transactions and information (certificates, invoices, delivery notes, amount, etc.)</p> <p>e) Inspect deliveries upon arrival to ensure they meet the standards and match the specifications made during the order process.</p> <p>f) Store materials properly in a clean, organized manner that adheres to standards.</p> <p>g) Maintain supplier relationships for ongoing support and potential discounts on future purchases.</p>	<p>(Committee PUANDESA & Japan International Cooperation Agency, 2004)</p>
	7. Training and Support Program	<p>a) Identify and register under any relevant or proposed agency (MADA, RISDA, MARA, Peladang, Pertanian, etc.)</p> <p>b) Participate in courses these agencies organize, such as quality control, management, accounting, marketing and certification.</p> <p>c) Participate in workshops or seminars related to business and halal.</p> <p>d) Utilize accessible online resources to gain information.</p>	<p>(Committee PUANDESA & Japan International Cooperation Agency, 2004)</p> <p>Suggested by H¹, O¹, O², O⁴ and A¹.</p> <p>Refer Appendix V</p>

		<p>e) Engage with related government agencies to gain consultation services, assistance or grants, and networking opportunities.</p> <p>i. Training programs, machinery allocations, start-up funding, and development grants: MAIPs, MADA, MARA, Pertanian, FELCRA, agencies under KUSKOP, etc.</p> <p>ii. Funding grant/scheme: DanaNITA grant by MARA, Change Upgrade Cup (CUP) and Young Agropreneur Program by MADA, Young Agropreneur Grant by Agriculture Dept., GrowBiz Program by SME Corp., Rural Industry Grant by FELCRA.</p> <p>iii. Vocational training and entrepreneurial workshops: GIATMARA.</p> <p>iv. Marketing assistance: FAMA.</p> <p>v. Product research, development, promotion and advisory services: MARDI and SIRIM.</p> <p>vi. Social Security Protection: PERKESO.</p> <p>vii. Financial assistance: SME Corp. Malaysia, TEKUN Nasional, AIM, etc.</p>	
	8. Start the Business	<p>a) Start the business</p> <p>b) Monitor and evaluate business performance.</p> <p>c) Gather feedback from the community and clients.</p>	(Committee PUANDESA & Japan International Cooperation Agency, 2004)
	9. Application for MeSTI Certificate	<p>a) Apply MeSTI certificate</p> <p>Understanding the conditions, requirements and criteria.</p> <p>i. Attend any courses related to MeSTI.</p> <p>ii. The information can be obtained from https://hq.moh.gov.my/fsq/mesti</p> <p>iii. Discuss the requirements and standards with MeSTI or agency officers (if necessary).</p> <p>Prepare documents, including:</p> <p>iv. A copy of the MOH/KKM premises registration slip,</p> <p>v. A copy of the SSM company registration certificate,</p> <p>vi. A copy of the PBT premises license,</p> <p>vii. A copy of the Food Safety Assurance System Certificate (if any),</p>	(Admin, 2014)

		<p>viii. Processing flow chart (if available).</p> <p>Implement Food Safety Practices</p> <p>i. Establish standard operating procedures that comply with MeSTI, including design and facilities, personnel hygiene, maintenance and sanitation practices, and control of raw ingredients and packaging.</p> <p>Applications can be made offline at BKKM Headquarters, MOH/KKM, State Health Department (JKN) and District Health Office (PKD) OR online at the following link: https://fosim.moh.gov.my/fssm/public/home</p> <p>Prepare for an inspection by health authorities to verify compliance with MeSTI standards</p> <p>MeSTI officers conduct on-site inspections</p> <p>i. Consist of a pre-audit (within 5 days of submission) and 6 months of guidance from MeSTI).</p> <p>A follow-up audit will take place after 6 months, which usually lasts for 3 months.</p> <p>i. The applicants must provide photographs or documentary support for the corrections.</p> <p>a) Upon successful inspection and compliance, the MeSTI certification is received, typically valid for three years.</p>	
Application	10. Halal Awareness and Competency Training (IHCS and Halal Internal Audit)	<p>b) Identify training providers, including JAIPs or private training institutions.</p> <p>c) Enroll or register in the training program.</p> <p>d) Participate in practical sessions during the training, especially for halal file and audit simulators.</p> <p>e) Complete assessment of the materials covered to receive the certificate.</p>	Refer Appendix VI

	<p>11. Applicant Category and Halal Scheme (Domestic)</p>	<p>a) Applicants who are eligible to apply for a halal certification are categorized as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Manufacturer/producer, ii. Distributor/ trader, iii. Sub-contract manufacturer, iv. Repacking, v. Food premises, vi. Slaughterhouse. <p>b) Halal schemes in the MPPHM (domestic) 2020 are as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Food products and beverage/Food supplement, ii. Food premise/hotel, iii. Consumer goods, iv. Cosmetics and personal care, v. Slaughterhouse, vi. Pharmaceutical, vii. Logistics, viii. Contract manufacturing/OEM, ix. Medical device products. 	<p>(Ying, 2024)</p> <p>(Department of Islamic Development Malaysia, 2020)</p>
	<p>12. Preparation for Halal Documentation (Halal File)</p>	<p>a) Form a dedicated team responsible for managing halal compliance within the organization (if feasible).</p> <p>b) Consult JAIPs for guidance on preparing the halal file.</p> <p>c) Develop Internal Halal Control System (IHCS) according to MHMS 2020.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Halal policy, ii. Raw material control, iii. Traceability. <p>d) Outline standard operating procedure (SOP) for sourcing, production, storage, packaging, and labelling practices.</p> <p>e) Perform risk assessments to identify potential areas where halal compliance could be compromised.</p>	<p>(Malaysian Halal Management System Development Working Committee, 2020)</p>

		<p>f) Gather all necessary documents as specified in the MPPHM (domestic) 2020 guidelines.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. A copy of the company's registration certificate, ii. A copy of the operating license from the local authority (PBT), iii. A copy of the company's financial statements, iv. Provide a copy of the identity card (IC) and letter of appointment for two permanent Muslim workers who are Malaysian citizens, v. Letter of authorization from the Drug Control Authority of the Ministry of Health Malaysia (for food/beverage nutritional supplements), vi. A copy of the import permit from the Malaysian Animal Services Department for meat/animal-based products. (If Relevant), vii. Copies of halal certifications for each ingredient used (Malaysian halal verification certificate or foreign Islamic body certificate that is still recognized), viii. Product process flow chart, ix. Packaging label/graphic artwork for products that will be certified halal, x. Operational location/map, xi. Factory Layout Plan, xii. Additional documents, such as HACCP, ISO, GHP, GMP, TQM, BKKM, JPV, NPRA, MDA, etc. (If any). <p>g) Organize all collected documents into a comprehensive halal file.</p> <p>h) Conduct a thorough review of all documents to ensure completeness and accuracy.</p>	<p>(Department of Islamic Development Malaysia, 2020)</p>
	<p>13. Application and Submission in MYeHALAL Portal</p>	<p>a) Access the MYeHALAL portal at https://myehalal.halal.gov.my</p> <p>b) Create an account or log in</p> <p>c) Complete the application form</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Fill out the halal certification application form available on the portal. <p>d) Upload required documents</p>	<p>(Ying, 2024)</p>

		<p>i. Upload all necessary documentation as specified in the MPPHM (domestic) 2020 as gathered previously.</p> <p>e) Review application</p> <p>i. Review all entries and upload documents for accuracy before final submission. Make any necessary corrections or additions.</p> <p>f) Submit Application</p> <p>i. Once everything is verified, submit the application.</p> <p>ii. A confirmation notification will be received indicating a successful submission.</p> <p>f) Physical document submission (if required)</p> <p>i. In some cases, physical copies of certain documents are required for JAIPs or JAKIM (usually within five working days). Ensure that these documents match those submitted online.</p>	
	<p>14. Payment of Fees</p>	<p>a) The fee depends on the entity's type and scheme.</p> <p>For product and service by category (products, logistics, and manufacturing service)</p> <p>i. Microenterprise: RM 100</p> <p>ii. Small enterprise: RM 400</p> <p>iii. Medium enterprise: RM 700</p> <p>iv. Large corporation: RM 1,000</p> <p>Food premise</p> <p>i. Annual fee: RM 100</p> <p>Food premise (hotel)</p> <p>i. 4 stars and above: RM 500</p> <p>ii. 3 stars and below: RM 200</p> <p>Slaughterhouse/Abattoir</p> <p>i. Small slaughterhouse: RM 100</p> <p>ii. Medium slaughterhouse: RM 400</p> <p>iii. Large slaughterhouse: RM 700</p>	<p>(Department of Islamic Development Malaysia, 2020)</p>

