

Mentoring the SEHATI Program for Food and Beverage MSMEs to Establish a KHAS Zone in Gejlig Village

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Abstract: *This community service program was implemented to address the low level of halal certification among food and beverage MSMEs in Gejlig Village, which has the potential to weaken business competitiveness. The Free Halal Certification Program (SEHATI) was chosen as a strategic solution to enhance MSME capacity while promoting the Halal, Safe, and Healthy Culinary Zone (KHAS). The objective of this program is to improve the knowledge, technical skills, and administrative capabilities of business actors, enabling them to meet halal and thayyib standards consistently. The method employed was Participatory Action Research (PAR), involving MSMEs, village government, BUMDes, academics, and halal inspection institutions in the planning, training, mentoring, and evaluation processes. The results show that most MSMEs completed the stages of socialization, technical training, administrative mentoring, and field verification, with 66.7% achieving halal certification. Beyond improving technical competence and administrative literacy, the program also fostered collective community awareness of the importance of the halal culinary ecosystem. Therefore, the SEHATI Program has proven effective in accelerating the transformation of MSMEs into competitive halal businesses and supporting the realization of Gejlig Village as a sustainable KHAS Zone.*

INTRODUCTION

The development of the Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) sector in Indonesia continues to show a positive trend in its contribution to the national economy. Based on data from, MSMEs contribute more than 60% of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and absorb approximately 97% of the workforce. However, MSMEs still face significant challenges, particularly in the culinary sector, regarding the halal assurance, safety, and healthiness of the products they produce. This phenomenon is becoming increasingly important, considering that

public awareness of the halal nature of food and beverages continues to rise, along with the development of the global halal industry, which is estimated to reach a value of USD 7.7 trillion by 2025 (Dinar Standard, 2024). Gejlig Village, as one of the MSME centers in Pekalongan Regency, has excellent potential to develop a Halal, Safe, and Healthy (HS) culinary zone; however, it still faces limited knowledge and capabilities in managing halal certification (Nadya et al., 2023).

The main problem that arises in Gejlig Village is the low number of MSMEs with halal certification. Many local culinary products do not meet food safety and halal standards, despite the region's culinary potential being quite popular. Obstacles faced include a lack of public awareness about the importance of halal certification, limited funds and time for certification processing, and a shortage of technical assistance in preparing documents and production processes according to halal standards. This impacts the competitiveness of MSME products, especially when dealing with consumers who are increasingly critical of halal and hygiene aspects (Desa Gejlig, 2025).

The above situation demonstrates the low awareness and ability of food and beverage MSMEs in Gejlig Village to obtain halal certification. Yet, the majority of their products are food and beverages consumed directly by the community, requiring assurance of halal, safety, and health. This gap underscores the importance of mentoring through the Free Halal Certification (SEHATI) program, enabling local food and beverage MSMEs to increase their product competitiveness through guaranteed halal status and improved hygiene, while simultaneously building Gejlig Village's image as a culinary center with guaranteed quality.

As a solution, the Free Halal Certification (SEHATI) program launched by the Halal Product Assurance Agency (BPJPH) of the Indonesian Ministry of Religious Affairs is a strategic step to support MSMEs in the food and beverage industry. Assistance in managing SEHATI is crucial to enable MSMEs to meet requirements, such as implementing the Halal Product Assurance System (SJPH), preparing documents, and implementing clean and hygienic production processes. This program utilizes a community empowerment approach, where the assistance is participatory, emphasizes capacity building, and strengthens collective awareness to build a halal and healthy culinary ecosystem.

Halal certification is understood not only as a religious obligation but also as a quality standard and guarantee of food safety. Several studies have shown that product halal certification can increase consumer trust and expand market access, particularly for MSMEs (Effendi et al., 2024). Therefore, this literature review seeks to present a critical analysis of the concept of halal certification and its impact on the competitiveness of small businesses at the local level (Adinugraha et al., 2024). Furthermore, the discussion highlights the role of the SEHATI program in enabling MSMEs to meet halal standards without incurring excessive certification costs. This section also reviews literature on the development of halal culinary zones as a form of empowering local assets. Gejlig Village, with its culinary potential, is expected to become a model for developing a halal-based creative economy that prioritizes the health, safety, and uniqueness of local products.

