



**THE AUTHENTICITY OF THE HALAL FOOD INDUSTRY IN COTABATO CITY:
AN OPINION SURVEY AMONG MUSLIM RELIGIOUS LEADERS
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ABSTRACT

This study aimed to determine the authenticity of the Halal food industry in Cotabato City: An opinion survey among Muslim Religious Leaders. Most specifically, the following Questions were asked: What is the profile of the respondents in terms of age, sex, status, occupation and educational attainment? What are the authenticated Halal food industries in Cotabato City? What are the perceptions of the respondents regarding the authenticity of the Halal food industry? What are the requirements in applying for authentic Halal food? What are the problems encountered by the Halal Certifying board in Cotabato City? The study adopted the qualitative method of research to explain the data gathered through narrative description of each of the tables that served as the indicatives. Accordingly, this method used primary data from in-depth interviews and other qualitative data to identify and describe the underlying themes of the experiences of a phenomenon (Bara, 2011). The characteristics of qualitative method of research are as follows: a.) the method takes place in natural setting; b.) Uses multiple methods that are interpretative; c.) is emergent rather than tightly Pre-figured; d.) is fundamentally interpretative; e.) holistically views research or social phenomenon; f.) reflects systematically on who the researcher is inquiring and is sensitive to his or her personal biography and how it shapes the study; g.) Researcher uses complex reasoning that is multifaceted; h.) Interactive and simultaneous; j.) Researcher adopts and uses one or more strategies of inquiry (Prudence and Aguja, 2014). It was found out also that the majority fifty one percent (51%) of the respondents do not believe on the existence of Palakasan System in the issuance of Halal certification, while the largest minority or forty nine percent (49%) of the respondents believed that there is Palakasan System in the issuance of Halal certification. Likewise, they agreed on the problems encountered by the respondents like multiple and complex problems as Halal certifier such as a.) shortage of volunteer Muslim technical experts, b.) shortage of trained Halal auditors, c.) problem of fund resources, d.) lack of cooperation, e.) lack of trust to the certifier, f.) unwillingness of the company, and g.) waste of time on the part of the company. On the other hand, there were also problems encountered by the Halal certifying board such as: a.) hiring of practicing Muslims by non-Muslim owned establishments as required by the board, b.) various ingredients mixed in the product, c.) problem of cooperation and disclosure of the company, and sources of Halal certified ingredients in food services, d.) problem on the procedure on how the products are processed, e.) problem of preservatives used in the products, f.) problem of enzymes and others, and g.) problem on materials being used.

KEYWORDS: Authenticity, Halal Food, Muslim Religious Leaders, Cotabato City

INTRODUCTION

Islam has prescribed certain practice of how meat should be handled and processed so

that it could be classified as Halal food for Muslims. Thus, the interest on Halal industry is imperative among Muslim. However, globally, Halal food certification has been criticized by anti-Halal lobby groups and Individuals using social media. These critics argue that the practice only results in added costs of requirements to officially avail certification of Halal foods and leads to consumers subsidizing particular products and often used in reference to foods and drinks that are permissible for Muslims under Islamic law. The criteria specifies both what foods are allowed, and how the food must be prepared.

The foods addressed in Halal industry are mostly types of meat and animal tissue. The most common example of non-Halal (or Haram) food is pork (pig meat). But while pork is the only meat that cannot be eaten by all Muslims at all (the Qur'an forbids it), however, foods other than pork can also be Haram. The criteria for non-pork items include their source, the cause of the animal's death, and how it was processed. It also depends on the Muslim's Madhab (school of thought).

In the Philippines, one of the vital components of the Halal Program is the Halal slaughter house where animals intended for consumers of Halal shall be slaughtered according to Islamic rites. In this regard to pass judgment of whether the slaughter house meets the necessary requirements, procedures and protocols is necessary component of the Halal program. Halal certification in the Philippines has been a useful tool in helping the Muslims to identify products that are acceptable for use and consumption in the midst of intricate and diverse production of various processed foods most of which are produced by company owned and operated by non-Muslims.