		<p>For food premise scheme (catering, services, food central kitchen)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Small enterprise: RM 100 ii. Medium enterprise: RM 400 iii. Large corporation: RM 700 <p>b) The fee is valid for two years, except for slaughterhouses, which only apply for one year.</p> <p>c) The receipt is issued after the payment is made and is non-refundable.</p>	
	<p>15. On-site Inspection Preparation</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Review halal standards and requirements <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Familiarize yourself with the standards and requirements outlined in MPPHM (domestic) 2020 and MHMS 2020. b) Compile the necessary documents required for the audit <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. MYeHALAL application form, ii. Complete Halal File, iii. Internal Halal Control System (IHCS), iv. Purchase/invoice records, v. Record of anti-typhoid injection, vi. Food Handler Course certificate, vii. Pest control records, viii. Product manufacturing record, ix. Factory layout plan. c) Conduct mock internal audits <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Review processes related to sourcing, handling, production, and storage of halal products. ii. Check for cross-contamination risks and ensure proper sanitation practices are followed. iii. Verify that the sources of raw materials are halal certified. iv. Document any findings and implement corrective actions as necessary. d) Prepare the facility 	<p>(Department of Islamic Development Malaysia, 2020; Yusuf <i>et al.</i>, 2016; Malaysian Halal Management System Development Working Committee, 2020).</p> <p>Suggested by A³</p>

		<p>Ensure the production facility is clean, organized, and compliant with halal standards.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Clean equipment and work surfaces, ii. Proper storage of raw materials, iii. Maintenance of hygiene practices among staff. <p>e) Train employees</p> <p>Conduct training sessions for employees to reinforce their understanding of halal practices and their roles in maintaining compliance.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Importance of halal certification, ii. Procedures for handling halal products, iii. Awareness of cross-contamination risks. <p>f) Prepare for auditor questions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Anticipate questions that auditors may ask during the inspection regarding the halal practices, documentation, and procedures. ii. Develop a checklist based on halal audit requirements to ensure all aspects are covered during preparation (i.e., ingredients used, production processes, halal internal management, storage and handling practices, and packaging and labelling compliance). 	
	<p>16. Halal Audit by Halal Authority</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Halal authorities will arrange an internal audit or inspection of the documents and premises. b) The company must comply with the instructions and submit necessary documents requested by the auditors during the auditing process. c) The on-site halal audit (field audit) is conducted by halal authorities/auditors who are qualified in Syariah and technical matters. d) The auditors may collect samples for laboratory analysis. 	<p>(Department of Islamic Development Malaysia, 2020)</p>

		<p>e) The company must complete any Non-Conformance Report (NCR) (minor/major/severe) issued by the auditors within the stipulated time.</p> <p>i. Documented in writing,</p> <p>ii. Submit direct, specific, and clear feedback related to the corrective actions that have been implemented,</p> <p>iii. Submit supporting documents (schedules, receipts, halal certificates, invoices, etc.) and ensure photographic evidence is systematically marked.</p>	
	17. Receive Certificate	Upon completing the inspection and verification process, the company will receive JAIPs/JAKIM' halal certification, which confirms that the products comply with halal standards.	
Post-Application	18. Monitoring and Enforcement of Halal Certificate	<p>a) Establish a dedicated team responsible for overseeing halal compliance.</p> <p>b) Create a checklist and do record-keeping daily/periodically for future inspection.</p> <p>c) Do document maintenance.</p> <p>i. Halal application file,</p> <p>ii. MHMS file,</p> <p>iii. Copy of the company's halal certificate (if relevant),</p> <p>iv. Employee records,</p> <p>v. Halal training record,</p> <p>vi. Raw material purchase records,</p> <p>vii. Pest control records,</p> <p>viii. Product processing record,</p> <p>ix. Previous Malaysian Halal Certification auditing or monitoring records,</p> <p>x. Other documents and records related to Malaysian Halal Certification requirements.</p> <p>d) Schedule periodic internal audits to assess adherence to halal standards.</p> <p>i. Review documentation,</p>	(Anis Husna <i>et al.</i> , 2022; Department of Islamic Development Malaysia, 2020)

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ii. Inspect facilities and equipment to ensure cleanliness and proper storage and labelling practices, iii. Identify any non-compliance issues and implement corrective actions. <p>e) Ensure all suppliers maintain halal certification and comply with halal standards.</p> <p>f) Establish a procedure for addressing complaints regarding halal compliance from consumers or authorities.</p> <p>g) Be ready for periodic external audits by halal authorities.</p> <p>h) Maintain open communication with halal authorities regarding any changes in operations or new products being introduced. Seek guidance when needed to ensure compliance with updated regulations.</p> <p>i) Renew the halal certificate when it reaches its authorized time limit/expires.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Review the halal certificate and initiate the renewal process when the certificate is due for renewal. ii. The renewal process should be submitted at least 3 months before its expiry date. iii. New applications must undergo the same steps during the previous application process (through MYeHALAL when applying for the first time). 	
	<p>19. Refresh Course</p>	<p>a) Provide ongoing training for employees on halal practices, emphasizing the importance of compliance.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Understanding halal requirements, ii. Procedures for handling halal products, iii. Awareness of cross-contamination risks, iv. Send halal executives to Halal Awareness Training by JAKIM every three years (if any). <p>b) Identify training providers</p>	<p>(Oemar <i>et al.</i>, 2023; Siska <i>et al.</i>, 2020)</p>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Gather information from related websites or social media (Facebook or Instagram) to look for training courses provided in Perlis. ii. Contact JAIPs or agency officers to obtain information. <p>c) Enroll in the refresher courses</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Register for halal awareness, halal requirements, best practices and regulations courses. <p>d) Stay updated on the changes in the standards and market.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Ensure the company knows about halal certification requirements or changes in industry standards. 	
	20. Attend HACCP, GMP and ISO 22000 Training	<p>b) Participate in awareness courses under the Food Safety Guarantee Program (PJKM), such as GMP, HACCP, ISO 22000, etc.</p> <p>c) Obtain information and course updates from the agencies or social media.</p> <p>d) Enroll in the course (online or offline)</p>	
	21. Application for Related Food Safety Guarantee Program (PJKM)	<p>a) Apply for HACCP, GMP or ISO 22000 Certificate.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. The premises must be registered with the Ministry of Health Malaysia via the website https://fosim.moh.gov.my. ii. Understand the requirements, conditions and standard operating procedures https://hq.moh.gov.my/fsq/haccp OR https://hq.moh.gov.my/fsq/gmp. iii. Preparation of related documents, premises, or products according to the related requirements, iv. Implementation of relevant systems, v. Submission of applications through https://fosim.moh.gov.my. vi. Payment of fees, vii. Internal audit by officers, viii. On-site inspection by officers, ix. Certification issuance. 	(Food Safety Information System of Malaysia-HACCP, 2021; Food Safety Information System of Malaysia-GMP, 2021)
	22. Application for a Health Certificate (for Product Export)	b) Apply for a Health Certificate to prepare for product exports	(Ministry of Health, n.d.-b)

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. The standard operating procedures, conditions, requirements and standards can be obtained from https://hq.moh.gov.my/fsq/permohonan-sijil-kesihatan_ ii. Applications for health certificates can be made using the online system at https://fosim.moh.gov.my/fssm/public/home iii. Payment of fees is according to category. 	
	23. Support System and Networking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Related support system for women entrepreneurs: Agencies under KPWK: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Perlis State Women's Development Department (JPW Negeri Perlis) ii. Malaysian Department of Social Welfare (JKM) iii. National Population and Family Development Board (LPPKN) b) Related Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) for women entrepreneurs in Malaysia to build connections and networks <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. National Association of Women Entrepreneurs of Malaysia (NAWEM) ii. Women Entrepreneur Network Association (WENA) iii. Business Networking Club Women (BNC Women) iv. Women Of Will (WOW) 	(Ministry of Women Family and Community Development, n.d.)