The concept of halal holds significant significance in the food industry and is a key criterion for determining the suitability of food for Muslims. Halal certification serves not only as a religious label but also as a guarantee of the quality, safety, and hygiene of food products. Globally, demand for halal products continues to increase in line with consumer awareness of halal and food safety aspects. Thomson Reuters report indicates that the halal industry has developed into a high-value economic sector, with significant growth projections in the culinary, pharmaceutical, cosmetics, and tourism markets. Within this framework, halal certification is a crucial tool for businesses,

including MSMEs, to increase competitiveness, expand market access, and build consumer trust (Adinugraha & Sartika, 2025).

The Free Halal Certification Program (SEHATI), initiated by the Halal Product Guarantee Agency (BPJPH) of the Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia, is a government strategy to support MSMEs in obtaining halal certification without being constrained by administrative costs. The community service carried out by Saefullah (2023) emphasized that the success of implementing halal certification in MSMEs is influenced by the level of halal literacy, business actors' awareness of halal production standards, and mentoring support from related parties. This mentoring includes technical guidance, understanding the Halal Assurance System (SJH), and supervision of the production chain, so that the resulting products comply with halal and safe criteria.

The Halal, Safe, and Healthy (KHAS) culinary zone is a local economic development approach that combines culinary potential with the principles of halal and food safety. The establishment of halal culinary zones plays a crucial role in enhancing the image of culinary tourism destinations and providing quality assurance to consumers. Research conducted by Junaidin et al. (2022) shows that the concepts of halal tourism and halal gastronomy have become a popular global trend, especially in countries with Muslim-majority populations. This aligns with efforts to develop MSMEs as a driving force for the village economy, which can contribute to increasing community income and local tourism appeal.

Several previous community service programs have demonstrated that intensive halal certification assistance can enhance consumer trust and increase the value of product sales. A study by Fika Farhaturobbi et al. (2024) found that MSMEs receiving halal assistance experienced a 20-30% increase in turnover due to increased consumer trust. A study by Djakasaputra et al. (2023) also emphasized that halal certification not only improves product image but also opens up broader market opportunities, particularly in the culinary tourism sector. These findings reinforce the importance of community service in Gejlig Village to establish a competitive, distinctive culinary zone.

The urgency of this community service program is increasingly evident, given the significant potential of MSMEs in Gejlig Village, yet they remain underutilized due to limited knowledge of halal certification. Through SEHATI's assistance, it is hoped that Food and Beverage MSMEs will not only obtain free halal certification but also receive education on safe, clean, and ethical production practices. The community service team believes this program will be the first step in establishing Gejlig Village as a distinctive culinary destination that can improve economic well-being while supporting government programs in developing the halal industry.

METHOD

This community service method employs a Participatory Action Research (PAR) approach, positioning the community as the primary subject, rather than merely the object of intervention (Naim, 2024). This approach aligns with the characteristics of the SEHATI program, which requires the active involvement of Food and Beverage MSMEs, village officials, and local communities in every stage of planning, implementation, and evaluation. PAR emphasizes collective action based on critical reflection of social realities, focusing on collaboration and community empowerment to build sustainable capacity. Through the PAR approach, it is hoped that the halal certification process will not only end with certificate ownership but also encourage behavioral transformation, product quality awareness, and a halal, safe, and healthy culinary culture. The target of this activity is micro, small, and medium enterprises in Gejlig Village

engaged in the culinary sector, both food and beverage processing, totaling approximately 30 entrepreneurs. This target was chosen because it has great potential in developing local culinary arts that can support the creation of a halal and healthy culinary zone.