However, it is difficult to impose Halal standards and procedure to the manufacturing and food processing industry in the Philippines since Halal process is basically rooted as a religious requirements for Muslims, the government could not accept its rules without violating

the separation of church and the state which is enshrined in the Philippine Constitution and for the simple reason that the Philippine being a non-Muslim country.

Furthermore, Halal certification is left to those certification board which is a non-government organization. Beside it is purely voluntary on the part of the manufacturing companies to submit their product into Halal certification. Though, it is to the belief of the researcher that this industry should submit their product to the Halal certification board since they are operating in a Muslim dominated area like the Autonomous Region in Muslim-Mindanao (ARMM) if they wanted the people to patronized their products. In other words, Halal certification is a marketing tool to give the a marketing advantage over other products in which the study on the authenticity of the Halal food industry in Cotabato City: An opinion survey among the Muslim Religious Leaders was basically focused.

In Cotabato City, the provisions of safe food to consumers are identified as a basic service to be delivered by Local government units. For this purpose, the authority to establish and operate slaughter house is given to cities and municipalities which can establish and operate the facility or which, by way of a Sangguniang Resolution, can authorize a person, corporate or corporation to establish and operate one in their locality.

Generally, Halal certification is in fact considered now as a certification of quality. In Philippines particularly in Cotabato City, there are number of certification processes and procedures. The role of a certifying body is to determine whether a product that he is about to certify is composed of all the raw materials, processing aids including the packaging are of Halal origin and processed without the possibility of contamination by non-Halal materials or ingredients.

METHODS

The study utilized descriptive and qualitative method of research design, specifically

through documents analysis to trace some works of the Halal accreditation/certification board and its own perspective in issuing Halal certification and the survey was used to determine the level of awareness of the consumers about the issues and concerns on the Halal food industry in Cotabato City area.

Cotabato area is the venue of this study. It composed of two (2) provinces, the North and the South Cotabato provinces with corresponding cities and municipalities.

On July 1, 1950, the then Municipality of Cotabato was made first class municipality under Executive Order No. 466. Nine (9) years later, on June 20, 1959, it was created into a chartered city by virtue of Republic Act No. 2364. Cotabato City alone has a total population of 271,786 as of 2010.

A great number of its population (29.88%) is the Maguindanaon with the total of 81,205. The city currently serves as the center for economic support activities (trade and finance), education and other support services such as social, physical, cultural and other basic services of central Mindanao.

Aside from the documents analysis, the questionnaire was the major instrument devised in order to collect the data. Personal interview were applied to augment or supplement some doubtful information that were supplied in the questionnaire. The questionnaire was the main instrument of gathering data in the study. The primary purpose of designing the questionnaire is to seek answers to the centuries-old and typical problems confronting the Muslim Ummah on the issue of the Halal Food industry in Cotabato area.

Population and Sampling

The total number of food-based established in Cotabato City is not yet established but 100 establishments are randomly selected using random sampling by the researcher that served as the population of the study.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The analysis and interpretation of the data gathered in this study were presented in three (3) parts: First part delves on the materials from the documents reviewed pertaining to research question 1 and 2 i.e. what are the authenticated Halal food industry in Cotabato City? The second part was focused on the materials pertaining to the opinions of the respondents regarding authenticity of the Halal food industry? And what are the requirements in applying for authentic Halal food? And the third part focused on what are the prospects and problems encountered by the Halal certifying board in Cotabato City.

I. The Socio-Economic Profile of the Respondents

This aspect of the study includes the respondent's age sex civil status occupation and educational attainment (both secular education and Islamic education)

AGE.

Table Ia shows the frequency and percentage distribution of respondents according to age.

