



**IMPROVEMENT OF HALAL EXECUTIVE POSITIONS IN THE HALAL
CERTIFICATION PROCESS TOWARDS CAREER GROWTH IN FOOD
INDUSTRIES IN MALAYSIA AND AUSTRALIA**

By

AMARUL ARIEF BIN MOHD SHUHAIMI

**Thesis Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies, Universiti Putra Malaysia,
in Fulfilment of the Requirement for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy**

February 2025

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DEDICATION

To Mrs. Jamaliah Mohamad Ali, Dr. Mohd Shuhaimi Ishak, Dr. Alia Amirah Mohd Shuhaimi, Dr. Aiman Aminuddin Mohd Shuhaimi, Ahmad Al-Amin Mohd Shuhaimi, and Fathimah Azzahraa' Mohd Shuhaimi,

Your constant encouragement, love, and affection have been my beacon and guiding force. With deep appreciation and love, I dedicate this work to all of you.

*Warmly,
[Along]*



Abstract of thesis presented to the Senate of Universiti Putra Malaysia in fulfilment
of the requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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February 2025

Chairman : Professor Muhammad Shahrin Abd Karim, PhD
Faculty : Food Science and Technology

The establishment of a Halal Executive position in the food industry is one of the specific requirements of Halal certification. Due to this circumstance, most Halal food industry entities have begun to create such positions. However, the existing literature demonstrates limited research in understanding the position of Halal Executive in general. Moreover, the current task scenario of Halal Executives in the food industry indicated that it is restricted to implementation processes, neglecting autocratic elements of decision-making capacity. Hence, substantial Halal-related decisions are seen to be occasionally compromised. As this is a Halal certification compliance-based position, it illustrates ambiguity to their future career growth towards critical positions in the industry, a glass ceiling position without future potential. Thus, this study aimed to deeply understand Halal Executive positions' current state of affairs and discover the potential career growth of Halal Executive positions and how they could be improved to become critical positions in the industry. The study exercised the qualitative method and collected the data through in-depth interview sessions among

Halal Executives in the food industry in Malaysia and Australia. The study also analysed official Halal certification documents established by the Malaysian and Australian governments. The study found that the challenges Halal Executives face in the workplace are derived from the unavailability of decision-making ability and the ambiguity of career growth. The study recommended several proactive measures to improve these positions such as providing a career structure, revisiting national Halal policies and updating Halal modules provided by higher institutions and training providers. Most importantly, it provided an in-depth understanding of Halal Executives' position, filling the literature gap on Halal food management in the realm of Human Resource Management, Halal Industry Management and Food Management in the food industry. A framework of guidelines for future career growth of Halal executives has been established to guide Halal food industry players, policymakers, and other relevant stakeholders.

Keywords: Halal Executive, Career Growth, Halal Industry, Talent Management, Food Industries.

SDG: GOAL 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth, GOAL 9: Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure.

Abstrak tesis yang dikemukakan kepada Senat Universiti Putra Malaysia sebagai memenuhi keperluan untuk ijazah Doktor Falsafah

**PENAMBAHBAIKAN PENJAWATAN EKSEKUTIF HALAL DALAM
PROSES PERSIJILAN HALAL BAGI PERKEMBANGAN KERJAYA
DALAM INDUSTRI MAKANAN DI MALAYSIA DAN AUSTRALIA**

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Penubuhan jawatan Eksekutif Halal dalam industri makanan merupakan salah satu keperluan khusus dalam proses pensijilan Halal. Oleh itu, kebanyakan entiti dalam industri makanan Halal telah mula mewujudkan jawatan ini. Namun, kajian terdahulu menunjukkan terdapat kekurangan penyelidikan yang mendalam dalam memahami kedudukan Eksekutif Halal secara menyeluruh. Selain itu, senario tugas semasa Eksekutif Halal dalam industri makanan didapati tertumpu kepada proses pelaksanaan, sekali gus mengabaikan elemen autokratik dalam kapasiti membuat keputusan. Akibatnya, keputusan penting yang berkaitan dengan Halal kadangkala dikompromi. Memandangkan jawatan ini berasaskan pematuhan pensijilan Halal, ia turut mencerminkan ketidakjelasan pertumbuhan kerjaya masa depan mereka ke arah jawatan kritikal dalam industri, menjadikannya satu bentuk “*glass ceiling*” tanpa potensi masa depan yang jelas. Oleh itu, kajian ini bertujuan untuk memahami secara mendalam keadaan semasa jawatan Eksekutif Halal, meneroka potensi pertumbuhan kerjaya mereka, serta mengenal pasti langkah-langkah penambahbaikan bagi

memastikan jawatan ini berkembang menjadi jawatan kritikal dalam industri. Kajian ini menggunakan kaedah kualitatif dengan mengumpul data melalui sesi temu bual mendalam bersama Eksekutif Halal dalam industri makanan di Malaysia dan Australia. Selain itu, dokumen rasmi pensijilan Halal yang dikeluarkan oleh kerajaan Malaysia dan Australia turut dianalisis. Hasil kajian mendapati bahawa cabaran utama yang dihadapi oleh Eksekutif Halal di tempat kerja berpunca daripada ketiadaan kuasa membuat keputusan serta ketidakjelasan laluan pertumbuhan kerjaya. Oleh itu, kajian ini mencadangkan beberapa langkah proaktif bagi memperkasa jawatan ini, termasuk penyediaan struktur kerjaya, penilaian semula dasar Halal negara, dan pengemaskinian modul Halal yang ditawarkan oleh institusi pengajian tinggi serta penyedia latihan. Lebih penting lagi, kajian ini turut menyumbang kepada pemahaman mendalam mengenai kedudukan Eksekutif Halal, sekaligus mengisi jurang literatur dalam bidang Pengurusan Sumber Manusia, Pengurusan Industri Halal dan Pengurusan Makanan dalam industri makanan. Satu rangka kerja garis panduan bagi pertumbuhan kerjaya masa depan Eksekutif Halal telah dibangunkan untuk membantu pihak industri makanan Halal, pembuat dasar, serta pihak berkepentingan lain yang terlibat.

Kata Kunci: Eksekutif Halal, Perkembangan Kerjaya, Industri Halal, Pengurusan Bakat, Industri Makanan.

SDG: MATLAMAT 8: Pekerjaan Yang Baik dan Pertumbuhan Ekonomi, MATLAMAT 9: Industri, Inovasi dan Infrastruktur.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AAG-AIO	Approved Arrangement Guidelines for the Australian Government Authorised Halal Program
AFIC	Australian Federation of Islamic Councils
ANIC	Australian National Islamic Council
AS 4696:2007	Australian Standard for the Hygienic Production and Transportation of Meat and Meat Products for Human Consumption
CAF	Consent and Anonymity Form
CB	Certified Body/ Bodies
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
COVID-19	Coronavirus Disease of 2019
CSR	Corporate Social Responsibility
DNA	Deoxyribonucleic Acid
F&B	Food & Beverage
FAQ	Frequently Asked Questions
FSSC 22000	Food Safety System Certification 22000
FoSIM	Food Safety Information System of Malaysia
FSMS	Food Safety Management System
GIE	Global Islamic Economy
GMP	Good Manufacturing System
HACCP	Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points
HDC	Halal Development Corporation Berhad
HE	Halal Executive
HFCE	Halal Food Council of Europe
HPB	Halal Professional Board
HQ	Headquarters

HTI	Halal Training Institute
IHAS	Internal Halal Assurance System
IHC	Internal Halal Committee
INC	Incorporated
IP	Interview Protocol
ISO	International Organisation for Standardization
ISO 22000	International Food Safety Management Standards
JAKIM	Jabatan Kemajuan Islam Malaysia
JAIM	Jabatan Agama Islam Melaka
JAIN	Jabatan Agama Islam Negeri
JAIS	Jabatan Agama Islam Selangor
JPJ	Jabatan Pengangkutan Jalan
KL	Kuala Lumpur
LPPOM	Lembaga Pengkajian Pangan, Obat-obatan dan Kosmetika
MAACWG	Malaysia-Australia Agricultural Cooperation Working Group
MAFTA	Malaysia-Australia Free Trade Agreement
MAIN	Majlis Agama Islam Negeri
MHM	Majlis Halal Malaysia
MHMS	Malaysian Halal Management System
MNC	Multinational Corporation
MPPHM	Manual Prosedur Pensijilan Halal Malaysia
MS	Malaysian Standard
MS 1500:2009	Malaysian Standard on Halal Food- Production, Preparation, Handling and Storage
MUI	Majlis Ulama Indonesia

MUIS	Majlis Agama Islam Singapura
MyIPO	Intellectual Property Corporation of Malaysia
NC	Non-Conformance
NCR	Non-Conformance Report
NHP	National Halal Policy
NSW	New South Wales
NT	Northern Territory
OIC	Organisation of Islamic Cooperation
OEM	Original Equipment Manufacturer
Pty Ltd	Proprietary Limited
QA	Quality Assurance
QC	Quality Control
QLD	Queensland
QR Code	Quick Response Codes
R&D	Research and Development
RQ	Research Question
RO	Research Objective
SA	South Australia
SME	Small and Medium-sized Enterprises
SSM	Companies Commission of Malaysia
TA	Tasmania
TAFE	Technical and Further Education
ToT	Training of Trainers
VIC	Victoria
WA	Western Australia

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Chapter Overview

This study intends to understand Halal food certification in Malaysia and Australia as they offer distinctive systems and services to the food industry. Through the same agenda, the study explores the future career growth of Halal Executives in both countries, hoping to propose a framework as a reference for future graduates, industry players, policymakers, and scholars. This chapter will explain the background of the study (globally and locally), the problem statement, and the significance of the study. Apart from that, this chapter will also explain the research objectives and research questions. It will continue with the scope of the research and the definition of terms as guidance and parameters to the study.

