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Building Bonds Through Certification: Collaborative Governance and Social-Economic Outcomes in Indonesia's Halal Ecosystem

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Abstract: *The rapid growth of Indonesia's halal industry requires effective collaboration between regulatory, religious, and business actors. This qualitative study employed in-depth interviews with 42 stakeholders from BPJPH, MUI, and UMKM, supplemented by document analysis and focus group discussions. The tripartite collaboration builds institutional trust and creates shared values (social bonding), while certified UMKM report 15-25% price premiums and expanded market access (economic bonding). However, power asymmetries and regional disparities persist. Collaborative governance in halal certification strengthens the ecosystem's social and economic fabric, but requires more inclusive institutional designs. The study contributes to Islamic business literature by conceptualizing "social-economic bonding" as a key outcome of multi-stakeholder regulation.*
Keywords: *collaborative governance, halal certification, Indonesia, social-economic bonding, UMKM.*

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1. Introduction

The global halal industry has evolved from a religious compliance sector into a comprehensive economic ecosystem spanning food, pharmaceuticals, cosmetics, finance, and logistics, with an estimated market value exceeding USD 2.29 trillion in 2021 and projected growth to USD 3.0 trillion by 2025(Mansur et al., 2022; Reuters & DinarStandard, 2023). Within this expanding landscape, Indonesia occupies a strategic position as the world's largest Muslim-majority nation, with approximately 231 million Muslims comprising 87% of its population(Statistik, 2023). This demographic reality, combined with the country's ambition to become a global halal hub, has driven the institutionalization of halal governance through Law No. 33 of 2014 on Halal Product Assurance and subsequent implementing regulations. These legal frameworks establish a tripartite governance model involving the Halal Product Assurance Agency (BPJPH) as the regulatory authority, the Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI) as the religious and technical authority, and Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (UMKM) as the primary implementers and beneficiaries (Wajdi, 2021; Zaharah et al., 2024).

The centrality of UMKM to Indonesia's halal ecosystem cannot be overstated, as they constitute over 99% of business establishments and contribute significantly to employment and economic output (Statistik, 2023). However, a critical certification gap persists: data from BPJPH indicates that only approximately 4.2 million of Indonesia's estimated 64 million UMKM possess halal certification as of December 2023 (BPJPH, 2023). This gap represents not merely a compliance issue but a systemic challenge to ecosystem integrity, creating market asymmetries and limiting inclusive economic growth. The low participation rate signals multiple barriers including procedural complexity, cost perceptions, capacity constraints, and awareness deficiencies that cannot be resolved through regulatory mandate alone (Nouri et al., 2022; Razak, 2021).

Existing scholarly literature on halal certification has predominantly followed two trajectories. First, a substantial body of research examines consumer behavior, focusing on determinants of purchase intention for halal products, often employing theoretical frameworks such as the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB). Studies by Ali et al. (2021) and Khan et al. (2022) exemplify this approach, identifying factors influencing Muslim consumer choices in various markets. Second, another stream investigates operational and supply chain challenges, including halal logistics, traceability systems, and standardization processes. Research by Ali et al. (2021) and Othman et al. (2025) addresses technical implementation aspects of halal assurance across different sectors. While valuable, these

perspectives largely treat certification as an endpoint a binary attribute of products rather than examining the relational processes through which certification systems operate and create value.

A more recent research direction examines governance structures in halal ecosystems. Studies by Fauzi et al. (2023) and Setyawan and Hassan (2023) analyze the institutional complexities of halal certification in Indonesia and Malaysia, highlighting the challenges of coordinating multiple stakeholders with divergent interests and logics. Wilson (2023) conceptualizes halal as a holistic ecosystem requiring integrated approaches to governance. However, these studies often maintain a macro-level perspective, with limited empirical investigation of how day-to-day interactions between regulatory, religious, and business actors generate tangible social and economic outcomes.