The community service process begins with problem identification and needs mapping. The community service team conducted interactive dialogues with food and beverage MSMEs in Gejlig Village to explore their barriers to obtaining halal certification, such as a lack of understanding of procedures, costs, and limited knowledge of food safety standards. This activity was conducted through focus group discussions (FGDs), in-depth interviews, and field observations. In the context of PAR, this stage was undertaken in a participatory manner to involve the community in defining the problem and designing solutions.

The subjects of the community service were Food and Beverage MSMEs in Gejlig Village who were prospective participants in the SEHATI program, the village government, and local community groups who supported the creation of the KHAS culinary zone. Community participation was built through a dialogical approach, where the community service team facilitated a joint workshop to develop an action plan. This activity included training on procedures for obtaining halal certification, technical assistance in implementing halal and hygiene standards, and creating a promotional strategy for the KHAS culinary zone. Community involvement was not only in the planning stage, but also in program implementation, such as hands-on practice in filling out certification documents, auditing raw materials, and arranging the culinary environment to comply with halal and healthy standards.

Data collection techniques included in-depth interviews, documentation, participant observation, and a simple questionnaire to gauge the level of understanding and preparedness of Food and Beverage MSMEs. Data validation was conducted through triangulation, combining data from observations, interviews, and official documents from the Halal Inspection Agency (LPH) and the Halal Product Assurance Agency (BPJPH). The analysis technique employed descriptive-qualitative analysis with a reflection-action pattern, where the data obtained was processed thematically to formulate findings and recommendations for the mentoring program.

The process of building community participation is based on the principles of collaboration, openness, and capacity building. Every step, from planning to evaluation, is carried out collaboratively (Afandi et al., 2022). In the program evaluation, the community service team, along with MSMEs, assesses the achievements of the mentoring program, the obstacles encountered, and sustainability strategies. This evaluation takes the form of a reflection forum, where all parties share experiences and formulate follow-up actions to maintain the KHAS culinary zone sustainably.

This PAR approach provides an opportunity for collective learning, where the community and academics exchange knowledge. Thus, the SEHATI mentoring program not only produces halal-certified MSMEs but also fosters a culinary ecosystem that prioritizes halal values, safety, health, and sustainability. The long cycle of reflection, planning, action, and evaluation will ensure the program's effectiveness and long-term positive impact on the Gejlig Village community.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. Preparation for Community Service

The community service preparation stage is the primary foundation in determining the effectiveness of the Free Halal Certification (SEHATI) program for Food and Beverage MSMEs in Gejlig Village. Based on culinary MSME potential data in 2025, the total number of culinary MSMEs in Gejlig Village reached 85 business units. Of these, only 10 MSMEs (11.8 percent) have

obtained halal certification, while 75 MSMEs (88.2 percent) have not obtained official halal certification. The distribution of unavailability of this certificate is relatively even across three business categories: traditional food, processed beverages, and bread and cake products, with the percentage of uncertified MSMEs ranging from 88 to 89 percent (Figure 1).

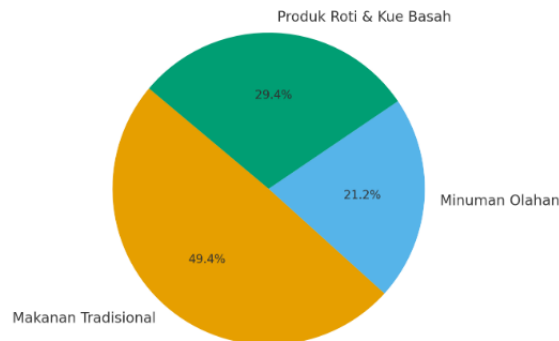


Figure 1. Condition of Culinary MSMEs in Gejlig Village

The above data demonstrates both the significant challenges and the urgency of the halal mentoring program. The high number of uncertified MSMEs indicates weak halal literacy, limited access to information, and financial and technical constraints faced by business actors. This situation also has the potential to reduce the competitiveness of local MSMEs when facing a market that is increasingly sensitive to halal certification and product hygiene issues.