1.2 Background of the Study

The Halal food market is no longer an alienated segment globally. According to the Halal World Institute in 2024, the global Halal food market has significantly influenced the global economy, with an estimated \$2.4 trillion in 2023. It is projected to grow at a compound annual growth rate of 9.33%, reaching \$4.6 trillion by 2030 (Halal World Institute, 2024). Despite the direct association with Islam and Muslim communities, it can manifest in many parts of the world, including non-Muslim majority countries. In the European region alone, the Halal Food Council of Europe (HFCE) has certified over four hundred European food companies, which is expected to increase gradually over time (Aniqoh & Hanastiana, 2020). In China, the Halal food industry is proliferating, fulfilling the local market, and penetrating the global market

by focusing on the export-oriented sector (Vanany et al., 2020). China has also staked a claim in the international Halal food sector by investing approximately AED1.35 billion in the Dubai Food Park, a specialised food industrial cluster (Salaam Gateway, 2018). In Southeast Asia, other than predominantly Muslim countries like Malaysia, Indonesia and Brunei, Thailand is also listed as one of the top Halal food producers in the region (Mohd Nawawi et al., 2020).

In the local context, the State of the Global Islamic Economy Report 2018/19 has recognised Malaysia as the leading Islamic economy ecosystem, with the highest score of 127 in their Global Islamic Economy (GIE) Indicator Score (State of the Global Islamic Economy Report, 2019). Malaysia, committed to being a global leader of Halal Hub, is spearheading many Halal-related industries such as research and development, infrastructures and provides many local and international facilities, especially as a “one-stop” centre for Halal certification to attract manufacturers to export and import goods from the centre to other Muslim-predominant countries and the rest of the world (Abdul Rahman et al., 2013). More than 3,500 food companies have been established in this country alone, with a total production of over \$9 billion (Fauzi et al., 2020).

Due to this astounding progress in the Halal industry, Malaysia has created many rules and regulations, to the extent of establishing a certification system as a guideline to assist industry players in providing better goods and services complying with this food dietary law. This Halal certification is monitored and accredited by an international Halal organisation called the Malaysian Department of Islamic Development, better known as JAKIM (Al-Teinaz & Al-Mazeedi, 2020), which acts as a pivotal point for

the Halal certification system and application. Grounded on the agenda of creating better compliance among Halal food industry players, JAKIM stipulated that one of the most prominent rules in acquiring the certification is by creating an in-house executive that monitors and supervises all Halal-related authority and compliance (JAKIM, 2014). They are locally known as Halal Executives.

Looking out to the neighbouring continent (Oceania), Australia is known to be a global leader in meat production. It has the tremendous potential to become a global Halal meat producer (Kabir, 2015). Approximately 50% of chicken produced by the Australian market is Halal, with an estimated \$13 billion in Halal exports in 2015 (Cochrane, 2016). State of the Global Islamic Economy Report 2018/19 has also listed Australia as one of the top ten in the Halal food location (Salaam Gateway, 2019) category worldwide, proving that the Halal food industry in Australia is flourishing locally and internationally.

In juxtaposition to the Halal certification system in Malaysia, the Australian government has listed at least twenty-four distinctive recognised Islamic bodies for Halal certification of red meat products for export (Department of Agriculture, Water, and the Environment, 2022). However, the recognition of this certification is subject to specific listing requirements of local authorities in Islamic countries, as some may be recognised in one Islamic country while others may not. Hence, the requirement for acquiring Halal certification in Australia varies, depending on the certification body (Zulfakar et al., 2019). Unlike in Malaysia, establishing a dedicated Halal-affair-related position such as Halal Executive is not compulsory for applicants to most

certification bodies' requirements, which focus on religious requirements (Zulfakar et al., 2018).

Although Malaysia is one of the Halal hub leaders in the world and has been referred to by many countries globally in managing Halal industries, certifications and assurance, the juxtaposition of the certification systems between Malaysia and Australia is conspicuous, especially in terms of Halal certification bodies authorities and requirements to attain certifications. Furthermore, both nations have yet to establish a clear career trajectory for Halal Executives/Halal-related professionals in Halal food industries.

1.3 Problem Statement

Despite the massive growth of Halal markets worldwide and tremendous efforts locally in Malaysia to spearhead the Halal industries globally, existing literature demonstrates limited research in understanding Halal Executives' career development, specifically within the Halal food industry.

The most crucial problem in this respective field is the inability of all stakeholders to provide clear career growth for these Halal Executives in Halal industries. Abdul Rahim et al. (2022) discovered the insecurities expected by Halal Executives working in Halal sectors, which now career advancement for Halal-related roles in the industry has yet to be objectified, combined with a lack of training and a low salary structure. Halal Executives also possess limited authoritarian power in making vital decisions regarding Halal-related verdicts, which contradict the manifestation of the position itself (Ahmad et al., 2018). Specifically in Australia, the lack of standardisation of the

Halal industry and slaughterhouses inflicts shortcomings in transparency and understanding of current practices and regulations within the industry (Loyer et al., 2020).

Current studies focus on assessing the Halal training programme (Jamaluddin, Kamarudin, & Ramli, 2015; Sopian et al., 2020) and examining Halal logistics and supply chains in the food industry (Ab Talib et al., 2020; Ab Talib & Wahab, 2021). A bibliometric analysis of Halal research streams published in the Web of Science (WOS) database also revealed that out of 548 manuscripts, scholars primarily concentrate on consumer behaviour concerning Halal products, certification systems, supply chain management, and Islamic financial products (Putera & Rakhel, 2023) as compared to other Halal-related topics. Indeed, scholars rarely prioritise conducting exploratory studies on Halal Executives' positions and the issues surrounding them.

Theoretically, many Halal studies primarily focus on behaviour and attitude towards it. The theory of Planned Behaviour (Ajzen, 1985), for instance, has been referred to numerous times by previous studies to measure the relationship between the attitude of consumers towards Halal products such as in Shah Alam and Mohamed Sayuti (2011), Memon et al. (2020) and Sherwani et al. (2018). Additionally, other studies related to Halal Executives or related positions primarily focus on the negotiating factor of needs on the sustainability of Halal Executives in Malaysia (Abdul Rahim et al., 2022).

Prominent theories on job satisfaction and career advancement, such as Herzberg's Two-Factor theory (1993), are undiscoverable in understanding the position of Halal

Executives in the food industry. Previous scholars tend to focus on different segments of the Halal Executive positions in the industry, such as training (Ahmad Nizar et al., 2022) and core competencies of these positions (Rosli et al., 2022). Limited attention is given to analysing the career spectrum of these positions, especially on growth and advancement in the food industry. Adaptation of the Halal Food Model by Riaz and Chaudry (2018) is also underutilised in academic studies, especially concerning the position of these executives in the food industry, given that this model provides a comprehensive understanding of the Halal food production system.

Scholars are starting to pay attention to the Halal Executive positions in the industry. For instance, Md Salleh, Romli, Mat Salleh, and Adnan (2020) executed a study on the sustainability of multinational slaughterhouses by examining the role of the Internal Halal Committee. Although the finding indicated that the Internal Halal Committee has a significant impact in gaining companies' confidence from existing and potential customers on their goods, the study focussed on examining the functions of the Internal Halal Committee in the company rather than focusing on the career development of the Halal Executives. From the study's findings alone, the researcher could conclude that the study about Halal Executives' positions should be projected as it is essential in gaining consumer confidence.

By examining the subject matter, using a qualitative approach involving Halal Executives and official documents developed by the local governments, the study will be able to unfold the experience and perceptions of Halal Executives in the food industry. With this knowledge, the researcher can generate a framework to guide every stakeholder in preparing for future career growth for Halal Executives in the industry,

creating a more sustainable position while restructuring the whole Halal food industry ecosystem. As this position is substantial in upholding the sustainability of the Halal industry, a study to understand such a position must be executed vigorously.

Hence, based on the issues stated above, the primary intention of this study is to explore the role of Halal Executives in the process of Halal certification application within Malaysia and the Australian food industry, their understanding of careers, issues and opportunities in the Halal food industry while developing a framework of guidelines for future career growth in Malaysia and Australia.

1.4 Research Questions

Building on the problems and gaps outlined in the previous section, this study has attempted to address the overarching question: What are the responsibilities of Halal Executives during the Halal certification process in the Malaysian and Australian food industries, and how can these roles be enhanced to support their career growth? From this central inquiry, the following specific research questions will be examined and addressed by the completion of the study:

1.4.1 What is the understanding of Halal Executives on the Halal certification system and process related to their position in the context of Malaysia and Australia's food industry?

1.4.2 What personal experience have Halal Executives gone through in their current position in Malaysia's and Australia's food industry? (Challenges and Opportunities)

1.4.2.1 What challenges do Halal Executives face in Malaysia's and Australia's food industry?

1.4.2.2 What are the opportunities perceived by Halal Executives in Malaysia's and Australia's food industry?

1.4.3 What are their expectations for career growth as Halal Executives in Malaysia's and Australia's food industry?

1.5 Statement of Purpose

The purpose of the study is to develop a framework of guidelines for the future career growth of Halal Executives in Malaysia and Australia by exploring the role of Halal Executives in the Halal certification process within Malaysia's and Australia's food industry, their understanding of career, issues and opportunities in Halal food industry while developing the framework of guidelines for future career growth in Malaysia and Australia. Hence, to achieve that purpose, the study has generated research questions that need to be addressed during the execution of the study. The study has identified three distinctive objectives. There are:

1.5.1 To identify the understanding of Halal Executives on the Halal certification system and process related to their position in the context of Malaysia and the Australian food industry.

1.5.2 To understand the personal experience of Halal Executives in Malaysia's and Australia's food industry.

1.5.3 To investigate their expectations for career growth as Halal Executives in Malaysia's and Australia's food industry.