4.6 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter discusses the results and findings of the research. Firstly, the discussion focused on the MIWEs' involvement in the Perlis halal industry by focusing on the MIWEs' demographic, training, understanding of halal concepts, and readiness for halal certification procedures and requirements. Then, an analysis of the challenges of MIWEs in halal certification was provided. The results indicated that the challenges encountered by MIWEs in this issue are mainly external limitations in the form of insufficient employees to handle halal certification, restricted facilities that do not meet the halal requirements, poor product marketability, and the lack of demand for halal-certified products among consumers in Perlis. On the other hand, internal challenges for MIWEs are the lack of IT skills in handling the MYeHALAL portal, the lack of positive attitudes among MIWEs in Perlis, and the lack of initiative and proactive involvement in programs arranged by government agencies. Furthermore, this chapter evaluated the opportunities of MIWEs in obtaining halal certification, which include the larger demand in the halal industry market globally, halal certification as the gateway to the local and international halal market, its role in consumer satisfaction, the active support from government agencies for halal certification among MIWEs, and the value of halal certification on business performance. This study has integrated the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) and found that all determinants (perception, social pressures, and government support) influence the intention and obtainment of halal certification. Lastly, the SOP developed for MIWEs to obtain Malaysian Halal Certification in Perlis elaborated based on experts' suggestions, previous literature, MPPHM (domestic) 2020, MHMS 2020 and other standards and requirements. It is divided into three phases and several steps for a better understanding.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION

5.1 INTRODUCTION

This final chapter provides a comprehensive summary of the research findings, the study's limitations, implications, and suggestions for future research. It concludes the overall investigation by addressing the research objectives and synthesising the key conclusions drawn from the analysis. Through this chapter, readers will understand the significance of the findings, their relevance to the field, and potential avenues for further exploration in related areas.

5.2 LIMITATIONS OF THE RESEARCH

Several limitations inevitably bound the study. Thus, they need to be considered when interpreting its findings.

This research's limitations highlight several critical aspects concerning women entrepreneurs in the micro-food manufacturing sector in Perlis. Firstly, focusing on food manufacturing within the halal certification framework may inadvertently neglect the challenges women entrepreneurs face in other sectors, limiting the generalisability of the findings. This narrow scope could overlook essential issues such as access to resources, market opportunities, and relevant support systems for women in different sectors or industries.

Additionally, the inability to obtain precise data on the number of micro-industry women entrepreneurs in Perlis due to confidentiality restrictions from the Department of Statistics Malaysia presents a significant limitation. This lack of data not only hinders a comprehensive understanding of the landscape of women entrepreneurs in the region but also affects the inclusivity of the data. The information is attached in Appendix VII for reference.

The informants' absence of halal-certified products may significantly influence their responses and experiences regarding the halal certification process. Only a few informants seek and maintain their halal certification, while many have yet to obtain it. This lack of certification could limit the generalisability of the findings to the broader halal food sector and other halal schemes and businesses that prioritise halal certification.

The study is limited in scope and generalisability by focusing only on the perspectives of four state-level government agency executives. Preliminary contact was established with some agencies, including FAMA, RISDA, MARDI, and Peladang, through phone calls and emails. Despite attempts to arrange interview sessions, the efforts were unsuccessful. The reading list was limited because the researcher obtained only a small amount of information, and agencies were only willing to share details if their official materials were accessible on their respective websites.

The experts in this study include one halal auditor and four halal executives, all of whom play crucial roles in certifying halal products and services. Their participation is essential for assessing the quality and relevance of the research findings based on the researchers' backgrounds. However, there are limitations to consider: the study focuses on a small group of halal auditing experts, which restricts the diversity of perspectives regarding various halal auditors and executives engaged in the certification process. This narrow focus may result in a limited understanding of the challenges and opportunities for MIWEs seeking halal certification in Perlis and a constrained view of the certification process and its potential impact on the sector.

Consequently, the limited sample size precludes generalisation to all women entrepreneurs in Malaysia's micro-industry. The limited number of informants might affect the generalisability of the research results to other contexts and areas. The detailed arrangements and operations afforded in the case of Perlis for the certification processes surrounding halal may not capture everything about territory-specific or national-specific dynamics and practices around halal certification. As this study had only been carried out in Perlis, the finding might be applicable only in this context, limiting the potential impact of the findings internationally.

5.3 IMPLICATIONS OF THE RESEARCH

Based on the research findings, a few implications were determined. This study contributes to government agencies, micro-industry entrepreneurs, halal auditors, halal executives, and the theoretical aspect, especially in the intention of human behaviour.

The following elaborates on the implications for the government and related agencies in the context of this study.

- Policymakers and program developers can leverage previously discussed results to develop more effective policies and programs to support MIWEs seeking halal certification. This insight can help the government identify issues that MIWEs face and provide them with appropriate support mechanisms to tackle these potential challenges. This can come in the form of giving specialised training, offering financial assistance, or providing platforms to network with other women entrepreneurs through their halal certification process.
- The implications of this study highlight the importance of providing clear operational standards for obtaining halal certification, which can significantly benefit the agencies involved in the certification process. By establishing a standardised framework, these guidelines can serve as a model for systematising the halal certification requirements, making it easier for both the agencies and the entrepreneurs to navigate the process.

Moreover, the study has several implications for micro-industry players.

- Identifying various challenges and barriers encountered by micro-industry entrepreneurs pursuing halal certification can serve as valuable reference material for addressing and resolving relevant issues in this process. Recognising the challenges will significantly empower affected entrepreneurs to engage or avoid similar situations, thereby enhancing their chances of successfully obtaining halal certification.

- In addition, by focusing on the opportunities or benefits of halal certification to the sector, the study offers entrepreneurs a valid justification for pursuing certification. By emphasising its benefits, the study motivates micro-industry entrepreneurs to obtain halal certification as a strategic business strategy.
- Next, the findings can be invaluable for assisting companies expanding and entering the halal market due to its relevant information regarding government bodies, related agencies, and halal trainers. This will help entrepreneurs determine with whom they can interact and where they can take specialised training to participate in obtaining halal certification.
- For entrepreneurs, the guidelines presented in this study function as Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for halal certification. They outline the necessary procedures and specify the required elements for certification, offering valuable insights into the process. This structured approach may help micro-industry entrepreneurs pursue halal certification for their businesses, as it instils confidence in the clarity and organisation of the certification process.

Since the study extends to halal auditors and halal executives, the implications of the research should be considered. This information will be of interest to halal personnel and management for certification and development practices.

- Halal auditors stand to gain valuable insights from this study regarding the involvement and challenges micro-industry women entrepreneurs (MIWEs) face in acquiring halal certification. Understanding their involvement and challenges allows auditors to provide more targeted support and guidance, helping businesses navigate the certification process effectively. Additionally, the study's SOP offers auditors a reference point and an evaluation checklist, equipping them with a systematic tool to assess compliance with halal standards among businesses.

- In the same manner, for the halal executives involved in managing the process of executive halal certification in organisations, this information can help create the institutional framework and support systems that empower women entrepreneurs within the companies by helping them acquire halal certifications. These insights are further applicable to their duties to implement and sustain halal certification effectively.

This research offers some practical implications to the halal food stakeholders, including the halal food authorities, to make them visualise and realise the involvement, factors and problems associated with halal certification operations in Muslim countries. The findings of this study are beneficial to halal institutions, particularly importers in Muslim countries, as it provides an overview of the involvement of MIWE in the halal industry and highlights the problems concerning halal certification among the micro-food businesses in Malaysia.

Integrating the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) into this study provides significant implications for understanding the factors influencing women entrepreneurs' engagement in halal certification processes. The TPB comprises three key components: perception (attitude), social pressures (subjective norms), and government support (perceived behavioural control), each of which plays a crucial role in shaping entrepreneurial intentions and behaviours.

In brief, this study's findings will be helpful to MIWEs in Malaysia, the Malaysian food manufacturing industry, other research scholars, and academics interested in Malaysian Halal Certification. The elements identified in this investigation can be used by academics and researchers for further advanced research in the future using practical approaches.