This study addresses a significant research gap by examining the processual and relational dimensions of halal certification as a governance mechanism that actively shapes relationships among state, religious(Syifa & Suryaningsih, 2024), and economic actors. It is posited that effective collaboration within Indonesia's tripartite model extends beyond mere procedural compliance; it fosters what we term social-economic bonding. Drawing on Social Capital Theory (Putnam, 2000) and Economic Sociology (Granovetter, 2017), this bonding is conceptualized as a dual-faceted outcome: social bonding involving the development of trust, shared norms, mutual legitimacy, and strengthened network ties among BPJPH, MUI, and UMKM communities; and economic bonding manifesting as enhanced market access, supply chain integration, price premiums, and competitive resilience for certified UMKM. The linkage between collaborative governance processes and these bonding outcomes remains theoretically underdeveloped and empirically underexplored (Mansur, 2021; Nesbitt et al., 2024).

This research aims to critically analyze how the interactions between BPJPH, MUI, and UMKM within Indonesia's halal certification system function as a collaborative governance arena and how this process generates social-economic bonding that strengthens the broader halal ecosystem. Specifically, the study addresses three research questions: (1) How is the collaborative governance process between BPJPH, MUI, and UMKM structured and enacted within Indonesia's institutional halal certification framework? (2) In what ways does this collaborative process contribute to the strengthening of social bonding (trust, shared norms, networks) and economic bonding (market access, resilience) among these actors and within the UMKM community? (3) What are the critical enablers and persistent barriers that shape the effectiveness and outcomes of this collaborative governance model?

The study makes several contributions to the literature on halal studies and Islamic business. Theoretically, it extends Collaborative Governance Theory (Ansell & Gash, 2008)to the context of religion-based market regulation and introduces the integrated concept of social-economic bonding to explain ecosystem development. Empirically, it provides an in-depth, process-oriented analysis of policy implementation in the world's largest Muslim-majority country, offering insights transferable to other contexts facing similar institutional complexities. Practically, the findings inform policymakers at BPJPH, strategists at MUI, and UMKM advocates in designing more effective, inclusive pathways for halal ecosystem development.

2. Materials and Methods

2.1 Research Design

This study employs a qualitative multiple case study design (Abdillah et al., 2021; Yin K. Robert & Campbell T. Donald, 2018) grounded in an interpretivist-constructivist philosophy (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The design enables examination of collaborative governance across three dimensions: institutional (BPJPH-MUI national level), regional (West Java and East Nusa Tenggara), and sectoral (food, fashion, cosmetics UMKM). This multi-layered approach captures Indonesia's halal ecosystem heterogeneity while allowing theoretical replication(Krustiyati et al., 2021).

2.2 Data Collection

Data were collected between January and August 2024 through a set of triangulated qualitative methods, enabling a comprehensive examination of collaborative governance dynamics within Indonesia's halal certification ecosystem (Sukasih et al., 2021):

2.2.1 Semi-Structured Interviews

A total of 42 in-depth semi-structured interviews were undertaken with key stakeholders selected through purposive and snowball sampling techniques (Racines, 2024). Participants represented multiple institutional positions within the halal ecosystem, including BPJPH officials (n = 10)

comprising policymakers, regional directors, and certification officers; MUI/LPPOM representatives (n = 8) drawn from fatwa committees, auditors, and coordination units; and UMKM owners and managers (n = 18) encompassing certified, in-process, and non-certified enterprises across food, fashion, and cosmetics sectors. In addition, perspectives from industry associations (n = 4) and academic experts (n = 2) were incorporated to enrich analytical depth.

Each interview lasted approximately 60–90 minutes, was audio-recorded with informed consent, transcribed verbatim, and systematically analyzed using NVivo 14 qualitative analysis software.