1.6 Why Malaysia- Australia Study

Malaysia and Australia have a solid economic relationship in the Halal meat market, as Australia is a significant exporter to Malaysia. The bilateral agreement and

recognition of the Halal certification system and requirements have facilitated the trading of Halal meat between these two countries, for example, through the Malaysia-Australia Free Trade Agreement, also known as MAFTA (Yusoff et al., 2022). This is evidenced by Australia being one of Malaysia's most competitive Halal exporting countries compared to other Halal exporting countries (Yusoff et al., 2022). In fact, through the 6th Malaysia-Australia Annual Foreign Ministers' Meeting, both nations have reaffirmed their commitment to advancing the Halal economy activities by continuously discussing the Strategic Halal Partnership (Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 2024).

Furthermore, the rigorous Halal certification system employed by Malaysia has facilitated Australian food producers not only to adhere to these regulations but also to penetrate the Malaysian market and the international market. A study identified that Halal Malaysia has the most comprehensive systems and guidelines, with the highest accreditations of global Certified Bodies (CB) and acknowledging countries (Azam & Abdullah, 2021), including CBs in Australia. Collaborative engagement between Australia, the Halal Development Corporation of Malaysia (HDC) and JAKIM fosters seamless trading and recognition processes for Halal goods from Australia to ensure the products conform to the standards of Malaysia's Halal certification (Suhaimi et al., 2019).

Additionally, the Malaysia-Australia Agriculture Cooperation Working Group (MAACWG) has created agreements related to agriculture, especially the placement of *Halal Attache* in Australia to assist slaughtering activities in Halal-certified products produced in Australia (Suhaimi et al., 2019). The robust collaboration and

synergy between these two prominent global players in the Halal industry necessitate the ongoing execution of in-depth Halal-based studies. This synergy should not be limited to economic benefits but also to human resources provided Australia produces a significant Halal market in Malaysia. Hence, the Halal management system in Australia should also be in line with Malaysia, including human resource management in the Halal industry. To sustain favourable progress, it is essential to uphold reciprocal advantages for both nations, regardless of the duration, short term or long term.

1.7 Significance of the Study

The study will be constructive to many stakeholders related to the Halal certification bodies and food industries, directly or indirectly. This study will clarify the nature of Halal certification bodies and systems in Malaysia and Australia. In addition to that, through this study, stakeholders and readers will better grasp the work nature of Halal Executives in the food industry of both markets by narrating their experience, the meaning of the positions and their perception of the trajectory of their careers in the respective industry. Hence, based on the generic contribution of the study, irrefutably, this significance of the study could be expatriated into four different subcategories.

1.7.1 Body of Knowledge

This study will contribute to an in-depth understanding of the whole journey and experience of Halal Executives in the food industry in the context of Malaysia and Australia. The study will provide additional information on how food industries are currently handling and managing their Halal Executives. From that, it would propose an exemplary mechanism on how these executives should be managed in the future,

either to fulfil the needs or vacancies or to ensure the sustainability of the positions in the industry. Managing the food industry goes beyond product development and production. It is also closely related and undoubtedly substantial to human resource management, as human resource management is one of the critical components of food management. This study seeks to contribute to this realm. It will also aid in filling the gap in Halal food management in human resource management, especially in the food industry.

1.7.2 Policy

Another significant contribution that could be anticipated from this study is policy. As this study will be executed in two different settings, consisting of two distinctive systems and applications of Halal certification and unique industrial human resource management from both countries, it will provide a new angle on the current system. From that point, it could be an excellent stepping stone for us to revisit the existing policy of both Halal certification systems.

For instance, in Malaysia, the findings of this study will assist the local authorities and policymakers in revisiting the current status quo of Halal Executives' positions in the food industry. Personal experience, perceptions of the food industry, and perceptions of career trajectory in the respective industry would be epiphanies to the current system, which may amplify the need for changes to improve these positions.

In Australia, the Halal accreditation system is very much unique from Malaysia. As Malaysia is one of the world's most renowned Halal hubs, the contribution of this study would be sufficiently exemplary in revisiting the Halal accreditation and

certification system in Australia. For instance, creating dedicated industry positions, such as Halal Executives in the industry, will help boost the confidence of local and international consumers. Not only that, but this study will also aid in revisiting the current decentralisation approach to the Halal accreditations system and their effectiveness and compliance with Sharia law and local authorities.

1.7.3 Practice

One of the most prominent contributions is the aspect of the practical contribution. The purpose of the study is to discover the experience of Halal Executives in the food industry and their perceptions of their work and industry. Hence, this study will amplify all relevant opportunities and issues discovered within the industry through that agenda. From there, necessary changes could apply to the industry players immediately. Objectifying career growth for Halal Executives in the food industry is one of the discernible changes. Plus, differentiating functions of various positions, such as Halal Executives, Quality Assurance Executives, Food Technologists, and Internal Auditors, should be done indiscreetly, as some employers may have overlapped functions of these positions (Ahmad et al., 2017).

1.8 Definition of Terms

1.8.1 Career Prospects

The chance of (future) success in a profession which may be entailed by employment against unemployment, the standard of education requirement by a position, salary, obtaining a position of the first choice, securing a permanent position and others (Waaier, 2016). In this study, as the intention is to assist current and prospective Halal

Executives in anticipating the possibility of career advancement in the food industry, the study will focus on understanding the status quo of the position in the industry and help to create an objectified portfolio of career advancement (moving forward as in getting promoted in a higher and critical Halal position) in the industry.

1.8.2 Career Growth

Employees' perceptions of the possibilities of development and advancement in their career encompassing need satisfaction on multiple levels, implying that career growth is positively related to affective organisational commitment. Career growth is stipulated within four factors: career goal progress, professional ability development, promotion speed, and remuneration (Weng, et al., 2010). In this study, the career growth of Halal Executives within Malaysia's and Australia's food industries will be the focal point. Hence, Halal Executives will be the primary subject matter of the study and unit analysis. As the creation of Halal Executive positions was proposed by the Halal certification authority (in this case, JAKIM) as part of the requirement of Halal certification (especially in Malaysia), relevant documents on the Halal certification system published by JAKIM and the Australian government will also be another focal point of the study to assess their commitment of the career growth of Halal Executives in the industry.

1.8.3 Food Industry

Consists of a convoluted chain of food-related activities from food supply, food production, harvesting, food processing, food packaging, food logistics, transportation, food distribution, food consumption, food-related regulations, research, and development related to food, food marketing activities and food waste

disposal (Sadiku, Musa and Ashaolu, 2019). In this context, the study will focus on food industries producing Halal products in Malaysia and Australia. These industries, however, are not limited to local or multinational industries or any specific food segmentations.

1.8.4 Halal Executives

Dedicated positions responsible for monitoring and supervising Halal compliance in a company or premises. According to JAKIM, 2020, Halal Executives must meet the following requirements: a) Muslim, b) Malaysian citizen (subject to the relevant clause in the Malaysian Halal Certification Procedures Manual (MPPHM), c) offered and work in the industry in a permanent position, d) hold a minimum of a diploma in Halal management or any equivalent qualification or experience in Halal management for at least five years and, e) have a Halal Executive certificate from a Halal training supervisor registered under the Halal Professional Board (HPB). As this research is conducted within two different settings, the contextual meaning of Halal Executive also differs. In Malaysia, Halal Executives in the study shall be subject to this definition as Malaysia has a more comprehensive Halal training system for Halal-related positions in the food industry. Whereas in Australia, the study shall be flexible in conceptualising samples of Halal Executives, any executive-level personnel in Australia's food industry that has experience working undeviating dealing with Halal-related matters (for instance, application of Halal certification, monitoring Halal process and procedures) shall be counted eligible to be nominated as sample/informant of the study.

1.8.5 Halal Food Certification

An official document requiring food manufacturers to have observed and implemented Islamic requirements in producing Halal foods per Islamic law. (Al-Teinaz & Al-Mazeedi, 2020). In this context, the study will monitor Halal certification in Malaysia (monitored and accredited by JAKIM) and Australia (monitored and accredited by local Halal-certified bodies). In Australia, Halal-certified bodies are subject to the organisations recognised and listed underneath JAKIM/Malaysia-specific listing requirements.

1.8.6 Internal Halal Committee

A committee appointed formally by the top management in the respective companies is responsible for developing, implementing, monitoring, and controlling the effectiveness of the Halal Assurance System and compliance with the Malaysian Halal Certification requirements (JAKIM, 2020). This scenario, however, may not be seen in the Australian food industry as such committee establishment is not a preparatory and executory regulation of the Halal certification system in the respective country.

1.9 Scope of the Study

Research on Halal certifications is commonly found chiefly concerning the general acceptance of the mass public and the perceptions of the food industry owners and restaurateurs in various settings. While on Halal Executives, previous studies prioritised the training aspect, including the adaptability of several training methods. Undoubtedly, Halal certifications and Halal Executives' research profoundly were done quantitatively.

Instead of focusing on the differentiation of the settings and the system practised by both nations, this study is intended to go beyond that by providing a deeper understanding of Halal Executives and their perceptions of their jobs and positions in their respective industries and countries. It will also extensively discover their understanding of the certification systems as it is fundamental to their jobs and the industry in which they are currently involved. By the end of the study, it will not only be able to provide an extensive understanding of the experience and perceptions of Halal Executives on their tasks, but it will also provide comprehensive guidance to Malaysia's Halal policymakers in establishing clearer career pathways for Halal Executives and at the same time, it will offer a practicable framework for Australia policymakers in constructing a more encyclopaedic Halal certification systems which may include internal Halal assurance system as Malaysia doing by creating Halal Executive positions in every related industry.

Based on the study's context and foresight results, this study investigates the experience of Halal Executives on their job. Perceptions of their career, challenges and opportunities experienced and perceived by these executives are the main purpose of the study. Hence, only certified executives in Malaysia are the study's informants. This limitation is not applicable within the Australian context, as the study identified that possessing professional Halal certification is not the standard requirement for executives to manage and facilitate Halal-related tasks. This study will also analyse official documents published by both governments related to Halal certification and production. Although this study has not limited itself to exploring any types of Halal food industries in both countries, it will be restrained geographically. In Malaysia, this study will interview informants based in Klang Valley and southern Peninsular

Malaysia, including Kuala Lumpur, Selangor, Negeri Sembilan, Melaka and Johor. In Australia, the study is conducted throughout the country, depending on the availability of Halal food manufacturers.