5.4 SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Given the worldwide increase in demand for halal products and services, an ongoing dialogue on halal certification has become necessary for businesses and halalpreneurs worldwide. This study provides a roadmap and directions for future research areas.

To further explore the involvement and challenges faced by MIWEs in obtaining halal certification, a mixed-method approach is recommended. This method would enable the researcher to adopt an all-encompassing approach that would capture the multifaceted nature of the factors that shape the halal certification process among MIWEs.

Interviews and focus groups employed within qualitative research methods can be used to discover the experiences, perceptions, and challenges MIWEs undergo when striving to acquire halal certification. Through in-depth semi-structured interviews with these entrepreneurs, researchers can also uncover the challenges they explicitly face stemming from cultural and social dimensions affecting their chances to acquire certification. In addition, focus group discussions can provide a medium for entrepreneurs to narrate their experiences and viewpoints, which may contribute to a better understanding of social and cultural undercurrents.

Meanwhile, quantitative research approaches are research procedures that entail empirical measurements utilising countable data in observation. This approach involves measuring the strength of the connection between variables and using statistical methods to conclude the results (Apuke, 2017). Such data can help conduct fundamental statistical analysis and discover patterns and trends in halal certification within the microenterprises.

As such, several recommendations are proposed, including the addition of quantitative research methods as follows:

- The study aims to identify and explore the factors related to the challenges and opportunities in obtaining halal certification. However, the level of relevance for every factor remains equivocal. Future research should conduct a correlational research design to determine the impact of these factors on the actual implementation of halal certification. For example, questionnaires can be carried out to collect information on the correlation between the accessibility of certifying organisations and the willingness to have halal certification. Thus, quantitative analysis of this data will offer an

understanding of other broad patterns and trends in halal certification within the micro-industry business segment.

- Future research should include a larger sample of informants. For instance, the research could analyse existing data on the certification rates for MIWEs versus men in the same sector or entrepreneurs in other sectors. This comparative analysis could reveal potential gender disparities or industry-specific challenges in obtaining halal certification.
- In addition to surveys and numerical data analysis, quantitative research could also entail experimental studies that could assess the impact of the strategies meant to counter the challenges in question. For instance, scholars can develop and integrate MIWEs' support interventions and assess the magnitude of the changes in their probability of receiving halal accreditation.

Hence, combining quantitative and qualitative methods (mixed method) helps the researchers to cross-check the findings and increases the validity and reliability of the study. A mixed-method approach is also essential to better understand the challenges and opportunities in obtaining halal certification and penetrating the halal market, hence enhancing the formulation of better support mechanisms and policies.

Further studies could enhance this study with different populations or different data sampling. Specifically, this could provide a more complete perspective on elements contributing to certification processes in varied contexts and sectors. If observed across different populations, such insight will generate information about shared challenges, opportunities and any unique contextual elements that could determine the experiences of halal-certified MIWEs.

- A possible future research direction would be to conduct replication studies in other regions or states within Malaysia and countries with a large Muslim community. By adopting this comparative perspective, researchers could evaluate how differences in regulatory structures and socio-cultural influences between regions or countries shape the challenges and

opportunities highlighted by the original research. For example, conducting similar kinds of research in both the urban and rural areas or different economically developed regions, such as in Kuala Lumpur and Sabah can enable us to understand the challenges related to micro-industry women entrepreneurs in different settings.

- Future research should expand to MIWEs in other sectors, such as cosmetics, pharmaceuticals, fashion, and tourism. By broadening the scope of study to encompass these industries, researchers can gain valuable insights into the sectoral differences and commonalities in the challenges associated with halal certification. This approach will enrich the understanding of halal certification processes across various fields and highlight specific issues unique to each sector, providing a more comprehensive view of the halal industry landscape.
- Future studies focusing on geographical and sectoral diversities, and other socio-economic characteristics, such as women entrepreneurs' socio-economic status, educational attainment, and business size, could also be investigated. This would provide more diversity in data to comprehend how differing characteristics relating to demographics and the business environment itself may affect the issues that are encountered when seeking halal certification.

Thus, the extension of the study to cover different populations and data samples can add to the current body of literature to develop a comprehensive understanding of the main issues in this topic. This approach can be used to develop interventions and policies that appropriately target women's engagement in entrepreneurship across diverse settings and sectors.

Finally, future research should shift focus from the challenges of obtaining halal certification to the issues encountered in its implementation. Investigating the challenges of maintaining halal certification is crucial, as proper enforcement and compliance with halal standards are essential for upholding certification integrity. For instance, a study by Muazu and Sjahrir (2023) identified challenges in halal

entrepreneurship, including regulatory concerns, knowledge gaps, and sustainable practices. By concentrating on the implementation phase, researchers and practitioners can gain insights into the practical issues and ongoing tasks necessary for sustaining halal certification.



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APPENDIX I

REFERRAL LETTER FOR INTERVIEW SAMPLE

 <p>الجامعة الإسلامية العالمية ماليزيا INTERNATIONAL ISLAMIC UNIVERSITY MALAYSIA بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ Garden of Knowledge and Virtue</p>	<p>LEADING THE WAY KHALIFAH - AMANAH - IGRA - RAHMATAN UL-ALAMIN SUSTAINABILITY INSTITUTION OF THE YEAR</p>
<p>Reference: IIUM/INHART Date: 04 May 2023</p>	
<p>Dr. Nor Aina binti Mhd Khotib, Pensyarah, Jabatan Muamalat dan Pengurusan Halal, Pusat Pengajian Perniagaan Islam (IBS), Universiti Utara Malaysia (UUM), 06010, Sintok, Kedah Darul Aman, Malaysia</p>	
<p>السلام عليكم ورحمة الله وبركاته</p>	
<p>Puan,</p>	
<p>PERMOHONAN TEMU RAMAH UNTUK KAJIAN MENGENAI PENSIJILAN HALAL DI PERLIS</p>	
<p>Semoga puan sentiasa dikurniakan kesihatan yang baik dan sejahtera hendaknya. Dengan segala hormatnya, perkara di atas adalah dirujuk.</p>	
<p>2. Adalah saya, Afaf Syakirah binti Md Rosdy, pelajar Universiti Islam Antarabangsa Malaysia di bawah Institut Penyelidikan dan Latihan Halal Antarabangsa (INHART), ingin memohon kerjasama pihak puan untuk membenarkan saya mengadakan sesi temu bual bersama puan mengenai tajuk "Cabaran dan Peluang Usahawan Mikro Produk Makanan Wanita dalam Memperolehi Pensijilan Halal di Perlis."</p>	
<p>3. Tujuan temu bual ini diadakan bertujuan untuk memberi pendedahan kepada kami tentang situasi pensijilan halal di Perlis, cabaran pensijilan halal khususnya dalam perusahaan mikro wanita di Perlis, dan usaha-usaha kerajaan dalam pelaksanaan pensijilan halal untuk membantu usahawan dalam pelaksanaan ini.</p>	
<p>4. Bersama-sama surat ini juga saya sertakan surat lampiran draf beberapa soalan yang ingin kami ajukan semasa menemu bual puan. Sebarang maklumat dan butiran boleh menghubungi kami:</p>	
<p>1) Prof. Madya Dr. Mohammad Aizat bin Jamaludin Penyelia Kajian No. Tel: 019-2896545 Alamat e-mel: mohdaizat@iium.edu.my</p> <p>2) Afaf Syakirah binti Md Rosdy Pelajar Sarjana</p>	
	



No. Tel: 012-5689499

Alamat e-mel: afaf.syakirah94@gmail.com

Pihak kami amat berharap agar puan dapat memberikan respons dan maklumat yang kami perlukan untuk melengkapkan laporan kami dan kami ingin merakamkan setinggi-tinggi penghargaan atas kerjasama daripada puan.

Terima kasih.

Yang Benar,

(AFAF SYAKIRAH BINTI MD ROSDY)

Pelajar Sarjana,

Institut Penyelidikan dan Latihan Halal Antarabangsa (INHART),
Universiti Islam Antarabangsa Malaysia.