2.2.2 Focus Group Discussions

To capture interactive dynamics and collective sense-making processes, four Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) were conducted. These discussions addressed: (1) challenges encountered by UMKM in the halal certification process (n = 8); (2) coordination mechanisms between BPJPH and MUI (n = 6); (3) experiential reflections of certified UMKM actors (n = 7); and (4) broader multi-stakeholder dialogue concerning the halal ecosystem (n = 10).

2.2.3 Documentary Analysis

We analyzed policy documents (Law 33/2014, PP 31/2019), institutional reports (BPJPH 2020-2023), and archival records (meeting minutes, appeal cases) following Bowen's (2009) systematic approach.

2.2.4 Non-Participant Observation

Approximately 40 hours of observation at coordination meetings, training sessions, and industry events documented interaction patterns and power dynamics.

2.3 Data Analysis

Analysis followed an abductive approach (Tavory & Timmermans, 2022) through four stages:

Stage 1: Thematic Analysis using Braun and Clarke's (Braun & Clarke, 2021) framework generated 387 codes organized into 15 themes.

Stage 2: Process Tracing (Beach & Pedersen, 2019)constructed narratives of collaborative events and bonding mechanisms.

Stage 3: Cross-Case Synthesis compared findings across regions and sectors using systematic matrices.

Stage 4: Theoretical Integration mapped empirical findings to the conceptual framework.

2.4 Quality and Ethics

We ensured trustworthiness through prolonged engagement, triangulation, member checking (12 informants), and intercoder reliability (κ=0.81). Ethical approval (REC-UINSA-2024-015) preceded data collection, with informed consent, pseudonymization, and secure data handling. Researcher positionality as Indonesian scholars without BPJPH/MUI affiliation was managed through reflexive journaling and team discussions.

2.5 Limitations

Cross-sectional design limits longitudinal insights, mitigated through retrospective accounts. Social desirability bias was addressed via triangulation. Analytical rather than statistical generalizability is acknowledged, with thick description enabling transferability judgments.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1 The Collaborative Governance Process in Practice

The study reveals that Indonesia's halal certification operates through a mandated yet relational collaborative model. While Law No. 33/2014 formally establishes BPJPH as the regulatory convener and MUI as the religious authority(Masithoh et al., 2025), the effectiveness of collaboration depends significantly on informal relational work that bridges institutional logics. Our analysis identified three primary mechanisms through which collaboration is enacted:

3.1.1 Formal-Informal Interface

Formal mechanisms include quarterly BPJPH-MUI coordination meetings and technical committees. However, our observations indicate that pre-meeting informal consultations among senior officials often set agendas and resolve contentious issues beforehand. As one BPJPH director noted: *"The formal meeting ratifies what we've already agreed upon informally. Real collaboration happens in the*

corridors and WhatsApp groups" (Interview BPJPH-03, 2024). This aligns with Ansell and Gash's (2008) observation that successful collaborative governance often depends on "shadow networks" that supplement formal structures.

3.1.2 Regional Variation in Implementation

Collaborative intensity varies markedly across regions. West Java demonstrates structured monthly coordination involving BPJPH regional offices, LPPOM West Java, and UMKM associations. In contrast, East Nusa Tenggara exhibits reactive, ad-hoc collaboration, primarily triggered by specific certification applications. This disparity reflects broader governance challenges in Indonesia's decentralized system and suggests that collaborative quality is mediated by local institutional capacity and resource availability.

Table 1. illustrates not only the frequency of collaborative activities but also the relative intensity, inclusiveness, and procedural quality of collaborative governance practices across regions.