1.10 Summary of the Chapter

This chapter summarises the study. It was initiated with the background of the study, an overview of the Halal market in the global context, and a discussion of the context of Malaysia and Australia. Subsequently, the chapter provided the study's rationale in the statement of problems, trailed by the purpose of the study, which was divided into several research questions and objectives. The significance of the study was also highlighted in the chapter. In assisting readers in understanding the study's special terms, the chapter featured the definition of terms. Finally, it ended with the scope of the study to define the context of the study correctly. Based on that stand, it aims to explore the Halal certification processes in Malaysia and Australia and the perceptions of Halal Executives on their positions in the food industry. The study anticipates that it could contribute to filling in vital gaps in the local system (Malaysia and Australia) of Halal certification bodies and provide a better future to Halal Executives regarding career growth and advancement in the Halal food industry. The study has also produced guidelines for Halal food industry players to improve their career growth. The inputs received will assist the local governments and stakeholders in ameliorating Halal-related policies and practices in terms of systems and human resource management.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Chapter Overview

This chapter offers rigorous discussions of theoretical and epistemological perspectives about Halal scenarios in Malaysia and Australia. It discusses explicitly the status quo of the Halal market in both contexts. Chronologically, the chapter begins by narrating both the market's retrospective and prospective spearheading in the global Halal market. This study referred to previous research and literature to support the narration of the markets. In the second section, the chapter explores the Halal certification bodies of both countries, whereby the nature of the organisation and implementation structure of these two countries are juxtaposed. This section will be a traversing factor to the Halal Executives scenario as this dedicated position is only available in the Malaysia setting. The chapter continues by elucidating Halal Executives' scenarios in both countries through a discussion of the literature. It will conclude with discussions on the theoretical foundations of the study, which will aid in achieving the original goal. The study incorporates Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory (1993) and the Halal Food Model (Riaz & Chaudry, 2018).

2.2 Halal: Global, Malaysia and Australia

The term "Halal" refers to a dietary law that is believed and practised by Muslims around the globe and translated from Arabic as lawful or permissible. Generally, Halal food should be free of any ingredients forbidden by Islamic or Sharia law. These ingredients are included but not limited to alcoholic beverages and other intoxicants, as well as any parts derived from pigs, carnivorous animals, birds of prey, and other

animals, as well as meals tainted with any of the aforementioned (Mohd Shuhaimi et al., 2021). Besides, the preparation (which includes processed, cooked, produced, cleansed, and manufactured) of Halal food should be carried out following the dietary law. Any cross-contamination of the products, utensils and machinery should be decontaminated using a unique cleansing method called Sertu (Othman et al., 2016). With that in mind, the production of Halal food and products should align with this dietary law.

The Halal market globally is booming compared to previous decades. The main contribution of the growth is the rising numbers of the Muslim population worldwide. Kettani (2020) rigorously discussed the Muslim population by country and continent. In 2020, Muslim populations covered at least 25% of the world population, and it is estimated that by 2075, the population will increase to one out of three. Although most Muslims are in the Asia continent (approximately 67% of the Asia population), the Muslim population are widely spread all over the world. Numerically, 1.3 billion Muslims reside in Asia, 0.59 billion live in Africa, 47 million in Europe, 6.4 million live in the Americas, and at least 42 million Muslims live in Oceania continents (Kettani, 2020). The enormous population of Muslim believers around the world demonstrates the potential of the Halal market in a variety of industries, particularly the food industry.

Despite the COVID-19 pandemic in recent years, the food and beverages sector of the Halal market has maintained its astounding size at USD 1.96 trillion. It continues to grow at USD 2.09 trillion in 2021 and is expected to accelerate up to USD 3.27 trillion by 2028 (Fortune Business Insights, 2021). These numbers alone represent the food

and beverages sector globally, putting aside other Halal industries such as Halal tourism, Halal cosmetics, Halal pharmaceutical, and Halal finance, proving that it will continue thrusting the global market immensely, notwithstanding the worldwide predicament.

Malaysia, as one of the top Halal industry markets, has not only catered to local demand but also exported Halal merchandise to prominent countries around the globe, such as Japan, China, Indonesia, and Singapore, amounting of \$10.3 billion (Shaari et al., 2020) and the value of Food and Beverage (F&B) industry alone (inclusive of local demands and exports) in Malaysia is around \$24.1 billion (Flanders Investment & Trade, 2020; Md Husin et al., 2021). As Muslim populations around the globe are growing, and the acceptance of Halal food products amongst consumers (Muslims and non-Muslims) is also significantly increasing (Billah et al., 2020), it is highly anticipated that Malaysia's Halal food industry will continue to strive tremendously. Hence, efforts to revamp the systems are continuously needed to fulfil local needs and cater to the global market.

Australia is among the top-tier Halal food industry players and is also known as one of the most extensive bovine meat suppliers globally. With AUD\$7.8 billion in exports to Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) nations in 2018, Australia is the fourth-largest Halal food and drinks supplier in the world. Exports are expected to double to AUD\$14.6 billion over the next decade, with a CAGR of 6.3 per cent (Financial & Corporate Relations, 2020). In 2018, Australia was the second largest supplier of meat and live animals to the OIC, after Brazil, at AUD\$3.1 billion. Indonesia was Australia's most significant client, importing at least AUD\$ 1.2 billion in meat and

live animals. Cereals were Australia's second most valuable OIC export, at AUD\$1.9 billion. (Financial & Corporate Relations, 2020). The domestic market for Halal-certified food in Australia is booming, with an annual spending of AUD\$1.7 billion. By 2050, Australia's 500,000-strong Muslim community is expected to grow to 700,000 (Financial & Corporate Relation, 2020), proving that the Halal industry in Australia has a solid foundation and promising future.

2.3 Halal Malaysia Certification Body and Australia Certification Bodies

Halal certification assesses and certifies products and services to guarantee that they fit Halal standards and Islamic law (Noordin et al., 2021). Although Islamic teaching upholds the same beliefs, values, and practices worldwide, Halal certifications vary according to each country's federal government. For instance, countries such as Malaysia and Indonesia possess their own distinctive-centralised Halal certification system, controlled, monitored, managed, and supervised by a central body appointed by the federal government. Countries like the United Kingdom and Australia have more localised and decentralised Halal certification systems and bodies where the producers/suppliers/merchandisers may enjoy choosing which Halal certification body to assess and certify their products and services. However, the absence of a centralised ruling authority within certain countries for extended periods in both religious traditions has led to divergent interpretations, with different Muslim inspectors adhering to distinct dietary standards (Regenstein et al., 2003).

JAKIM in Malaysia is the Halal certification agency authorised by the federal government of Malaysia to execute any necessary activities related to Halal certification. Noordin et al. (2021) explained the standard of practice in acquiring

Halal certification within the Malaysia region conducted by JAKIM. The process started with the application for the certification, followed by compilation, checking, and verifying application documents. Upon receiving the completed application, a premise inspection by an authorised Sharia Officer (the auditor) will occur. Based on that inspection, the certification panel will make a decision. A Halal Certificate will be issued once approval is granted. Regular monitoring sessions by the Sharia Officer will be executed post-granted to ensure the certificate holders continue complying with the Halal regulations. Unlike other countries with any particular standardisation nationwide, Malaysia has a single-ratified Halal logo status once the products/industries/restaurants are granted a Halal Certificate (S. Nuraini & Sucipto, 2021). This logo plays a vital role as it will provide Halal assurance to consumers regarding the products/ restaurants/ services. Figure 1 illustrates Halal's official logo, which JAKIM authorises. JAKIM has developed an online system (www.Halal.gov.my) to not only assist the applicants in applying for a Halal certificate but also to assist consumers in checking and verifying the Halal status of products and restaurants to inculcate confidence during the enjoyment of the products/restaurants/premises.



Figure 1 : Halal Logo Authorised by JAKIM

Apart from that, JAKIM also generated a list of *Recognised Foreign Halal Certification Bodies and Authorities*, of which eighty-four bodies and authorities are listed globally. The validity of the appointment is only within two years, and the bodies must submit a review audit application upon the expiry of the appointment period (JAKIM, 2020). Through this service, qualified international bodies and authorities are entitled to apply for recognition as it will boost the confidence of the global consumers of the products since Halal JAKIM is one of the prominent Halal certification systems globally.

Australia practices a distinguished Halal certification system. The Halal certification system is not granted and monitored by a centralised agency. Instead, it is monitored by Islamic organisations/bodies authorised by the Australian government (Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment, Australian Government, 2022). The Australian government generated an approved arrangement list for Halal certification in producing/supplying meat and red meat products for export. According to this list, at least 24 authorised bodies in Australia can grant Halal certificates to local red meat suppliers/producers. Suppliers and producers may choose whichever preferred bodies to acquire Halal certification through this list. The Halal certification systems vary according to the bodies, as some may be lenient and simplified while others might be more extensive and comprehensive. The Halal logo provided by these bodies upon certification is also varied. Table 1 illustrates the list of the Islamic organisations authorised by the Australian Government to grant Halal certifications and the recognised bodies by JAKIM, Malaysia.