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APPENDIX II

INTERVIEW QUESTIONNAIRES

Table A. Interview Questionnaire for Entrepreneur

Questions for Entrepreneurs Soalan-soalan untuk Usahawan
Introductory Questions
1. Can you tell me about your background? <i>Bolehkah anda berkongsi mengenai latar belakang diri anda?</i>
Transition Questions
2. Can you share about the background of the company? <i>Bolehkah anda berkongsi tentang latar belakang syarikat?</i> 3. What are your financial and marketing practices like? <i>Bagaimana pula dengan amalan kewangan dan pemasaran anda?</i> 4. Have you participated in any of the business training provided? <i>Adakah anda pernah menyertai mana-mana latihan perniagaan yang disediakan?</i>
Key Questions/Probing Questions
5. What is your opinion regarding halal certification? <i>Apakah pandangan anda tentang pensijilan halal?</i> 6. Are you familiar with IHCS? <i>Adakah anda tahu tentang IHCS?</i> 7. What steps have you taken to put it into practise? <i>Apakah langkah yang anda pernah lakukan untuk praktikkannya?</i> 8. How did you become aware of the halal certification? <i>Bagaimakah anda mengetahui tentang pensijilan halal?</i> 9. Have you previously applied? <i>Adakah anda pernah memohon sebelum ini?</i> 10. If so, what motivated you to apply? <i>Jika ya, apakah perkara yang mendorong anda untuk memohon?</i> 11. If so, what obstacles did you encounter when applying? <i>Jika ya, apakah cabaran-cabaran yang anda hadapi semasa memohon?</i> 12. Have you ever employed a halal certification consultant? <i>Adakah anda pernah menggunakan khidmat perunding untuk pensijilan halal?</i> 13. Based on your observations, what positive contributions have been made to your company? <i>Daripada pemerhatian anda, apakah kebaikan yang telah berjaya disumbangkan untuk syarikat anda?</i> 14. Does the company currently possess a halal certificate? <i>Adakah syarikat mempunyai sijil halal sekarang?</i>

15. If not, what is preventing you from applying or pursuing it?

Jika tidak, bolehkah anda berkongsi apakah perkara yang menghalang anda daripada memohon atau meneruskannya?

Closing Questions

16. Do you know of any government programmes or aid for female entrepreneurs, particularly micro-entrepreneurs and those seeking halal certification?

Adakah anda tahu mana-mana program atau bantuan kerajaan untuk usahawan wanita khususnya dalam usahawan mikro dan pensijilan halal?

17. Have you joined or applied for it?

Pernahkah anda menyertai atau memohonnya?



Table B. Interview Questionnaire for Agencies Officers and Academicians

Questions for Agencies Officers and Academicians Soalan-soalan untuk Pegawai Agensi dan Akademik
Introductory Questions
<p>1. Can you share about your background and organization? <i>Bolehkah anda berkongsi mengenai latar belakang diri dan organisasi?</i></p> <p>2. What are the opportunities and advantages of the halal industry in Perlis? <i>Apakah peluang dan kelebihan industri halal di Perlis?</i></p>
Key Questions/Probing Questions
<p>3. What is the level of halal awareness among entrepreneurs, especially women entrepreneurs and micro enterprise entrepreneurs in Perlis about halal certification? <i>Apakah tahap kesedaran halal dalam kalangan usahawan khususnya usahawan wanita dan usahawan perusahaan mikro di Perlis tentang pensijilan halal?</i></p> <p>4. From your observation and experience, what are the challenges of halal certification and the issues faced by women entrepreneurs and micro enterprises especially in its implementation in Perlis? <i>Daripada pemerhatian dan pengalaman anda, apakah cabaran-cabaran pensijilan halal dan isu-isu yang dihadapi oleh usahawan wanita dan perusahaan mikro khususnya dalam pelaksanaannya di Perlis?</i></p> <p>5. Can you share, what are the factors that contribute to the success in the implementation of halal certification? <i>Bolehkah anda berkongsi, apakah faktor-faktor yang menyumbang kepada kejayaan dalam pelaksanaan pensijilan halal?</i></p> <p>6. What type and form of assistance does your agency offer to help entrepreneurs obtain halal certification? <i>Apakah jenis dan bentuk bantuan yang ditawarkan oleh agensi anda untuk membantu usahawan dalam memperolehi pensijilan halal?</i></p> <p>7. How is the implementation of halal certification carried out by your agency? <i>Bagaimanakah langkah pelaksanaan pensijilan halal dilakukan oleh agensi anda?</i></p>
Closing Questions
<p>8. From your observation, do the above efforts have an impact on the growth of the product and the company applying? <i>Daripada pemerhatian anda, adakah usaha-usaha di atas memberi kesan terhadap pertumbuhan produk dan syarikat yang memohon?</i></p> <p>9. What are your suggestions to improve the implementation of halal certification among women entrepreneurs and micro enterprises in Perlis? <i>Apakah cadangan anda untuk menambah baik pelaksanaan pensijilan halal dalam kalangan usahawan wanita dan perusahaan mikro di Perlis?</i></p>

APPENDIX III

INTERVIEW SCRIPT (INTERVIEW PROTOCOL)

(Opening)

Assalamualaikum WBT. How are you today madam? Before anything else, let's start our discussion or interview with Ummu al-Kitab al-Fatihah. My name is Afaf Syakirah binti Md Rosdy, a master's student from INHART, IIUM. I am currently conducting research on "Challenges and Opportunities in Obtaining Halal Certification among Women-Owned Micro-Enterprises Food Products in Perlis."

(Collecting Consent)

I would like to thank you, first and foremost, for consenting to be my informant and for taking the time to attend today's interview. As I have mentioned to you before, my study seeks to understand the issues concerning halal certification in Perlis and to gain information on the challenges faced by women entrepreneurs in microenterprises, especially in obtaining halal certification. The interview shall last approximately around 20 minutes to 40 minutes at most.

Thus, before we start, are you okay if I audio-record our conversation?

If yes: then thank you! Please let me know if there is ever a time when you want me to turn off the recorder or omit certain parts of what you've said.

If not: I appreciate your reply. I will only take notes during our discussion.

Before we begin, do you perhaps have any questions that you would like to ask me? [Discuss questions].

(Start interview questions based on Interview Draft)

(Closing)

Before we conclude this interview, would you like to share your thoughts regarding our discussion of halal certification?

I can't thank you enough for the informative experience you've shared with me today. I have a small token of gratitude for your generosity. Let me know if you have any questions or complaints. Lastly, let's conclude with tasbih Kafarah and surah al-Asr.



APPENDIX IV

INFORMATION OF INFORMANTS

Table A. Informants Demographic

Code	Name	Education	Company/ Agency	Location	Position	Date of Interview
E1	ANONYMITY	SPM	Perusahaan Sri Siding Enterprise	Padang Siding, Arau, Perlis	Entrepreneur (Traditional cakes and cookies)	14 th May 2023
E2	Maznah binti Ahmad	SPM	Siding Klasik Enterprise	Padang Siding, Arau, Perlis	Entrepreneur (<i>Bahulu</i>)	21 st May 2023
E3	Farah Hanim binti Jaafar	Bachelor's degree	Farah Hanim bin Jaafar	Padang Siding, Arau, Perlis	Entrepreneur (Cakes and cookies)	31 st May 2023
E4	ANONIMITY	SPM	Double R Honeyfood	Kangar, Perlis	Entrepreneur (Rempeyek)	21 st June 2023
E5	Yusniza binti Abdullah	SPM	Shanz Legacy	Kangar, Perlis	Entrepreneur (Multipurpose cooking pastes)	21 st July 2023
E6	Roshamiza binti Meli	SPM	Rose Myza Enterprise	Kangar, Perlis	Entrepreneur (Traditional cakes and cookies)	9 th August 2023
E7	Nor Hidayah binti Radzli	Diploma	Chef Micky Pinky Enterprise	Simpang Empat, Perlis	Entrepreneur (Cakes and cookies)	31 st October 2023
H1	Azizah binti Mat Isa	-	JAIPs	Kangar, Perlis	Halal Auditor, JAIPs Chief Assistant	29 th May 2023