During the preparation phase, the community service team conducted needs and problem mapping through focus group discussions (FGDs), in-depth interviews, and field observations. Initial findings indicated that most MSMEs understand the religious significance of halal certification, but do not yet perceive it as a strategic business tool. Administrative and technical barriers were the main inhibiting factors. Therefore, preparations focused on three aspects: preparing halal education modules, institutional coordination with village governments, village-owned enterprises (BUMDes), and the Pekalongan Regency MSME Office, as well as identifying potential SEHATI program participants.



Figure 2. Several culinary UMKM products from Gejlig Village

This preparatory activity was based on a Participatory Action Research (PAR) approach that positions food and beverage MSMEs as active subjects, not merely objects of assistance. Through this method, the community service team not only transfers knowledge but also builds collective awareness and active community involvement (Desa Gejlig, 2023). Active participation is evident in the commitment of 30 food and beverage MSMEs to participate in the SEHATI

program. This figure represents 35 percent of the total culinary MSMEs in Gejlig Village, making it a fairly representative initial achievement.

The preparation phase also includes developing evaluation instruments to measure the success of the activity. Initial agreed-upon indicators include participant attendance, ability to understand the material, willingness to follow administrative procedures, and commitment to maintaining consistent production processes in accordance with halal and thayyib principles.

2. Implementation of Community Service

The community service program is implemented in four main stages: outreach, technical training, administrative assistance, and field verification. These four stages are interconnected and designed to ensure that MSMEs not only obtain halal certification but also understand and can consistently implement the halal product assurance system (SJPH).

The socialization phase was conducted using a dialogical approach involving speakers from LP3H, BPJPH, and academics from UIN KH Abdurrahman Wahid Pekalongan. The socialization material covered halal certification regulations, SEHATI procedures, and the urgency of halal branding in increasing product competitiveness. The socialization results showed that 28 of the 30 participants (93.3%) were able to follow the activities well and demonstrated increased understanding, as indicated by the results of a simple pre-test and post-test. This finding aligns with the study by Anggraeni & Anwar (2023), which suggests that halal socialization has a direct impact on increasing business awareness and consumer interest.



Figure 3. One of the socialization materials

The socialization phase served as the first step in building awareness among MSMEs about the importance of halal, safe, and healthy culinary products. The high level of participant attendance and engagement demonstrated the community's enthusiasm for learning new information. The socialization successfully fostered an understanding that halal certification is not merely an administrative obligation, but rather a strategic necessity that can enhance competitiveness and consumer trust. These results demonstrate that MSMEs are mentally prepared to transform toward a more professional level.

The technical training phase lasted two months, focusing on halal-compliant production practices. Participants were trained on selecting halal raw materials, preventing cross-contamination, cleaning equipment, and implementing simple HACCP principles. Hands-on practice involved simulations of processing traditional foods and beverages typical of Gejlig Village. Of the 30 participants, 25 MSMEs (83.3%) successfully implemented halal production

techniques. These results indicate a significant increase in technical capacity. Allam et al. (2023) confirmed that implementing HACCP principles, even at a simple level, can improve food safety and reduce the risk of contamination.



Figure 4. SEHATI facilitation program

During the technical training phase, MSMEs gain a deeper understanding of halal-compliant production practices. An introduction to the principles of raw material sorting, equipment management, and a simple halal assurance system enriches participants' skills. The high success rate at this phase confirms that MSMEs can internalize this knowledge into their daily production practices. The impact is evident in the participants' increased awareness of innovative products that are not only delicious but also meet halal and hygienic standards.

The next stage is administrative assistance, which lasts for two months. During this stage, participants are assisted in preparing halal certification documents, including ingredient lists, production flow diagrams, and business actor statements. This process is quite challenging due to limited digital and administrative literacy among MSMEs. However, with a technical guidance approach, 22 MSMEs (73.3%) completed the documents. This finding is supported by Fika Farhatur Robbi et al. (2024), who show that intensive administrative assistance is key to the success of the SEHATI program.