Table 1 : List of Recognised Islamic Bodies for Halal Certification of Red Meat by the Australian Government

No	Islamic Organisation	Recognised by JAKIM (Malaysia)
1	Al-Iman Islamic Society WESTMEADOWS VIC 3066	-
2	Al Sadeq Association THOMASTOWN VIC 3074	-
3	Australian Halal Development and Accreditation ARCHERFIELD QLD 4108	-
4	Australian Federation of Islamic Councils Inc. ZETLAND NSW 2015	-
5	Australian Halal Authority and Advisers DALLAS VIC 3047	
6	Australian Halal Food Services SPRINGWOOD QLD 4127	-
7	Australian National Imams Council CHULLORA NSW 2190	
8	Global Australian Halal Certification Pty Ltd BANKSTOWN NSW 2200	-
9	Global Halal Trade Centre Pty Ltd SUNNYBANK HILLS QLD 4109	-
10	Halal Australia Pty Ltd AUBURN NSW 2144	-
11	Halal Certification Authority Pty Ltd SYDNEY NSW 2001	
12	Halal Certification Council SPRINGWOOD QLD 4127	-
13	Halal Meat Board of Western Australia MOUNT LAWLEY WA 6050	-
14	Halal Supervisory Board of South Australia for the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia ADELAIDE SA 5000	-
15	Islamic Association of Geraldton. GERALDTON WA 6530	-
16	Islamic Association of Katanning KATANNING WA 6317	
17	Islamic Coordinating Council of Victoria AIRPORT WEST VIC 3042	
18	Islamic Council of Western Australia BURSWOOD WA 6100	-
19	Muslim Association of Riverina Wagga Wagga Inc WAGGA WAGGA NSW 2650	-
20	Perth Mosque Incorporated MOUNT LAWLEY WA 6050	
21	Supreme Islamic Council of Halal Meat in Australia Inc SOUTH GRANVILLE NSW 2142	
22	Western Australia Halal Authority MADDINGTON WA 6109	-
23	World Halal Certification Body KILKENNY SA 5009	-
24	RACS International for Halal Certification Services GUILDFORD NSW 2161	-

(Adopted from the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry)

Research on Halal certification globally is discoverable as the Halal market has taken a noticeable placement globally. However, these research execution and findings primarily focused on specific settings or have almost no relation to the Halal Executives position. For instance, previous research on the challenges encountered by Halal certification authorities in managing the whole certification process in Malaysia identified that the most prominent problems in managing Halal certification in Malaysia are a lack of workforce for task execution and insufficient skills and knowledge of Halal Auditors about the task given (Muhammad et al., 2020). Additionally, the Halal JAKIM system (MYeHalal) malfunctioned over time. Halal certification review also encountered several issues, while the guidelines provided by Halal certification are considered uncomprehensive and face competition with other foreign certification bodies. Although this research is conducted based on Halal certification, the setting focuses more on the Malaysian scenario, as such issues are in different jurisdictions. Additionally, the research mainly focussed on the certificate provider (JAKIM) while not directly involving the industry players (to be exact, Halal Executives).

Multiple Halal certification bodies within one country have been studied previously. Previous studies show that having multifarious Halal certification bodies in one country tends to be more harmful than bringing opportunities for Halal certification (Khan & Haleem, 2016). A similar study conducted in the United Kingdom (UK) also concluded that the absence of a centralised Halal authority has rendered the market vulnerable to fraudulent activities and corruption, particularly at the intersection of religious practices and consumer culture (Fischer, 2005). The studies mentioned above highlighted an excellent point regarding diversified Halal certification bodies.

However, the setting of the study focused on India and the UK in general. Reflections of a study conducted within these two regions may not be able to be generalised to other settings as the disadvantages of such a practice may potentially not be related to the Halal certification bodies. Factors like lack of enforcement and lack of support by local government on such a policy might be prone to the disadvantages of the government's system itself.

Another research conducted regarding Halal certification was by Latif et al. (2014). They discovered that JAKIM is the strictest body in awarding Halal certification to companies and is well-recognised globally. This research was conducted within multinational settings, which was applaudable as it compared the Halal certification requirements of various bodies from different countries. However, the primary concern of these findings is that the research was published in 2014. Hence, the status quo of Halal certification bodies may be different. Apart from that, the Australian Federation of Islamic Councils (AFIC) was the sole representative of Australia. At the same time, at least 20 other Halal certification bodies in Australia probably have stricter policies and requirements concerning Halal certifications. Moreover, suppose JAKIM remains the strictest and most comprehensive Halal certification system globally; hence, JAKIM should be the reference for other countries/bodies in developing, evolving, and managing their Halal certification bodies.

Al-Shami and Abdullah (2023) mentioned challenges in Halal food industry certification and operational and manufacturing issues within the Malaysian market. Stiff production competition from neighbouring countries, high production costs, which eventually contribute to low-profit margins and decentralised tasks that

potentially hinder the production process from being completed were some of the issues faced by Halal food manufacturers in Malaysia. This study focussed on manufacturing, almost disregarding the Halal certification process. Furthermore, the study did not mention the connection of these challenges to the Halal Executives' position in executing daily tasks during the manufacturing process. Hence, another study to discover this connection may help improve the ecosystem of the Halal food manufacturing system.

Ab Talib et al. (2017) discovered that Halal food certification positively affects local businesses' operational and business performance. This study was conducted in Malaysia, a Muslim-majority country. Hence, such an impact is expected as Muslims in Malaysia rely on Halal certification as a symbol of safe-to-consume/confidence during consumption as it abides by the Sharia Law. Different results may be obtained if the same observation is done in different settings.

The legal regulations related to religious slaughter in Australia have been discussed previously. Shortcomings of transparency and understanding of current practices and regulations were part of the issues found in a study by Loyer et al. (2020). They also found out that the system needs more precise and consistent legislative provisions while increasing the independence of the bodies from industry in setting the standard enforcement and administration of religious slaughter, which is also part of the suggestions.

As the Halal certification bodies in Australia vary, creating such a standard across certification bodies may be difficult. Different organisations rule each certification

body and possess different capabilities. The involvement of the government and all certification bodies collectively may be needed if such a vision is to be made a reality. Loyer's (2020) study concurred with the findings of Lever and Miele (2012), which highlights the complexities surrounding Halal certification, coupled with the lack of clear regulatory guidance, have significantly contributed to the emergence of 'hybrid' governance models and third-party certification mechanisms within the Halal supply chain (Lever & Miele, 2012).

Another prominent research on Halal certification and positions within Australia was conducted on the Halal meat supply chain. In Australia, only Halal supervisors at respective establishments are authorised to issue Halal-products transfer and export certificates (Zulfarkar et al., 2019). Zulfakar's research proved that only designated positions within the Halal establishment can authorise such a task. However, the research did not discuss the job scope of these executives and their impact on the industry, much less on their career growth.

2.4 Government Agencies in Facilitating Halal Initiatives

In Malaysia, the facilitation of Halal initiatives is a significant responsibility that is mainly shouldered by three main agencies: JAKIM, Halal Development Corporation (HDC), and Halal Professional Board (HPB). HPB's main function is to facilitate Halal-related modules to ensure the industry's workforce is well-equipped with the necessary knowledge, especially on Halal matters. These modules and training are provided by recognised and registered training providers, which, as of 2021, there are at least 32 organisations. These organisations are varied, including higher education institutions (public and private institutions, private training providers and nonprofit

organisations (JAKIM, 2021). Therefore, the role of government agencies in facilitating Halal initiatives in Malaysia is not just significant but crucial for the industry's growth and development.

On the other hand, HDC's main purpose is to advance Malaysia's Halal sector comprehensively and systematically. Intending to promote Malaysia's Halal industry on the international level, its main agenda is to facilitate the marketing of Halal products globally (Harun & Abdullah, 2022). HDC's involvement inspires confidence in the industry's capacity for growth as it can enhance and assist in the development of Malaysian Halal product brands (Harun & Abdullah, 2022). Additionally, it provides services for Halal product development locally and internationally (Shahwahid et al., 2017). A Variety of Halal training courses and modules are offered, encompassing basic, intermediate, and professional level choices. The Halal training curriculum includes several components, such as Halal certification processes and standards, Sharia, Halal markets, and Halal food, on top of quality and food safety (Jamaludin et al., 2013).

Initially, HDC's primary role was to oversee and execute the Halal certification process. However, this responsibility was later transferred to JAKIM, allowing HDC to concentrate on its core mission of establishing a global Halal centre (Harun & Abdullah, 2022). This strategic shift underscores HDC's commitment to promoting and empowering the Halal industry, including providing consultancy and training services on Halal matters.

As an organization dedicated to maintaining the integrity of Halal standards, HDC does not engage in law enforcement operations. Instead, it focuses on ensuring high-quality standards and providing solutions that meet the needs of both Sharia and commercial sectors (Harun & Abdullah, 2022). By concentrating solely on Halal development, HDC has successfully managed over 100 projects aimed at advancing the industry (Harun & Abdullah, 2022). The Halal Park by HDC was specifically designed to foster the growth of the Malaysian Halal industry within a corporate community that prioritizes Halal products and services (Harun & Abdullah, 2022). This community, built on collective property ownership, offers support and maintenance services for the physical structures and systems. The Halal Park of Malaysia is particularly attractive to foreign firms, especially multinational corporations, as a potential investment destination (Shahwahid et al., 2017).

In 2021, HDC initiated a new agenda to prioritise and strengthen its position as the secretariat of the Halal Industry Council through the attraction of new investments into Halal Parks (Harun & Abdullah, 2022). This will increase their presence in the significant Halal markets and facilitate government-to-government corporations through consultancy services and advising on Halal (Harun & Abdullah, 2022). This is where the Malaysia-Australia Agriculture Cooperation Working Group (MAACWG) materialised to enhance the Halal-related activities and consultancies between Malaysia and Australia. HDC also aim to attain exceptional standards in the process of digitalising a Halal-integrated platform. This entails the creation of a comprehensive digital ecosystem that encompasses all Halal services and products provided by the industry players. This digital ecosystem will provide international

Halal enterprises with the opportunity to access and penetrate a broader market (HDC, 2020).