Table Ia

Frequency and Percentage Distribution of the Respondents according to Age

Age	Frequency	Percentage
20-25	7	7%
26-30	20	20%
31-35	12	12%
36-40	13	13%
41-45	18	18%

46-50	13	13%
51-55	7	7%
56-60	10	10%
TOAL	100	100%

The table above shows that 20 percent of the respondents belonged to age bracket 36-30. This was followed by age bracket 41-45 with a frequency of 18 percent. While age bracket 20-25 and 51-55 have the same frequencies of 7 percent only. This implies that considerable number the respondents engaged in Halal small business belonged to younger age bracket. Ina casual conversation initiated by the researcher with the respondents have better knowledge on the marketability of Halal foods/products due to their advanced knowledge on the usage of social media.

SEX.

Table 1b presents the frequency and percentage distribution of respondents according to their sex classification.

Table 1b

Frequency and Percentage Distribution of the Respondents according to Sex.

Sex Category	Frequency	Percentage
Male	68	68%
Female	32	32%
TOTAL	100	100%

The table indicated that there were 68 (68%) males and 32 (32%) were females. This implies that majority of the respondents were male. The findings further revealed that establishment engage in Halal industry were dominated by male, may be because in Islam it is

mandatory for the husband to have a stable means of livelihood to support his family.

CIVIL STATUS.

The table shows the frequency distribution of the respondents according to civil status.

Table 1c

Civil Status	Frequency	Percentage
Single	26	26%
Married	58	58%
Widow	10	10%
Separated	6	6%
TOTAL	100	100%

Frequency and Percentage Distribution of Respondents according to Civil Status.

The table above indicated that 26 (26%) of the respondents were single while 58 (58%) of them were married. The findings indicated that majority of the respondents were married.

The findings further indicated that may be married person one need to look for a living or livelihood to have income to support the family.

SECULAR EDUCATION.

The Table 1d shows the frequency and percentage distribution of the respondents according to their Educational Attainment in Secular Education.

Table 1d

Frequency and Percentage Distribution of Respondents according to their Educational Attainment in Secular Education.

Educational Attainment (Secular)	Frequency	Percentage
Elementary	0	0%
Secondary	4	4%
Tertiary	32	32%
Master’s Degree	41	41%
Doctoral Degree	13	13%
Others	10	10%
TOTAL	100	100%

Table 1d revealed that many or 41 percent of the respondents were Master’s Degree. Some 32 percent of them finished tertiary education. While the most wonderful reality shown in the table is that 13 percent of the respondents have Doctoral Degree and none of them were illiterate. This implies that those engage in Halal Industry were highly educated.

Educational Attainment in Islamic Education

Table 1e shows the frequency and percentage distribution of the respondents according to their Educational Attainment in Islamic Education.

Table 1e

Frequency and Percentage Distribution of Respondents according to their Educational Attainment in Islamic Education.

Educational Attainment (Islamic)	Frequency	Percentage
Ibtidaiyyah	24	24%
Thanawiyyah	9	9%
Kulliyah	12	12%
Majister	0	0%
None	55	55%
TOTAL	100	100%

Table 1e indicated that majority or 55 percent of the respondents have ni Islamic education. Some 24 percent of them finish Ibtidaiyyah, other 12 percent finishes Kulliyah while few 9 percent of the respondents finished Thanawiyyah in Islamic education. The data implied that majority of the respondents has not been educated in the Madaris School.

II. Respondent’s Perception on the authenticated Halal food industries in Cotabato City

The second problem deals with the authenticated Halal Food Industries in Cotabato City. The items were able to enumerate and describe the different Halal Food Industries in the City and the perceptions of the respondents in each industry.

A. Respondents/Awareness on Presence of the Authenticated Halal Food Industry in Cotabato City

Table 2a shows the Frequency distribution of the Respondents’ awareness on the presence of Authenticated Halal Food Industry in Cotabato City.

Table 2a

**Frequency distribution of the Respondents' Awareness on the presence of
Authenticated Halal Food Industries in Cotabato City.**

Respondents' Awareness	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	70	70%
No	30	30%
TOTAL	100	100%

Table 2a shows the highest responses and lowest responses yielded from the Respondents. Specifically, majority or 70 percent of the respondents indicated that they were Aware of the presence of the authenticated Halal food Industry in Cotabato City, while 30 Percent of them were not. This implies that halal food industry in the city is already a public Knowledge.