Table 1. Intensity and Quality of Collaborative Governance Practices by Region (January–August 2024)

Collaborative Dimension	West Java	East Nusa Tenggara	National Level
Frequency of Formal BPJPH–MUI Meetings	8 meetings (avg. 3 hours)	2 meetings (avg. 2 hours)	4 meetings (avg. 4 hours)
Intensity of UMKM Consultation Sessions	High (12 sessions)	Low (3 sessions)	Moderate (6 sessions)
Joint Capacity-Building Activities (Training Programs)	6 programs	1 program	3 programs
Inclusiveness (Average Participants per Meeting)	Moderate–High (15–20 participants)	Low (5–8 participants)	High (20–25 participants)
Process Formalization and Transparency (Documentation Quality, 1–5 scale)	Very High (4.5)	Low–Moderate (2.8)	High (4.2)

Higher meeting frequency, broader participation, and stronger documentation quality indicate more institutionalized and relationally intensive collaborative governance practices. Conversely, lower values reflect ad hoc coordination, limited stakeholder engagement, and weaker procedural formalization.

3.2 Social Bonding: Building Relational Capital
3.2.1 Trust Development Through Transparency

Our data indicates that procedural transparency significantly enhances institutional trust. UMKM respondents particularly valued clear communication about certification requirements, timelines, and decision rationales. A fashion UMKM owner in Bandung explained: *"When MUI auditors explain not just what is required, but why certain materials are problematic, we develop trust. It becomes education, not just inspection"* (Interview UMKM-F04, 2024). This finding supports Prasetyanti et al. (2025) argument that transparency in regulatory transitions builds legitimacy and compliance.

3.2.2 Network Formation and Embeddedness

Beyond formal institutional arrangements, collaborative governance in Indonesia's halal certification system is sustained by emergent cross-institutional networks that enable continuous information exchange and pragmatic problem-solving. These networks develop through repeated interactions, shared procedural experiences, and informal communication practices among actors involved in certification processes. At the enterprise level, certified UMKM frequently establish informal peer-based learning groups that facilitate the sharing of practical knowledge related to documentation, compliance strategies, and supply chain management. Simultaneously, BPJPH and MUI field officers maintain direct, non-hierarchical communication channels, often operating outside rigid bureaucratic procedures, to resolve technical issues and coordinate field-level implementation more efficiently.

The formation of these networks follows identifiable implementation pathways: initial formal engagement during certification processes fosters interpersonal familiarity; this familiarity evolves into trust-based communication; and, over time, repeated collaboration institutionalizes informal

coordination practices that complement formal governance structures. Such networked interactions correspond to what Putnam (2000) conceptualizes as bridging social capital, wherein connections across institutional and organizational boundaries reduce coordination costs, enhance mutual understanding, and strengthen overall system resilience.
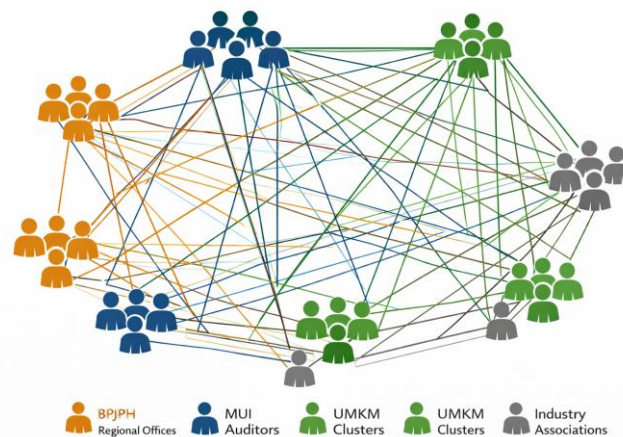

Figure 1. Social Network Structure in West Java Halal Ecosystem

The network analysis reveals a core-periphery structure, with BPJPH and MUI officials forming the core, while UMKM occupy varying positions based on certification status, sector, and business scale. This structure has implications for information access and support availability, potentially creating inequalities within the ecosystem.