HDC also established the Halal Training Institute (HTI) in 2008 to provide education on Halal procedures. HTI offers five major modules: awareness, competency, certification, governance, and e-learning. The training and modules cover a wide range of topics, which are not limited to Halal auditing, Halal industry management, Halal pharmaceutical, Halal assurance management, Halal slaughtering, Halal Auditor training, and Halal Executive training. Since 2008, it is estimated over 60,000 persons worldwide have attended their education courses (Harun & Abdullah, 2022).

Meanwhile, in Australia, as discussed in Chapter 1, Halal-related activities are recognised and facilitated under the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry. Additional initiatives related to Halal programs are subject to requirements from the certified bodies (or, in other words, the authorised Islamic organisations) and the manufacturing companies.

2.5 Halal Studies around COVID-19 Era

Given the widespread impact of COVID-19 on human activities, the Halal industry has not been immune to its effects. Scholars have extensively explored the implications of the pandemic on various aspects of Halal practices. However, there has been a noticeable absence of research focusing on the human resource aspect within the realm of Halal studies during this challenging period. For instance, Atabik and Muqtada (2024) and Sudarsono et al. (2024) discussed the COVID-19 vaccine's impact on human beings from various aspects, including religious acceptance of it.

Rachman and Amarullah (2024) discussed the repurchasing intention of Halal cosmetics during the COVID-19 era. Lee et al. (2023) also discussed the purchase intention of Halal products before and during the challenging period.

Meanwhile, Ruangsiroj and Suvittawat (2022) examined Halal Logistic services around the crisis era and revealed a positive association between innovation solutions and value creation. This implies that, during crises, the use of tangible and intangible resources can help organisations gain a competitive advantage. Wahyuni et al. (2021) also examined the supply chain of Halal products, specifically on risk and mitigation matters. Halal tourism is also one of the topics discussed during the COVID-19 era, as reported by Muawanah et al. (2021), Holidah and Pasaribu (2021), also by Wardi and Trinanda (2022). None of these studies related to human resource management, specifically on Halal Executives

Additionally, other studies, such as Susilawaty (2020), found that three Halal business sectors are believed to be more vulnerable to the COVID-19 pandemic to facilitate national economic recovery: Halal finance, Halal food, and Halal fashion. Jaiyeoba et al. (2023) discussed that Halal-certified companies utilised corporate social responsibility (CSR) as a promotional tool. They concluded that although there is a positive relationship between CSR and Halal economy responsibility as a promotional tool, it is not that significant. The only study closely related to human resources during the COVID-19 era was conducted by Hidayat et al. (2022). The study briefly discussed preparing competent human talents in the Halal industry to face challenges during trying periods and opportunities, with the potential to lead an agenda toward community and transparency. Despite that, the focus of the study was a generic

analysis of the Halal industry before, during, and after the post-COVID-19 era, which did not focus on human capital analysis.

A bibliometric analysis of the Halal economy during the COVID-19 era listed the top 10 topics that were most discussed during the COVID-19 era, which did not include human talent analysis. Laila et al. (2021) revealed that among 217 articles focusing on the impact of COVID-19 on the Halal sector, a massive portion of scholarly attention is dedicated to various aspects such as finance, banking, philanthropy, food, and tourism. Surprisingly, the analysis identified a clear gap in the discussion of human resource management within the Halal industry, particularly in the context of the challenges brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic. This omission raises important questions about the management of human capital in this sector during these uncertain times, despite the pertaining issues raised in Chapter 1.

2.6 Historical Development of Halal Executive Position

The Halal Executive role originated in Malaysia, one of the global leaders in Halal governance. The terminology of Halal Executive was first introduced in MS1500:2009 in 2009 (Jais, 2019) to designate personnel responsible for facilitating Halal compliance within the industry. This specialised professional role is integral to ensuring organisational adherence to Halal certification standards, particularly in the food and related industries. Rooted in Islamic jurisprudence, Halal (permissible) certification mandates strict compliance with guidelines governing sourcing, production, storage, and distribution to align with Shariah principles (Aufi et al., 2024). The emergence of this position is attributed to the global expansion of Halal

markets, driven by increasing consumer demand and regulatory requirements in both Muslim-majority and non-Muslim-majority nations.

A Halal Executive is defined as a compliance officer tasked with implementing, monitoring, and auditing Halal protocols within an organisation (JAKIM, 2020). While commonly found in the food industry, this role also extends to other sectors, including manufacturing, pharmaceuticals, cosmetics, and hospitality (JAKIM, 2020). The primary responsibility of a Halal Executive is to ensure that all operational activities comply with Islamic dietary laws and meet the standards set by national or international Halal certification bodies (Jais, 2019). In the food industry, the Halal Executive serves as a critical intermediary between religious compliance and industrial operations, necessitating expertise in both Islamic jurisprudence and food science. While the fundamental principles of Halal remain rooted in religious precepts and beliefs, technoscience has emerged as a critical domain that underscores the interplay between regulatory frameworks and audit culture (Fischer, 2016). This is proven that Halal has evolved into a rapidly expanding global market with significant economic implications, including its influence on Western biotechnology companies (Fischer, 2008).

The responsibilities of a Halal Executive include compliance monitoring, documentation management, and stakeholder coordination. Compliance monitoring entails rigorous oversight of raw material sourcing, production methods, and logistics to prevent contamination or procedural breaches (Talib et al., 2015). Documentation management involves maintaining comprehensive records for audits, including supplier certifications, production logs, and hygiene protocols, which are essential for

certification renewals (Rosli et al., 2022). Additionally, Halal Executives serve as liaisons between their organisations and Halal certification authorities (JAKIM, 2020), facilitating audits, resolving non-compliance issues, and ensuring the timely renewal of certifications. Another key responsibility is staff training, whereby Halal Executives educate employees on Halal requirements, hygiene standards, and contamination prevention measures (Rosli et al., 2022).

This position is known by different titles depending on regional and organisational contexts. In Malaysia, the term Halal Executive is widely used, denoting responsibility for managing Halal-related compliance in the manufacturing industry (JAKIM, 2020). In Indonesia, the equivalent role is referred to as Halal Supervisor, encompassing similar responsibilities (Wijaya & Priantina, 2024). In Western contexts, particularly in Australia, the position may also be termed Halal Supervisor (Zulfakar et al., 2018; Zulfakar et al., 2019), however, the role is often described as an on-site Muslim representative carrying out Halal-related duties at the factory, rather than as an individual responsible for managing Halal programmes within the food industry. The terminology used to refer to those managing Halal programmes in Australia varies, and this will be further elaborated in the results section of Chapter 4. Despite terminological variations, the core mandate of ensuring Halal integrity remains consistent across regions.

The Halal Executive position is pivotal in maintaining both the religious and commercial integrity of Halal products. While terminology and specific duties may vary across regions, the role consistently emphasises compliance with Shariah principles and certification standards. Scholarly research highlights its growing

significance in global trade, particularly as non-Muslim-majority countries, such as Australia, continue expanding Halal exports (Zulfakar et al., 2018; Zulfakar et al., 2019). However, challenges such as limited decision-making authority and unclear career progression pathways, as identified in recent studies, underscore the need for structural reforms to enhance both the efficacy of the role and the professional development opportunities available to Halal Executives (Abdul Rahim et al., 2022).

2.7 Halal Executives' Scenario in Malaysia and Australia

Halal Executives are well-known positions in the Halal industry in the Malaysian market. As it is part of the requirement for acquiring Halal certification, this certification application is not only known in the Halal food industry; businesses like hoteliers and pharmaceuticals are also starting to employ dedicated executives to manage, execute, monitor, and control all Halal-related tasks within the respective industries. Foreign companies in Malaysia are also legally required to establish a Muslim Committee to oversee Halal compliance, comprising senior Muslim executives from various disciplines, to ensure adherence to Halal certification standards, provide training for workers, and conduct compliance audits (Fischer, 2016).

However, in academia, research on Halal Executives is not prevalent as it is not a worldly-recognised requirement for Halal certification around the globe. Only certain countries such as Malaysia, Thailand and Indonesia have begun to instil such a rule to elevate the quality of the products/services according to the Sharia Law (JAKIM, 2020; Mohd Nawari et al., 2020; Ridwan, 2020).

Previous literature demonstrates that research on other executive levels is significantly limited (Withers et al., 2023) as it is predominantly by studies on CEO executives. Hence, available data and information on other non-CEO executives are fairly restricted (Krause et al., 2022), especially on Halal Executives in the food industry.

One of the most prominent research projects regarding Halal Executives was conducted in Malaysia, and it found that Halal Executives are experiencing poor career growth. Not only that but there is also a lack of training opportunities to elevate their knowledge and practice in the industry. Halal executives also experience a poor salary structure (Abdul Rahim et al., 2022). As these issues highlighted a disturbing fact faced by current Halal Executives, this study, however, focussed on Halal Executives in general, without specifically focussed on Halal Executives, in which each position possesses different educational backgrounds, qualifications, and expected tasks to be executed. Besides, this study was explicitly conducted within the context of Malaysia. Hence, different contexts may provide different outcomes and may be irrelevant to other locations and circumstances. Plus, the mentioned study adopted focus group discussions to understand the perspective of the executives without reviewing official documents published by the local government. It adopted the theory of reasoned action as the foundation of the study. Hence, the motivational factors of the executives were not discoverable in the study as they were not part of the discussion.

The study conducted by Abdul Rahim et al. (2022) discussed above supports previous discoveries related to Halal Executive positions in general. For instance, a study by Hassan, Arif and Sidek (2015) found that implementation of the Internal Halal Assurance System (IHAS) based on knowledge of Islam is the requirement of IHAS.

This study proved that training related to this position is still lacking as these executives manifest their tasks using their knowledge of Islam rather than following the guidelines of the IHAS. This study, however, was conducted based on Knowledge, Understanding and Practice (KUP) by adapting the Technology Acceptance Model by Fred Davis (1985), which showed that it was focussing solely on the understanding of the sample to IHAS, without any correlation to the whole structure of the positions itself during job executions and their experience as Halal Executives in general. Consequently, the motivational expectations of these executives were not discoverable in this study.