B. Respondents/Awareness of Establishment Complying with Authenticated Halal Food Industry in Cotabato City

Table 2b shows the frequency distribution of the respondents' Awareness of the Establishment in compliance with Authenticated Halal Food Industry in Cotabato City.

Table 2b

**Frequency and Percentage Distribution of the Respondents' Awareness on the
Establishment Complying with Authenticated Halal Food
Industry in Cotabato City**

N=70

List of Establishments	Frequency	Percentage
Kitok's Litsong Manok	63	90%
Magnolia's Dressed Chicken	48	68.57%
Jollibee	1	1.43%
McDonald	26	37.15%
Biton Catering Services	31	44.29%
Chowking	0	0%

SouthSeas Food Court	9	12.86%
Cotabato Slaughter House	56	80%
Water Refilling	52	74.29%
Connie’s Bakeshop	33	47.14%
Manong’s Resto	38	54.29%
Las Hermanas	27	38.57%
Sardonix	8	11.43%
AlNor Food Court	67	95.43%
Em Manor Catering	64	91.43%
Superama Dressed Chicken	9	12.86%
Cosmetics Manufacturers	2	2.86%
Canned Good Manufacturers	6	8.57%

As seen in the table, overwhelming majority or 95.43 percent of the respondents opined that Alnor Food Court is an establishment that comply with Halal Food Industry in the city, closely followed by Em Manor Catering and Kitoks Litsong Manok with frequencies of 91.43 percent and 90 percent respectively. Great majority pointed out that Cotabato City Slaughter complied with Halal Food Industry having a frequency of 80 percent, followed by water refilling station with a frequency of 72 percent and Manongs Resto’s with 54.29 percent. While the rest of the certified Halal Food Industry In the city were lowly described by the respondents as Halal Food Industry. The data implied that in Cotabato City the Halal Food Industry requirements was complied by the mention establishment that had a high frequency.

III. The opinions of the Respondents regarding authenticity of the Halal Food industry in Cotabato City

A. Respondents’ Opinion on the Importance of Certified Halal Food items

Below is a table that shows the frequency and percentage distribution of the Respondents’ on the importance of certified Halal food items.

Table 3

Frequency and Percentage Distribution of the Respondents’ on the Importance of Certified Halal in Food Items

Rating	Frequency	Percentage
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Very Important	99	99%
Important	1	1%
Not so Important	0	0%
Not Important	0	0%
TOTAL	100	100%

In Table 3 above, 99 percent of the respondents indicated that Halal Food Items are very important, especially in the Muslim communities because it is the classification of food that prescribed by Allah in the Holy Qur'an. They also narrated that Halal Food Industry is now dominant even in the Western World which are dominantly populated by non-Muslim.

B. Respondents' Opinion if Halal Certification in Cotabato City Area is the Food Service Establishment Only.

Below is a table that reflected the frequency and percentage distribution of the respondents' opinion on the question whether the Food Establishment in the Cotabato Area were the only Halal Certified.

Table 4

Frequency and Percentage Distribution of the Respondents' Opinion on the Food Service Establishment was the Only Halal Certified Cotabato Area

Rating	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	40	40%
No	60	60%
Total	100	100%

Table 4 shows frequency and percentage distribution of the Respondents' Opinion if the Halal Certification in Cotabato Area is confined only to Food Service Establishment. The respondents indicated that Halal Certification in Cotabato Area are not only for Food Establishment, this composed 60 percent response of "NO".

The table 5 exhibits the frequency distribution on the Opinion of respondents is believing the credibility of Muslim Mindanao Halal Certification Board, Inc. (MMHCBI).

C. Opinion of Respondents on the Credibility of Muslim Mindanao Halal Certification Board, Inc. (MMHCBI).

Below is the table that shows the frequency and percentage distribution on the opinion of Respondents on the Credibility of Muslim Mindanao Halal Certification Board, Inc. (MMHCBI).

Table 5

Frequency and Percentage Distribution on the Opinion of Respondents on the Credibility of Muslim Mindanao Halal Certification Board, Inc. (MMHCBI).