					Director of Research and Halal	
O1	Yusri bin Md Yusoff	-	MARA Perlis	Kangar, Perlis	Halal Executive, Chief Assistant Director of Perlis State MARA (Entrepreneur Development)	29 th May 2023
O2	Ariff Suhair bin Suhaimi	Bachelor's degree	MADA Region 1	Kangar, Perlis	Head of the Farmers & Entrepreneurs Development Division	6 th June 2023
O3	Hafizuddin bin Othman	Bachelor's degree	Perlis Agriculture Department	Kangar, Perlis	Director of Perlis Agriculture Department	23 rd June 2023
O4	Zubaidah binti Mohamad	-	SME Corporation	Kuala Lumpur	Manager, Business Development & Entrepreneurship Division	20 th November 2023
A1	Nor Aina binti Mhd Khotib	PhD	Northern University of Malaysia (UUM)	Sintok, Kedah	Halal Executive, Lecturer, Institute of Halal Management (IHM), Islamic Business School (IBS), UUM	14 th June 2023
A2	Muhammad Aizat bin Md Sin	Master's degree	Perlis Islamic University College (KUIPs)	Kuala Perlis, Perlis	Halal Executive, Lecturer, Faculty of Business & Management Sciences, KUIPs	7 th July 2023
A3	Muhammad Haziq bin Hassan	Master's degree	Perlis Islamic University College (KUIPs)	Kuala Perlis, Perlis	Halal Executive, Lecturer, Head of Halal Industry & Hospitality Department, Muamalat & Islamic Finance Faculty, KUIPs	2 nd August 2023

APPENDIX V

AGENCIES IMPLEMENTING ENTREPRENEURIAL DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVES

Table A. Agencies Implementing Entrepreneurial Development Initiatives

AGENCY	FUNCTION/ROLE	ADDRESS
People's Trust Council (MARA)	<p>Entrepreneurship Sector A comprehensive entrepreneurial development ecosystem for <i>Bumiputera</i> entrepreneurs.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support Facilities • Business Development • Entrepreneur Development 	<p>Kangar District MARA Office</p> <p>Lot F51-F52 Tingkat 1, Arked Kayangan Square, Jalan Penjara, 01000 Kangar, Perlis</p>
Young Agricultural Development Board (MADA)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilitate and foster economic and social growth in the Muda Area. • Devise and execute strategies in the Muda Area to promote agricultural advancement, as designated by the State Authorities of Kedah and Perlis. 	<p>MADA Region 1</p> <p>Km. 2, Bohor Temak, 01000 Kangar, Perlis</p>
Agriculture Department (Jabatan Pertanian)	<p>Their role towards entrepreneurship is centred on the development of the agriculture sector.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Apply measures of modernization of agriculture • Foster the growth of the food crops and flowers market • Give professional advice and technical assistance • Preserve the agriculture sector • Ensure the safety of food and the environment • Engage in forums, bilateral relations, and international technical cooperation • Enhance the development of human capital 	<p>Bukit Temiang Agricultural Complex</p> <p>KM11, Jalan Kaki Bukit, 02400 Beseri, Perlis.</p>

Federal Agricultural Marketing Authority (FAMA)	<p>In charge of promoting goods from the agricultural and food processing industries.</p> <p>FAMA has used the approaches that follow to improve the efficiency of the marketing chain:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create opportunities in the market • Construct an advertising framework • Foster entrepreneurship • Develop product marketing • Create regulations for the marketing 	<p>FAMA Perlis Office</p> <p>KM2, Jalan Baru Kangar-Alor Setar, Behor Temak, 01000 Kangar, Perlis</p>
Standard and Industrial Research Institute of Malaysia (SIRIM)	<p>Ensure that all products manufactured adhere to the established standards of quality.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote scientific and industrial research and development • Advance the industrial development and productivity • Transfer of and consulting on technology • Develop Malaysians standards and promote quality and standardisation for competitiveness • Protection of the health, safety, and well-being of the public and the industrial workforce 	<p>SIRIM Northern Region</p> <p>Lot 67 & 68, Jalan Johan 1/1, Kawasan Perindustrian Pengkalan II, Fasa I, 31550 Pusing, Perak Darul Ridzuan</p> <p>Lot PT483 Mukim 6, jalan Permatang Pauh, 13500 Permatang Pauh, Seberang Prai, Pulau Pinang</p>
Malaysian Agriculture Research and Development Institute (MARDI)	<p>MARDI's functions and roles encompass various aspects of research, development, and technology transfer to support the growth and sustainability of the agricultural industry. The institute is involved in researching to enhance agricultural productivity, improve crop varieties, and develop sustainable farming practices.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Researching SMEs' production, consumption, and processing, mixed farming • Information-gathering and advising centre • Expert food and industry services • Provide training 	<p>MARDI Perlis Office</p> <p>19, Jalan Tengku Budriah, Kampung Tambun Tulang, 02600 Arau, Perlis</p>
Rubber Industry Smallholders	<p>The smallholders' sector is an essential segment of the country's</p>	<p>RISDA Perlis Office</p>

<p>Development Authority (RISDA)</p>	<p>economy, and the role of RISDA is to coordinate its functioning.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement all research-based agricultural changes. • Work with all government departments involved in research, development, agricultural financing, rubber processing, and marketing to modernize the smallholder sector. • To improve smallholder income, implement regular replanting with high-yielding crops and modernize the industry. • Gathering and storing smallholder statistics. 	<p>No.64 - G, Jalan Raja Syed Alwi, Kampung Bukit Lagi, 01000 Kangar, Perlis</p>
<p>The National Entrepreneurial Group Economic Fund (TEKUN Nasional)</p>	<p>Provide micro-credit financing to SMEs and entrepreneurs, fostering entrepreneurship growth through financial assistance, business support, and development programs, empowering local entrepreneurs and contributing to the country's economic development.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Offering fast, simple, and entrepreneur-friendly microfinancing. • Guide and assist dedicated businesses. • Establish an entrepreneurial network. • Creating an entrepreneurial and saving culture among entrepreneurs. • Make sure loans can be recovered on time to re-distribute to new entrepreneurs. 	<p>TEKUN National Perlis Office</p> <p>No. 1L Jalan Arau – Kodiang, Taman Utara (Fasa II) Guar Sanji, 02600 Arau, Perlis</p>
<p>SME Corp. Malaysia</p>	<p>SME Corp. Malaysia is the one-stop centre whereby SMEs nationwide can access information and consultation.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop strategies to promote the growth of SMEs in all economic sectors. • Coordinate the efforts of relevant Ministries and Agencies • Foster collaboration with the private sector 	<p>SME Corporation Malaysia Perlis State</p> <p>3, Jalan Tun Abdul Razak, 01000 Kangar, Perlis</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Oversee the successful execution of SME development initiatives 	
Amanah Ikhtiar Malaysia (AIM)	<p>AIM is a microfinance institution that focuses on providing financial services and support to small and medium enterprises (SMEs) and micro-entrepreneurs.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide microcredit facilities to individuals who do not qualify for loans from formal commercial banks because they lack acceptable security or references. Assist individuals to start income-generating ventures. Provide various programs to enhance the skills and knowledge of entrepreneurs, including women entrepreneurs. Foster community among its clients by encouraging networking and collaboration among entrepreneurs. 	<p>Office of Amanah Ikhtiar Malaysia (AIM)</p> <p>No. 36, Tingkat 1, Taman Pertiwi Indah, Jalan Kangar, 01000 Kangar, Perlis.</p>
Social Security Organization (SOCSO/PERKESO)	<p>PERKESO or SOCSO provides a range of social security protections and benefits crucial for self-employed individuals, including entrepreneurs.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implement the Employment Injury Scheme and the Invalidity Scheme. Protect employees/entrepreneurs against occupational accidents and diseases during work. Offer vocational rehabilitation services to assist injured employees/entrepreneurs in reintegrating into the workforce. Promote educational awareness of occupational safety and health. Establish a Housewives Social Security Scheme (SKSSR) towards housewives who contribute to their family's businesses or engage in entrepreneurial activities. 	<p>Perlis State SOCSO Office</p> <p>No. 6A & 8A, Jalan Hospital, 01000 Kangar, Perlis</p>
Federal Land Consolidation and Rehabilitation	<p>FELCRA is responsible for developing rural areas and improving the social status of rural populations</p>	<p>FELCRA Berhad Office</p>