Ahmad et al. (2019), in their study “Disequilibrium and Divinity Salience as Invariant Structures in the Halal Executives’ Experience of Eudaimonia”, discovered that the phenomenon of eudaimonia well-being experienced by Halal Executives perpetually associated with the structure of divinity salience and disequilibrium in status quo. This study focused on the religiosity of the work with the Creator, upholding the executives’ faith in the Divine (Ahmad et al., 2019). Tangible and intangible motivational factors were not part of the study. In addition, the experience of the executives in conducting the job per se was also not the focus of the study. Hence, the eudaimonia found in the study potentially were not related to the task executions themselves, rather than strongly connected to their faith relationship to the Creator (Ahmad et al., 2019).

Another noticeable research associated with Halal Executive positions was conducted in 2017. According to this research, Halal Executives are one of the critical success factors in implementing the Halal food management system (Ahmad et al., 2017).

They discovered that Halal personnel empowerment is vital as it plays dual roles in some industries (Halal role and quality/safety role). Another study also found that the establishment of Halal Committees or specialised Halal compliance divisions within companies exemplifies the growing prominence of internal control mechanisms that are subject to audit and regulatory scrutiny (Bergeaud-Blackler et al., 2015). As abundance as it looks, agonisingly, most Halal Executives in Malaysia hold two distinct roles in the food industry, which may contribute to the feeling of being overwhelmed while executing tasks (Ahmad et al., 2017). This study also discovered that Halal Executives possess limited authoritarian power in making vital decisions regarding Halal-related verdicts, which could contradict the manifestation of the position itself (Ahmad et al., 2017). They were allegedly hired based on their expertise in the respective department (Halal), yet their inputs and voices were sometimes not discerned in the final decisions.

Nevertheless, this study took place in Malaysia, and it is inequitable to generalise the findings to different settings. Besides, the motivational factors of the executives were not part of the study. As it is focused on the success factors in effectuating the Halal management system within the food industry, the study did not focus on the experience of Halal Executives, and their career growth was not the subject matter to be explored. Table 2 summarises the relevant previous studies associated with this study from the aspects of Halal certifications, while Table 3 summarises Halal Executives' previous studies.

Table 2 : Previous Studies Related to Halal Certification in Various Contexts

Name (Year)	Topic	Setting	Key Contribution / Findings
Muhammad, Abu Bakar, and Ahmad (2020)	The Challenges Faced by Halal Certification Authorities in Managing Halal Certification Process in Malaysia	Malaysia	Lack of workforce, insufficient skills and knowledge of Halal Auditors, malfunction of MYeHalal system, Halal certification application review issues, uncomprehensive guidelines by Malaysia Halal certification and competition with the foreign certification bodies.
Khan and Haleem (2016)	Understanding Halal and Halal Certification & Accreditation System – A Brief Review	India	Multiple Halal certification bodies (in one country) tend to be more harmful than bringing opportunities for Halal certification.
Abd Latif, Mohamed, Sharifuddin, Abdullah and Ismail (2014)	A Comparative Analysis of Global Halal Certification Requirements	Multinational	JAKIM (Malaysia) is the strictest body in awarding Halal certification to companies and is well-recognised worldwide.
Al-shami and Abdullah (2023)	Halal Food Industry Certification and Operation Challenges and manufacturing execution system opportunities. A Review Study from Malaysia	Malaysia	i) Stiff production competition from neighbouring countries and China. ii) High production cost contributes to low-profit margins. iii) Decentralised tasks make production tasks take a longer time to complete.
Ab Talib, Chin, and Fischer (2017)	Linking Halal Food Certification and Business Performance	Malaysia	Halal food certification has a positive impact on operational performance and business performance.
Loyer, Whittaker, Buddle, and Ankeny (2020)	A Review of Legal Regulation of Religious Slaughter in Australia: Failure to Regulate or a Regulatory Failure	Australia	There are shortcomings in transparency and understanding of current practices and regulations, and there is a need for more precise and consistent legislative provisions. It is suggested that the industry be more independent in setting the standards, enforcement, and administration of religious slaughter.

Table 2 : Continued

Zulfakar, Chan, Jie, and Sundram (2019)	Halal Accreditation and Certification in a Non-Muslim Country Setting: Insights from Australia Halal Meat Supply Chain	Australia	Only Halal supervisors at respective establishments are authorised to issue the Halal-products transfer and export certificates.
Regenstein, Chaudry and Regenstein (2003)	The Kosher and Halal Food Laws	Multinational	The absence of a centralised ruling authority within certain countries for extended periods in both religious traditions has led to divergent interpretations, with different Muslim inspectors adhering to distinct dietary standards
Fischer (2005)	Feeding Secularism: The Halal Market in London	United Kingdom	The absence of a centralised Halal authority in the United Kingdom has rendered the market vulnerable to fraudulent activities and corruption, particularly at the intersection of religious practices and consumer culture.
Lever and Miele, (2012)	The Growth of Halal Meat Markets in Europe: An Exploration of the Supply Side Theory of Religion	European Countries	The complexities surrounding Halal certification, coupled with the lack of clear regulatory guidance, have significantly contributed to the emergence of 'hybrid' governance models and third-party certification mechanisms within the Halal supply chain.

Table 3 : Previous Studies Related to Halal and Halal Executives

Name (Year)	Topic	Setting	Key Contribution / Findings
Abdul Rahim, Abdullah, Yahya, Awang, Muhammad, Ahmad Sabri and Ahmad (2022)	Negotiation of Needs Towards Halal Talents Sustainability	Malaysia	Halal Executives experience poor career paths, lack of training and poor salary structure.
Hassan, Arif and Sidek (2015)	Knowledge and Practice for Implementing Internal Halal Assurance System among Halal Executives	Malaysia	Implementation of the Internal Halal Assurance System (IHAS) based on knowledge of Islam rather than the requirement of IHAS.
Ahmad, Mohd. Roslin and Abdul Kadir (2019)	Disequilibrium and Divinity Saliency as Invariant Structures in the Halal Executives' Experience of Eudaimonia	Malaysia	The eudaimonia well-being experienced by Halal Executives is perpetually associated with the structure of divinity saliency and disequilibrium in the status quo.
Ahmad, Abdul Rahman, Othman, and Ungku Zainal Abidin (2017)	Critical Success Factors Affecting the Implementation of Halal Food Management Systems: Perspective of Halal Executives, Consultants and Auditors	Malaysia	Halal Executives are one of the critical success factors in implementing the Halal food management system. Halal personnel empowerment is vital as it plays dual roles in some industries (Halal and quality/safety roles).
Fischer (2016)	Market, Religion, Regulation: Kosher, Halal and Hindu Vegetarianism in a Global Perspective	Multinational	International companies in Malaysia must establish a Muslim Committee to oversee Halal programs in the industry, comprising senior Muslim executives from various disciplines to adhere to Halal standards.
Bergeaud-Blackler, Fischer, and Lever (2015).	Halal Matters: Islam, politics and markets in global perspective	Multinational	The establishment of Halal Committees or specialised Halal compliance divisions within companies exemplifies the growing prominence of internal control mechanisms that are subject to audit and regulatory scrutiny.

Based on these previous studies, it can be deduced that studies about Halal certifications and Halal Executives from the perspective of motivational and hygienical factors shall be explored as the career growth of these executives befuddled. Hence, this research explores through the lens of a theory and a model as it will assist in discovering the potential career growth of Halal Executives in the food industry. Nonetheless, this theory shall not limit the exploration as it will only be a stepping stone of the study as it was carried out qualitatively.

2.8 Theoretical Foundation

The application of theories is typically associated with quantitative and mixed-method research, as these studies commonly exploit theories as an element to be tested. In juxtaposition to that, using theories in qualitative studies profoundly serves as an element to manoeuvre research in the sense of a 'lens' designed to accommodate fresh perspectives on certain data features or comparisons with other literature (Leeming, 2018). Although theories shall not be tested in the study, theories in qualitative research will help the study grasp the subject matter in general. Based on that stand, this study employs one theory and one model to properly understand the fragmentation of Halal certification and Halal Executives' experience in Malaysia and Australia. Herzberg's Two Factor Theory and Riaz and Chaudry's Halal Food Models are chosen as they are best suited to represent the whole idea of the Halal certification system and exploration of career growth of Halal Executives positions in food industries.

2.8.1 Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory: Motivating Factors and Hygiene Factors

This theory was introduced in the 1950s by Frederick Herzberg (1993). According to this theory, there are two-dimensional job satisfaction factors for employees in the workplace. It is labelled as a motivational factor and hygienic factor. Herzberg discussed that hygiene elements might not be able to motivate employees in the workplace, but they can help reduce dissatisfaction if appropriately catered. Specifically, these elements can only cause dissatisfaction if they are not present or mistreated. Company policies, supervision, salary, relationships, working conditions, remuneration and security are some hygiene elements that concern the employee's environment. On the contrary, motivators fulfil employees' needs for meaning and personal development. Elements like achievement, recognition, the task itself, responsibility, career advancement and growth are among motivators in the workplace. The motivators will bolster job satisfaction and spur production once the hygiene elements are resolved.

This theory will aid the study in understanding the working culture comprehensively, as it covers both sides: the related to workplace satisfaction (motivators) and the indirectly related to workplace satisfaction (hygiene factors). Issues related to workloads, working environment, job security and other issues can be potentially explored and covered through the lens of this theory. To understand the career growth of Halal Executives, this theory is utilised as the lens as it provides fundamental knowledge concerning the career growth of employees in the workplace. However, the study has not limited itself to the elements stated in the theory and conjectures any discoveries that arise as it will be conducted qualitatively and will take place in two

different settings. Figure 2 illustrates the theory and assists a better understanding of the theory in general.