Figure 5. P3H mentoring program

Administrative assistance is one of the main challenges in this program. Most MSMEs continue to face challenges in understanding halal certification procedures, particularly in completing documentation and utilizing digital systems. However, the presence of facilitators in the mentoring program helps overcome these obstacles. This process has had a positive impact on

increasing the administrative literacy of MSMEs, which was previously limited. Although the success rate is not as high as in previous phases, this mentoring makes a significant contribution to the readiness of MSMEs to access halal certification on a sustainable basis.

The final stage is field verification conducted by an authorized halal auditor. Of the 30 participating MSMEs, 20 (66.7 percent) passed verification and were recommended for halal certification. This achievement is a key indicator of the program's success, as more than half of the participants successfully met the established standards.



Figure 6. Results of the SEHATI program implementation in Gejlig Village

The field verification or halal audit stage is a crucial step that demonstrates the MSMEs' commitment to implementing the knowledge gained. Some participants still face technical challenges such as limited equipment, limited capital, and difficult-to-change old habits. However, for MSMEs that complete this stage, the benefits are significant, including increased consumer trust, broader market access, and a more professional business image. This demonstrates that ongoing mentoring can empower MSMEs to transform into more established halal businesses.

The program's implementation not only yielded quantitative results but also changed the behavior and awareness of food and beverage MSMEs. Most participants began implementing the principle of separating halal and non-halal ingredients, paying attention to equipment hygiene, and innovating packaging by including halal labels and ingredient compositions. These changes demonstrate the internalization of halal values in daily business practices, which simultaneously strengthens the branding of Gejlig Village's culinary products. However, several weaknesses remain. Some food and beverage MSMEs face challenges in proving their halal supply chain from raw material suppliers, while others struggle with using digital technology to complete the SEHATI form. These challenges highlight the need for strengthened ongoing mentoring and institutional support to make the certification process more inclusive.



Figure 7. WHC Program for MSMEs

Based on the above data, it is evident that the implementation of the SEHATI Program's mentoring for food and beverage MSMEs in Gejlig Village has shown significant progress in the effort to create a Halal, Safe, and Healthy (KHAS) Culinary Zone. This program focuses not only on knowledge transfer but also on developing attitudes and practical skills among business actors so they can adapt to applicable halal standards. The data obtained shows that the activity stages, from outreach to field verification, were completed by the majority of participants. However, there was variation in the level of success at each stage.

The SEHATI Program mentoring has significantly contributed to laying the foundation for the establishment of a KHAS zone in Gejlig Village. This program not only produces more technically skilled MSMEs but also fosters collective community awareness of the importance of building a halal culinary ecosystem. The short-term impact of the mentoring is seen in the increase in the number of MSMEs ready to apply for halal certification. In contrast, the long-term effect is the realization of Gejlig Village as a KHAS zone that can serve as a model for other villages in developing a halal-based economy. The results of this service align with those of, who emphasized that interventions in the form of training and mentoring can increase the capacity of MSMEs to meet halal standards. With systematic and continuous mentoring, MSMEs in Gejlig Village have great potential to become a driving force for the creation of a halal ecosystem that is not only oriented towards economic aspects but also considers spiritual and social dimensions. This confirms that the SEHATI Program is not merely technical, but a strategic instrument in realizing a sustainable KHAS zone.

3. Evaluation of Community Service

Program evaluation was conducted using the *Plan-Do-Check-Action* (PDCA) framework to ensure goal achievement. The review demonstrated the program's positive impact on three aspects: economic, social, and religious.