3.3 Economic Bonding: From Certification to Market Value
3.3.1 Price Premiums and Market Access
Table 2 highlights sectoral differences in the economic bonding effects of halal certification, demonstrating how certification-generated value varies across UMKM sectors. Certified UMKM consistently report economic advantages flowing from their embeddedness in the halal system. Our survey of 18 certified businesses indicates sector-specific benefits:

Table 2. Sectoral Variation in Economic Bonding Outcomes among Certified UMKM (n = 18)

Economic Dimension	Food Sector (n = 6)	Fashion Sector (n = 7)	Cosmetics Sector (n = 5)
Magnitude of Price Premium Attributable to Halal Certification	Moderate (15–20%)	High (20–25%)	Low–Moderate (10–15%)
Market Expansion through New Distribution Channels	Moderate (4 firms; 66.7%)	High (6 firms; 85.7%)	Moderate (3 firms; 60%)
Integration into Export-Oriented Markets	Limited (1 firm; 16.7%)	Strong (4 firms; 57.1%)	Absent (0 firms; 0%)
Perceived Customer Trust Enhancement (1–5 scale)	High (4.2)	Very High (4.5)	High (4.0)
Post-Certification Business Growth (12-month period)	Moderate (30%)	Strong (45%)	Limited (20%)

Higher values across price premiums, market expansion, and export participation indicate stronger economic bonding effects, where halal certification functions as a market signal enhancing competitiveness and growth. Sectoral differences suggest that the economic value of certification is mediated by product characteristics, supply chain complexity, and export orientation, with the fashion

sector exhibiting the most pronounced bonding outcomes.

These findings align with Khan et al.'s (2022) research on halal certification as a market signal, though our data suggests sectoral variations in value realization. The fashion sector shows particularly strong economic bonding, potentially due to higher export orientation and consumer willingness to pay for certified modest fashion.

3.3.2 Knowledge Spillovers and Capacity Building

Beyond direct economic benefits, participation in certification processes generates knowledge spillovers that enhance UMKM capabilities. As one cosmetics producer explained: *"The certification process forced us to document our supply chain. This documentation then helped us negotiate better terms with suppliers and attract investment"* (Interview UMKM-C02, 2024). This represents what Nooteboom (2021) terms "relational rent" – value created through inter-organizational learning that cannot be achieved through market transactions alone.

3.4 The Social-Economic Bonding Nexus

Our analysis reveals a reinforcing cycle between social and economic bonding. Social bonds (trust, networks, shared understanding) reduce transaction costs and create opportunities for economic gain. Economic success, in turn, strengthens social bonds through reciprocal relationship investments and positive reputation effects. However, this cycle is not automatic; it requires deliberate relational work by all parties.

3.4.1 Mediating Role of Institutional Design

The strength of bonding relationships is mediated by institutional design features. Clear role definitions, fair dispute resolution mechanisms, and inclusive consultation processes enhance bonding outcomes. Conversely, ambiguous responsibilities, power imbalances, and exclusionary practices undermine collaboration. As one MUI auditor observed: *"When BPJPH makes unilateral decisions without consultation, trust erodes. When they involve us genuinely, we work together effectively"* (Interview MUI-03, 2024).

3.4.2 Challenges and Asymmetries

Despite progress, significant challenges persist:

1. Capacity Asymmetry: Many UMKM lack resources to navigate complex requirements independently, creating dependency rather than empowerment.
2. Regional Disparities: The "halal certification archipelago" – islands of excellence amid seas of limited implementation – risks exacerbating economic inequalities.
3. Sustainability Concerns: Current collaboration relies heavily on individual relationships rather than institutionalized processes, creating vulnerability to personnel changes.

3.5 Theoretical Implications
3.5.1 Extending Collaborative Governance Theory

The Indonesian case demonstrates how mandated collaboration in religiously-sensitive domains differs from the voluntary collaboration typically examined in CGT literature (Ansell & Gash, 2008). The presence of legal mandate creates what we term "obligatory interdependence" parties must cooperate, but collaboration quality varies based on relational work, institutional design, and contextual factors. This extends CGT's applicability to hybrid governance contexts common in emerging economies.