Rating	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	60	60%
No	40	40%
Total	100	100%

In Table 5, the respondents pointed out that the Certification Board is still credible with majority that answer resulting to 60 percent. However, 40 percent of the respondents believed that the Muslim Mindanao Halal Certification Board Incorporated is no longer credible. As opined by this portion of the respondents that in some instances, the certifying board is somewhat turning into money-making industry. It is supposed to function in the spirit as it is prescribed by the Shari'ah.

D. Opinion of Respondents on the Benefits of the Halal Certification

Table 6 shows the Frequency and percentage distribution on the Opinion of Respondents on the Benefits of the Halal Certification.

Table 6

Frequency and percentage distribution on the Opinion of Respondents on the Benefits of the Halal Certification.

N=100

Category	Frequency	Percentage
Healthy to Consume	69	69%
Pure and Clean	75	75%
Not Contaminated	56	56%
Safe to Eat	71	71%
Very Affordable	26	26%
Part of Aqeedah	89	89%

The table above illustrated that majority or 89 percent of the respondents were amenable that Halal certification is part of Aqeeda. This was followed by 75 percent as pure and clean, 71 percent as safe to eat, 69 percent as healthy to consume and 56 percent As not contaminated. While 26 percent of the respondents indicated as very affordable.

This implied that many of the people in Cotabato who were Muslim, thus they believed That Halal certification on basic foods they consumed as part of their faith and also as Part of being considered as pure and clean.

Part IV. The Requirements in Applying for authentic Halal food industry in Cotabato City.

A. Respondents' responses on the Easiness the process of the issuance of Halal certification in Cotabato City.

Table 7 shows the Frequency distribution of the Respondents' Responses of Easiness of the process of the issuance of Halal Certification in Cotabato City.

Table 7

Frequency and Percentage distribution of the Respondents on the process of the Issuance of Halal certification.

Easiness Rating of Process of the Issuance of Halal Certification	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	55	55%
No	45	45%

TOTAL	100	100%
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Table 7 shows that majority or 55 percent responses yes while 45 percentage of them Response NO. This indicated that majority of the respondents believed that issuance of Halal Certification is easy.

B. Responses’ Reason of the Easiness of the process of the Issuance of Halal Certification.

The table below reflected the frequency and percentage distribution on the reasons of the Easiness of the process of the Issuance of Halal Certification.

Table 7.1
Frequency and percentage distribution on the Reasons of easiness of the process of the Issuance Halal Certification
 N=55

Reasons of the Easiness on the Process of the Issuance of Halal Certification	Frequency	Percentage
The application paper for certification is very simple	49	89.09%
The certification fee is affordable	51	92.72%
The flow of certification process is easy	47	85.45%
The office of the certifier is accessible within the City	44	80.00%

Table 7 shows that majority or 92.73 percent of the respondents indicated that the certification fee is affordable; and the application paper for certification is very simple with a percentage of 89.09 percent. As indicated also by the respondents, the flow of certification

process is easy having a percentage of 85.45 percent, and the office of the certifier is accessible within the city with a percentage of 80 percent. The result implied that the process on the issuance of Halal Certification is not complicated process and that the one in-charged on it is accommodating and facilitate the released of it.

V. Problems Encountered by the Halal Certifying Board in Cotabato City

A. Respondents’ belief of “Palakasan System” in the Issuance of Halal Certification

Table 8 shows the Frequency distribution of the Respondents’ Belief of “Palakasan System” in the Issuance of Halal Certification.

Table 8

Frequency and percentage distribution of the Respondents’ Belief of “Palakasan System” in the Issuance of Halal Certification.

Rating	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	49	49%
No	51	51%
Total	100	100%

Table 8 indicated that many or 51 percent of the respondents pointed out that they do not believe on the existence of Palakasan System in the issuance of Halal certification. while some believed that there was Palakasan System in the issuance of Halal Certification. This implied that something must be done to resolved this problem the soonest possible time so that the credibility of the institution will be erased.