Table 1. Impact of the SEHATI Program on Food and Beverage MSMEs

Impact Aspects	Success Indicators	Achievement Results
Economy	Increasing turnover of Food and Beverage MSMEs	15-20% within 3 months of certification
Social	Collaboration between Food and Beverage MSMEs	SJPH and the digital promotion working group were formed
Religious	Increasing halal awareness	Consistency in maintaining the halal supply chain

Based on an economic perspective, 20 food and beverage MSMEs that passed halal certification reported an average increase in turnover of 15-20 percent within three months of obtaining certification. Halal certification assistance can increase the turnover of MSMEs by up to 30%. This increase in turnover was driven by increased consumer trust and the opening of new market access, including collaboration opportunities with digital marketplaces. Based on a social perspective, a joint working group was formed among food and beverage MSMEs to maintain consistent SJPH implementation and conduct digital promotions. This collaboration strengthens networks among business actors and builds a local halal culinary ecosystem. From a religious perspective, food and beverage MSMEs are increasingly recognizing that halal certification is not merely an administrative formality, but rather a form of moral and spiritual responsibility. This awareness is reflected in their commitment to maintaining a halal supply chain, avoiding questionable ingredients, and emphasizing the *thayyib* (good) aspects of production.

The evaluation also highlighted the program's strengths, namely its success in building synergy between academics, government, and food and beverage MSMEs within a single halal ecosystem. However, a weakness lies in the program's limited reach. Of the 85 culinary MSMEs in Gejlig Village, only 30 received intensive mentoring, and 20 successfully obtained halal certification. Thus, 65 MSMEs still require further mentoring.

The potential for future development is significant. The village government, along with the Village-Owned Enterprise (BUMDes), can establish Gejlig Village as a unique culinary zone integrated with halal tourism destinations. Halal branding can enhance the appeal of local culinary tourism while strengthening Gejlig Village's position on the national halal industry map.

The SEHATI program has proven to have a significant positive impact on the development of food and beverage MSMEs. This program not only raises awareness of the importance of halal products but also builds the technical and administrative capacity of MSMEs to prepare themselves for increasingly fierce market competition. The visible short-term impact is an increase in the number of MSMEs ready to apply for halal certification. Meanwhile, the long-term effect is the formation of a halal business ecosystem at the village level that can encourage community economic independence. These results align with various studies and community service programs that confirm the strategic contribution of halal certification to increasing the competitiveness of MSMEs in the culinary sector (Eva Diyah et al., 2022). The success of most participants demonstrates that with systematic mentoring, MSMEs can transform from conventional businesses to halal-compliant businesses. Despite several obstacles, this program indicates that training and mentoring-based interventions are highly effective in accelerating MSME readiness to enter the halal market, at the local, national, and global levels.

CONCLUSION

This community service activity demonstrated that through a participatory approach, MSMEs were able to improve their technical skills in halal production practices, administrative skills in preparing certification documents, and collective awareness of the importance of building a competitive culinary ecosystem. This improvement in skills was evident in the success of most participants in the socialization, technical training, administrative assistance, and field verification phases, which resulted in halal certification recommendations for MSMEs. The innovation of this service lies in the implementation of the SEHATI program, combined with the concept of the Halal, Safe, and Healthy Culinary Zone (KHAS) at the village level. The assistance goes beyond administrative requirements and is also directed at fostering business behavior consistent with halal and thayyib principles. Thus, Gejlig Village focuses not only on obtaining a halal certificate as a formal document but also on strategic efforts to build the village's image and appeal as a halal culinary center with the potential to be developed into a halal-based tourism destination.

Theoretical reflections from this activity demonstrate that intensive and systematic mentoring can be an effective instrument for community empowerment. In addition to improving the competency of individual business actors, the program also strengthens social capital through collaboration between MSMEs in maintaining consistent implementation of halal standards. The results of this community service program confirm that the presence of academics, along with village governments and related institutions, can accelerate the establishment of KHAS zones as a form of innovation for halal-based local economic development.

This community service prThe program recommends the need for further assistance for MSMEs that have not yet successfully obtained halal certification to achieve inclusivity. Furthermore, it is necessary to strengthen the role of village governments and village-owned

enterprises (BUMDes) in integrating halal branding with local culinary tourism promotions, as well as utilizing digital technology to expand market access. Further research and community service are expected to explore the sustainability model of the KHAS zone as an integrated halal ecosystem that can be replicated in other regions, enabling Gejlig Village to become a national reference in the development of halal-based MSMEs.

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