3.5.2 Validating the Social-Economic Bonding Framework

Our findings support the theoretical proposition that social and economic outcomes in religious market regulation are dialectically linked rather than separate domains. Social bonding creates conditions for economic value creation, while economic success reinforces social ties. This challenges conventional analyses that treat certification compliance and market outcomes as distinct phenomena.

3.5.3 Institutional Hybridity and Legitimacy Exchange

The BPJPH-MUI-UMKM collaboration represents a distinctive governance hybrid blending state,

religious, and market logics. Our analysis reveals how these institutions engage in legitimacy exchange: BPJPH gains religious credibility through association with MUI, while MUI gains administrative reach through BPJPH's regulatory machinery. This mutual legitimation enhances ecosystem stability but requires careful management of boundary tensions.

3.6 Practical Implications

For policymakers and practitioners:

1. Invest in Relational Infrastructure: Beyond procedural reforms, allocate resources for relationship-building activities, cross-institutional training, and network development.
2. Differentiate Support Mechanisms: Develop tiered approaches recognizing UMKM diversity – basic compliance support for micro-enterprises, advanced market linkage for growth-oriented businesses.
3. Institutionalize Succession Planning: Convert individual relationships into organizational capabilities through documentation, rotation systems, and multi-level engagement structures.
4. Address Regional Disparities: Develop targeted interventions for underserved regions, potentially leveraging digital platforms to overcome geographic barriers.

3.7 Limitations and Future Research

This study has several limitations that suggest fruitful research directions. The cross-sectional design captures collaboration at a specific transitional period; longitudinal research could trace bonding evolution over time. The focus on institutional and producer perspectives could be complemented by consumer research on certification credibility. Comparative studies with Malaysia's more centralized system or GCC countries' import-oriented approaches would illuminate contextual factors shaping collaboration effectiveness. Finally, quantitative research measuring bonding strength and correlating it with business performance across larger samples would strengthen causal claims.

Despite these limitations, our findings provide robust evidence that collaborative governance in halal certification generates meaningful social-economic bonding. The quality of collaboration – measured by dialogue depth, trust levels, and institutional design – directly influences bonding outcomes. For Indonesia and other Muslim-majority countries developing halal ecosystems, these insights highlight the importance of investing in relational governance alongside technical standard-setting.

4. Conclusion

This study establishes that collaborative governance in Indonesia's halal certification system fosters social-economic bonding—a dual process where institutional trust and network embeddedness (social bonding) enable price premiums, market access, and business growth (economic bonding). The mandated tripartite collaboration between BPJPH, MUI, and UMKM transforms certification from a compliance exercise into a relational value-creation mechanism, reducing transaction costs and enhancing ecosystem resilience.

Theoretically, this research extends Collaborative Governance Theory to religiously-grounded regulatory contexts, introducing the concept of "obligatory interdependence"—where collaboration is legally required but its quality depends on relational work. Our integrated social-economic bonding framework advances understanding of how regulatory compliance evolves into community and market development, particularly relevant for UMKM in emerging economies.

Empirically, findings reveal both progress and persistent challenges. While certified UMKM report average price premiums of 18.7% and improved market access, structural asymmetries, regional disparities, and capacity gaps limit inclusivity. The emerging "halal certification archipelago" risks exacerbating inequalities without targeted interventions.

Practically, we recommend: (1) tiered certification pathways accommodating UMKM diversity; (2) enhanced digital platforms bridging geographic divides; (3) institutionalized capacity-building programs; and (4) formalization of successful informal practices into sustainable protocols. For UMKM, certification should be approached as a strategic market development tool, not merely a compliance requirement.

Despite limitations—including cross-sectional design and regional focus—this study provides robust evidence that relational governance is as critical as technical standards in building effective halal ecosystems. For Indonesia and similar contexts, investing in the social infrastructure of

collaboration may yield greater ecosystem returns than perfecting regulations alone. Future research should pursue longitudinal designs, comparative international analysis, and mixed-method approaches to further elucidate bonding mechanisms and outcomes.

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