<p>Authority (FELCRA Berhad)</p>	<p>by participating in economic activities.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement various entrepreneurial programs on instilling business knowledge, creativity, and innovation. • Provide soft loan schemes to upgrade business premises and machinery. • Emphasize agricultural entrepreneurship by managing vast areas of land for agricultural activities. • Promotes women's participation in entrepreneurship through targeted programs. • Assist entrepreneurs in obtaining necessary certifications and accreditations. • Offer comprehensive business developments. • Provide platforms and organize carnivals and expos for entrepreneurs. 	<p>Kawasan Lubuk Sireh, Batu 16, Jalan Kaki Bukit, 02000 Kaki Bukit, Perlis</p>
<p>Perlis Malay Religious and Ceremonial Council (MAIPs)</p>	<p>MAIPs uplifts B40 and <i>Asnaf</i> communities by providing support that fosters economic self-sufficiency and sustainable business practices.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaborate with financial institutions to provide financial aid, including distribution of <i>zakat</i> and soft loans for micro-entrepreneurs to start or expand their businesses. • Organizes training programs to equip participants with entrepreneurial skills. • Collaborate with relevant government bodies and other private players to provide entrepreneurs with relevant support. • Encourage, motivate, aid and work on the development and economic well-being of the Muslim community in Perlis according to Islamic laws. 	<p>Perlis Malay Religious and Ceremonial Council (MAIPs)</p> <p>A2, Taman Pengkalan Asam, Jalan Tuanku Syed Putra 01000 Kangar, Perlis</p>

<p>Division of Research and Halal Hub, Department of Islamic Religious Affairs Perlis (JAIPs)</p>	<p>This division promotes and develops the halal industry in Perlis.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Carry out investigation and reporting of activities of Muslims that violate Islamic laws. • Conduct inspections on-premises in the food and beverage sector, including restaurants, hotels, factories, and guest houses, to ensure that products and services do not cross-contaminate halal and <i>haram</i>. • Issue a certificate of eligibility for slaughter in conformity with Islamic laws. • Monitor and oversee the halal certification process and application. 	<p>Department of Islamic Religious Affairs Perlis (JAIPs)</p> <p>Pesiaran Jubli Emas, Pusat Bandar Kangar, 01000 Kangar, Perlis</p>
<p>Women's Development Department (JPW)</p>	<p>JPW carries out programs and activities for women's development that are consistent with the vision and mission of the Ministry of Women, Family, and Community Development.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Empower women economically and socially through initiatives and programs. • Provide information on available financial assistance programs for women entrepreneurs. • Advocate for women's rights and gender equality within the community. • Facilitate networking among women entrepreneurs through events. • Collaborate with various government agencies, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and private sector partners to enhance the effectiveness of its programs. 	<p>Perlis State Women's Development Office</p> <p>No. 4, Aras 1, Blok B Pusat Transfromasi Bandar (UTC) Perlis Mukim Sena 01000 Kangar Perlis</p>
<p>Department of Social Welfare (JKM)</p>	<p>JKM provides social services and support to vulnerable populations and focuses on welfare assistance, rehabilitation, and community development.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide financial assistance to individuals and families in need 	<p>Perlis State Social Welfare Department</p> <p>Kompleks Pejabat Kerajaan Negeri 01000 Kangar, Perlis.</p>

	<p>through various welfare schemes. Offer rehabilitation programs aimed at helping individuals recover from social issues such as addiction or mental health challenges.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Involve in community development initiatives to empower local communities. • Support vulnerable groups such as women, children, the elderly, and disabled people. • Conduct outreach programs to identify individuals and families in need of assistance. • Provide training programs to enhance vocational and entrepreneurial skills among the needy. 	
<p>National Population and Family Development Board (LPPKN)</p>	<p>LPPKN is crucial in shaping family policies and promoting family well-being in Malaysia.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plan, implement and coordinate population programs and activities, family development and human reproduction. • Provide education and encourage positive behaviour in the community. • Conduct community outreach initiatives to raise awareness of family issues, healthy relationships, and responsible parenthood. • Develop various programs focused on enhancing family resilience and well-being. • Provide support services for vulnerable families, including those facing economic hardships or social challenges. 	<p>Perlis State LPPKN Office</p> <p>Tingkat 1 Bangunan Persekutuan Kangar, Persiaran Jubli Emas, 01000 Kangar, Perlis</p>
<p>National Association of Women Entrepreneurs of Malaysia (NAWEM)</p>	<p>NAWEM empowers and support women entrepreneurs across the country by addressing their unique challenges in business.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote, develop and enhance activities and ventures of women entrepreneurs. 	<p>National Association of Women Entrepreneurs of Malaysia (NAWEM)</p> <p>Lot 13 Rumah Puspanita, 5171 Jalan</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Act as a liaison between members and Malaysian Government, State and local agencies, etc. • Develop leadership among women entrepreneurs in business operation. • Conduct seminars, workshops, training programs and conferences for women entrepreneurs. • Administer grants and donations to the benefits of the members. 	Hose 50460 Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
Women Entrepreneur Network Association (WENA)	<p>WENA focuses on providing resources, networking opportunities, and training to enhance the capabilities of women in business.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Offer mentorship initiatives which connect aspiring entrepreneurs with experienced businesswomen. • Provide training programs focusing on essential skills for entrepreneurship. • Promote the products and services through various channels. • Establish alliances and collaboration with other agencies and non-governmental organizations. 	<p>Women Entrepreneur Network Association (WENA)</p> <p>B3A-11, Megan Ambassy, 225 Jalan Ampang, 50450 Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia</p>
Business Networking Club Women (BNC Women)	<p>BNC Women is a platform for women entrepreneurs to connect, collaborate, and grow their businesses.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide a structured environment for women entrepreneurs, industry experts, and potential business partners to network with each other. • Organize various training sessions, workshops, and seminars to enhance women entrepreneurs' skills. • Facilitate mentorship opportunities where experienced entrepreneurs guide newer members. 	<p>Business Networking Club KL & PJ</p> <p>D4 Bangunan Khas, Jalan 8/1E, 46050 Petaling Jaya Selangor, Malaysia</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote the achievements and contributions of women entrepreneurs through events and campaigns. 	
Women Of Will (WOW)	<p>WOW is an NGO in Malaysia that focuses on empowering economically disadvantaged women, including single mothers, widows or abused women, and the B40 household bracket.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide micro-credit financing in starting or expanding businesses. Implement training and coaching programs such as Entrepreneurial Development Programs. Community Leadership Training among women. Provide resources and moral support for women in need. Engage in programs that promote wellness. 	<p>Women Of Will HQ,</p> <p>Suite E0506, Block E, Level 5, Mont Kiara Plaza, No 2, Jalan Kiara, 50480 Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.</p>

APPENDIX VI

JAKIM CERTIFIED HALAL TRAINING PROVIDERS (2021-2023)

(Sekretariat Majlis Halal Malaysia, 2022)

1. Universiti Teknologi Malaysia
2. Kolej Uniti
3. Universiti Sains Islam Malaysia
4. Universiti Islam Antarabangsa Malaysia
5. Universiti Malaya
6. Universiti Utara Malaysia
7. Kolej Universiti Agrosains Malaysia
8. Kolej Profesional Baitulmal Kuala Lumpur
9. Universiti Kuala Lumpur – (MICET)
10. Univerisiti Teknologi Mara
11. Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia
12. Universiti Malaysia Sabah
13. Kolej Universiti Islam Antarabangsa Selangor
14. Cyberjaya University of Medical Sciences
15. Universiti Malaysia Pahang
16. SIRIM STS Sdn Bhd
17. Management & Science University Shah Alam
18. Halal Development Corporation
19. GAE Resources Sdn Bhd (Halal Academy)
20. Politeknik Metro Kuantan
21. Politeknik Sultan Ahmad Shah
22. Politeknik Sultan Idris Shah
23. Politeknik Tuanku Syed Sirajuddin
24. Politeknik Merlimau Melaka
25. JCP Professional Services Sdn Bhd
26. PJJ Halal Ventures Sdn Bhd
27. Kazai Innovative Ideas Solution Sdn Bhd
28. Pusat Pembangunan Kemahiran Perindustrian Dan Keusahawanan Melaka (MISDEC)
29. Global Haltech Sdn Bhd
30. Exclusive Continent Sdn Bhd
31. Univeriti Putra Malaysia