B. Respondents’ Perception on the problems Encountered by the Halal Certifier.

Table 9 shows the Frequency distribution of the Respondents’ perception on the Problems encountered by the Halal Certifier.

Table 9

Frequency and Percentage distribution of the Respondents’ Perception on the Problems Encountered by the Halal Certifier

Rating	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	73	73%
No	27	27%
Total	100	100%

C. Respondents’ perception on the Problem of the respondents’ perception on the Problems encountered by the Halal Certifier.

This table below shows the frequency and percentage distribution of the respondents’

Perception on the problems encountered by the Halal Certifying Board.

Table 9.1

Frequency and percentage distribution of the Respondents’ perception on the Problems Encountered by the Halal Certifying Board

N=73

Statement Indicator	Frequency	Percentage
Lack of trust to the certifier	55	75.34%
Unwillingness of the Company	53	72.60%
Waste of time on the part of the company	50	68.49%
Lack of Cooperation	58	79.45%
Shortage of Volunteer Muslim Technical Experts	66	90.41%
Sources of Halal Raw or finished materials usually imported	57	78.08%
Shortage of Trained Halal Auditors	61	83.56%
Fund Resources	60	82.19%

As indicated in table 9, the respondents encountered a multiple and complex Problems as Halal Certifier. These are: (a) 90.41 percent of them said they encountered Shortage of volunteer Muslims technical experts, (b) 83.56 percent shortage of trained Halal Auditors, (c) 82.19 percent problem of fund resources, (d) 79.45 percent lack of cooperation, (e) 75.34 percent lack of trust to the certifier, (f) 72.60 percent unwillingness of the company, And (g) 68.49 percent waste of time on the part of the company.

D. Problems Encountered by the Halal Certifying Board

Table 10 below shows the frequency distribution of the respondents' problems Encountered by Halal Certifying Board

Table 10

Frequency and percentage distribution on the problems encountered by The Halal Certifying Board

N=100

Statement Indicators	Yes	Percentage	No	Percentage
1. Cooperation and Disclosure Company	69	69%	31	31%
2. Various ingredient on this products	72	72%	28	28%
3. Procedure on how the products are processed	68	68%	32	32%
4. Materials being used	61	61%	39	39%
5. Preservatives used in the products	67	67%	33	33%
6. Enzymes and others	62	62%	38	38%
7. Sources of Halal certified ingredients in food service establishments or even meat	69	69%	31	31%
8. Hiring of practicing Muslims by non-Muslims owned establishments as required by the Board	76	76%	24	24%

As revealed in table 10 above, the respondents indicated that the Halal Certifying Board is also facing a multiple complex problems in their efforts to run the Institution. These are (a) 76 percent problem of hiring a practicing Muslims by Non-Muslims Owned establishments as required by the board, (b) 72 percent problems on various Ingredients on this product, (c) 69 percent problems of cooperation and disclosure of the Company, and sources of Halal certified ingredients in food service, (d) 68 percent problem Of preservatives used in the products, (f) 62 percent problem enzyme and others, and (g) 61 percent problem on materials being used. This implied that although the certifying board Is considered credible but they were confronted with a multiple of problems also that Affected their work.

FINDINGS:

The findings of the study revealed that most of the respondents were on the age bracket of 26-30 followed by 18 percent of the age bracket of 41- 45 and a 7 percent of both age bracket of 20-25 and 51-55. This implies that considerable number of the respondents engaged in Halal small business. They also belonged to younger age bracket. Some twenty (20%) of the respondents were married and six (6%) were separated. Many, forty one (41%) of the respondents were M.A degree holders while fifty (50%) have no Arabic education. It should be noted that Halal food items are very important especially in the Muslim communities because it is a classification of food and beverages that are prescribed by ALLAH (SAW) in the Holy Qur'an and Halal certification is part of Aqeedah. It can help to generate foods that are pure and clean, safe to eat, healthy to consume and not contaminated with hazards. Further, the issuance of Halal certification is affordable; application paper for certification is very simple, the flow of certification process is easy, and the office of the certifier is accessible just within the city.

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