APPENDIX VII

NOTIFICATION LETTER ON DATA REQUEST FOR ANALYSIS

Department of Statistics, Malaysia's Notification on the Requested Data on the
Number of Micro-Industry Women Entrepreneurs in Perlis



JABATAN PERANGKAAAN MALAYSIA
(DEPARTMENT OF STATISTICS, MALAYSIA)
BLOK C6, KOMPLEKS C
PUSAT PENTADBIRAN KERAJAAN PERSEKUTUAN
62514 PUTRAJAYA
MALAYSIA

Talian Am : 03-8885 7000
Faks : 03-8888 9248
Portal : <https://www.dosm.gov.my>

Dear Sir/Madam,

Refer to order no **63203 - The number of micro-industry women entrepreneurs in Perlis**

Deskripsi The number of women entrepreneurs owned micro-enterprises in Perlis with
Pemintaan Data * Employee Count: fewer than five full-time employees
Sales Turnover: a sales turnover of less than RM300,000 for most sectors, with specific thresholds varying slightly across industries such as agriculture and manufacturing, where it can be as low as RM200,000 to RM250,000

2. Thank you for your request through [eStatistik](#).
3. Attached herewith is a description of the data request for your attention. Kindly be informed that the data for the number of micro-industry women entrepreneurs in Perlis **could not be distributed** according to the required information due to private and confidential reasons. Therefore, data cannot be shared. Any inconvenience is deeply regretted.
4. Anything inquiries, can be submitted to us via email data@dosm.gov.my.

Thank you and regards.

Integration & Data Management Division
Department of Statistics Malaysia

"PENJANA STATISTIK NEGARA"
"Producer of National Statistics"

GLOSSARY

Allah. The Arabic word for God is the absolute and omnipotent God, who is the Creator of the universe.

Asnaf. specific categories of individuals eligible to receive *zakat* (charitable donations) in Islam. According to Islamic teachings, particularly as outlined in the Quran, there are eight recognized *asnaf*. Each category represents a distinct group of people with specific needs and are entitled to support from *zakat* funds.

Bumiputera. The term ‘*Bumiputera*’ means ‘son of the land’. In Malaysia, *Bumiputera* mainly refers to those from the indigenous ethnic group declared as having special rights and privileges under the New Economic Policy implemented in 1971 to those prescribed privileges under Article 153 of the Malaysian Constitution. In this case, the *Bumiputera* are Malays, indigenous people of West and East Malaysia, Kadazan/ Dusun, Bajaus, Indonesians and Murut people of Sabah, and the Iban, Bidayuh Christians and the Melanau’s of Sarawak.

Entrepreneurship. Entrepreneurship is establishing, managing, and profiting from a new venture while bearing financial risk.

Fardhu Kifayah. Literally, *fardhu kifayah* means communally obligated. In terminology, it refers to the deed Allah S.W.T asks of the collective of morally responsible humans, not of everyone. In the fulfilment of *fardhu kifayah*, a person who can execute the *fardhu kifayah* act via himself or his property is required. In contrast, a person who is unable to conduct the act himself is required to encourage and have the person who can accomplish it do so. If the required action is performed, everyone is absolved of sin, but if it is omitted, everyone is guilty of grave sin.

Hadith. *Hadith* refers to everything ascribed to the Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him, in terms of words, acts, *taqrir*, or nature, whether physical or moral, before or after becoming a messenger.

Halal Value Creation. Halal value creation is an Islamic method that emphasises value-driven end-to-end services.

Halal. An act, product, or service that is lawful according to Islamic law.

Halalan Tayyiban. A concept consisting of halal and *tayyib* indicates lawfulness, safety, quality, and wholesomeness.

Haram. An act, product, or service that is prohibited according to Islamic law.

Manufacturing. The process of transforming raw materials into new products.

Maqasid al-Sharia. The term "*Maqasid al-Sharia*" refers to the objectives or intentions that Islamic law intends to accomplish. It has several objectives that must be addressed, incorporated, and endorsed to achieve them.

Maqasid. Legal doctrine in Islam means the objective, purpose, or intent of Sharia.

Maslahah. Derived from the Arabic word for interest or benefit. *Maslahah* is an objective drawn from Maqasid al-Sharia, which refers to preserving the purposes of the Sharia. *Masalih al-Mursalah* is an interest that Sharia promotes and is typically aimed at securing public benefits and safeguarding the public from harm.

Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) or (SMEs). Micro, small, and medium-sized companies (MSMEs) are business units that may play a role in the supply of productive business operations and opportunities in financing and employment circumstances. To be designated an SME, the predominant requirements are a sales turnover of less than RM50 million or a full-time staff count of less than 200. All small and medium-sized enterprises are required to be entities that are registered with SSM or other comparable agencies.

Najs. Impure matters according to Islamic law.

Quran. Islamic scripture contains Allah's revealed words to Prophet Muhammad (P.B.U.H) through Angel Jibrail, the intermediary in Arabic and a primary source of Islam.

Sharia. The legal practice derived from the teachings of the Quran and Prophet Muhammad (P.B.U.H) concerning Allah's overall regulation of mankind.

Shubhah. Doubt, uncertainty, or conceit.

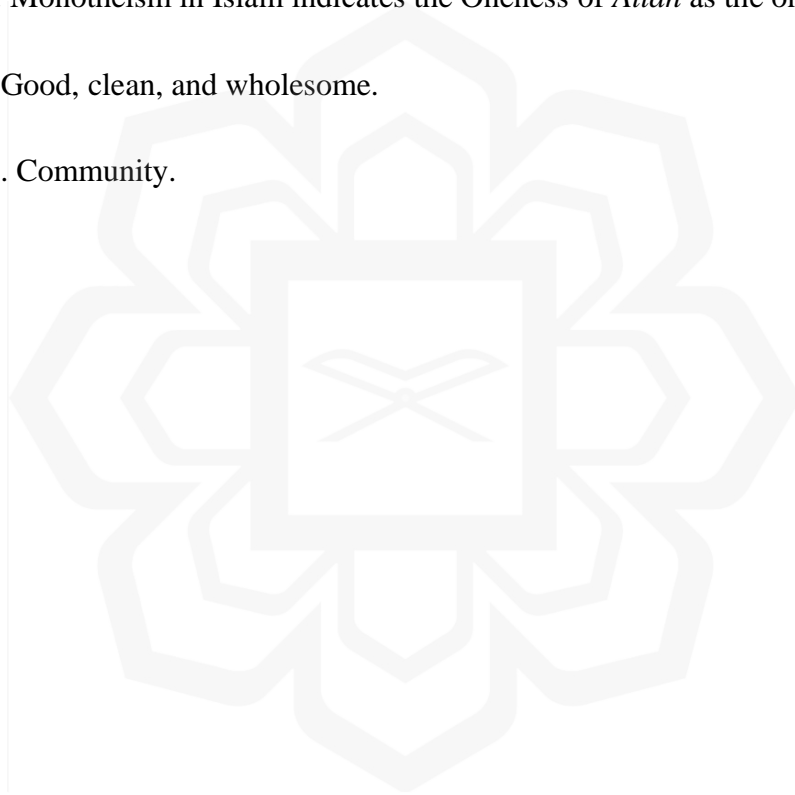
Sunnah. The word, act, or tacit approval of the prophet Muhammad (P.B.U.H) is the second primary source of Islam.

Taqwa. An Islamic concept which is defined as piety or fear of God. It requires believers to act according to His commands and steer clear of actions that displease Him.

Tawhid. Monotheism in Islam indicates the Oneness of *Allah* as the only and one God.

Tayyib. Good, clean, and wholesome.

Ummah. Community.



LIST OF PUBLICATIONS

NO.	ARTICLE TITLE	CONFERENCE/ JOURNAL	DATE OF PUBLICATION
1.	Overview on the Implementation of Halal Certification among Home-Based Food Business (HBFB) in Malaysia	International Halal Science Conference 2023 (IHASC2023)	August, 2023
2.	Competencies of SMEs in Food Manufacturing Sector: A Conceptual Model	International Conference on Halal Industry in Islam, Medical and Scientific Perspective 2023 (World HAPEX 2023)	July, 2023
3.	A Study on Micro-Industry Women Entrepreneurs in the Obtainment of Halal Certification: Challenges and Success Factors	Journal of Halal Industry & Services (JHIS)	November, 2024