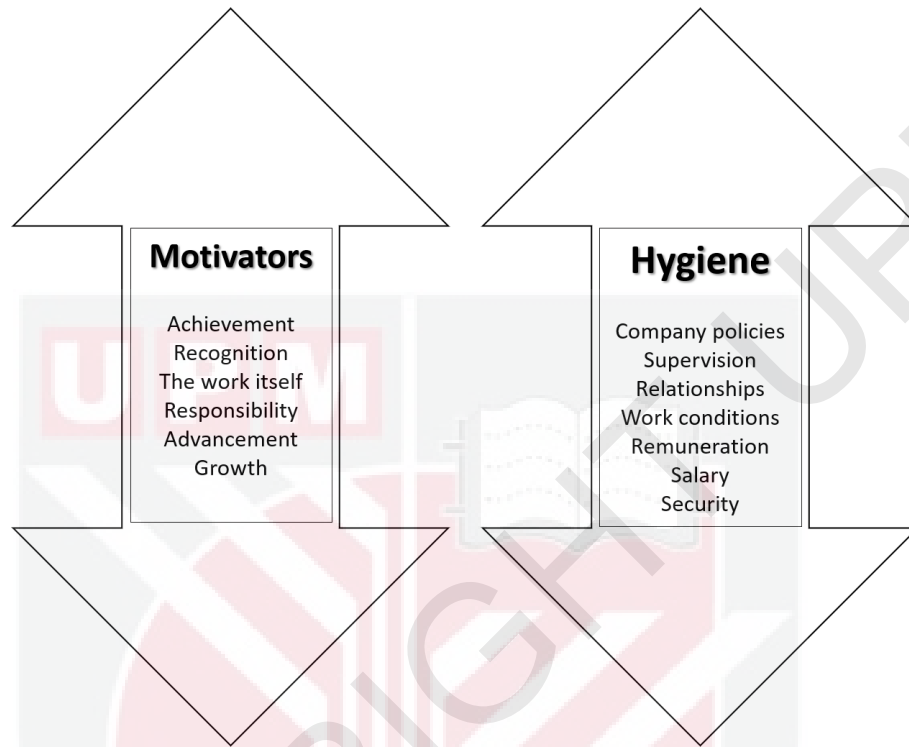


Figure 2 : Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory: Motivating Factors and Hygiene Factors

2.8.2 Halal Food Model

Differing Halal certification standards and practices around the globe, be it intercountry or within the countries themselves, has not only induced confusion and misunderstanding but also exposed it to abuse in the practices of Halal certification and audit processes (Omar & Jafaar, 2011). One might think progress has occurred globally on the Halal certification system after a decade. Nevertheless, most countries are still practising decentralisation of the Halal certification system as they believe that consumers, producers, suppliers, and service providers should enjoy the benefit of choosing. Hence, Riaz and Chaudry (2018) believed that the Halal food model

would not only aid in decreasing the issues mentioned earlier but also help boost the industries' productivity to become more seamless.

Riaz and Chaudry (2018) explained that the Halal food model should begin from the initial stage of production at the farm (in this research, labelled as the Pre-Production Stage). Plants and animals shall be grown organically and taken care of humanely and should be catered fit for Muslims' consumption. Any genetic modification measures applied (such as DNA manipulations) to plants and animals should also abide by Sharia law.

The second stage of the Halal food model is the Processing Stage. Riaz and Chaudry (2018) divided this stage into two segments. In the first segment, which is the slaughtering facilities, the producers should prepare the whole slaughtering facility following Sharia Law. Slaughtering affairs such as contamination, transportation, health and safety audits, slaughtering processes and other requirements should be executed according to Halal and Safety and Health requirements. For the second segmentation at the Production/Processing Facilities, the exact measurement is also expected to be carried out throughout the production processes. Halal compliance should be appropriately monitored from the farm to the slaughtering stage, including the validity of the certification at the time of receiving the raw ingredients. Machines and equipment must also be secured from cross-contamination with non-Halal ingredients. If cross-contamination occurs, the equipment is expected to be cleaned through the Sertu process (Ahmad & Shariff, 2016). A preparatory cleaning system should be executed prior to the processing stage.

The final stage proposed by Riaz and Chaudry (2018) is the Post-Production Stage. In this stage, the producers should take precautionary steps in preparing food labelling and packaging. A Halal logo with the latest technology upon labelling is also suggested to be prepared at the packaging stage. Apart from that, they recommended that all necessary, updated information be digitalised and made available to be accessed in a Digital Halal Database, including digitalised Halal audit forms. Constructing and executing all the measures will only create a holistic Halal food model that will eventually strengthen the educational aspect of the whole Halal ecosystem. Business owners, consumers and governments should know the Halal ecosystem and how it works, especially those directly involved in the Halal supply chain.

Without a doubt, from the proposition of Riaz and Chaudry (2018), the involvement of Halal Executives plays a vital role throughout the whole production of the food industry, not only within a certain period or within one stage. Creating a prosperous Halal ecosystem must start with analysing the functions and experience of Halal Executives in the food industry, especially when their career growth has yet to manifest. The illustration below is the proposition of the Halal food model by Riaz and Chaudry (2018), labelled as Figure 3.

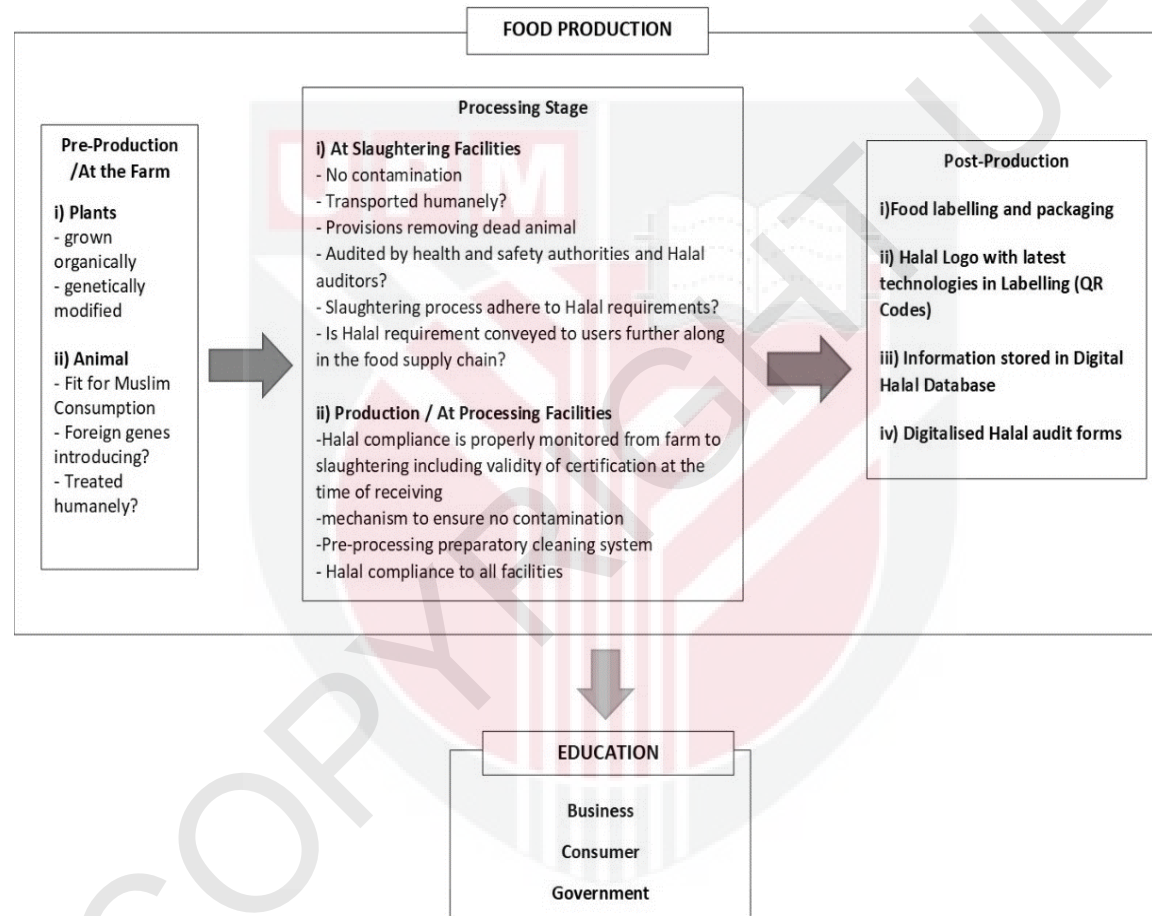


Figure 3 : Halal Food Model Proposed by Riaz & Chaudry (2018)

2.9 Conceptual Framework

Conceptually, this study is based on the Halal certification systems of the countries derived from the perspective of Halal Executives, who are the key players in the ecosystem within the Halal food industry. The study has developed a guiding foundation for observing the subject matter, typically derived from the study's theoretical foundation, labelled as the conceptual framework.

Nonetheless, the development of this framework is not solely driven by underpinning theories alone. It was considered earlier and has undergone a systematic process flow. Ravich and Carl (2019) proposed eight elements in developing a comprehensive conceptual framework, including research questions, goal, context, the researcher, and theories. From that, the study made some necessary changes that best suited this study.

It was initiated with the topic selection of Halal certification, and Halal Executives were chosen to be explored. From the determined topic, the study conducted a literature review process to discover gaps and problems in the study. The study recognised relevant problems of the study, alongside stating the gaps about the subject matter derived from the literature process. The study proceeds by identifying the purpose of the study to ensure that the study has a focus throughout the whole execution. From identifying the purpose, the study continued by developing research questions. The development of research questions is substantial as it will guide the study's worldview, which elements should be addressed and how to address them.

From the research questions, the study has identified best-fitting theories as the “lens” of the study based on the available variables and constructs. Herzberg's Two-factor

Theory and proposition of the Halal Food Model by Riaz and Chaudry have been selected as they provide an adequate worldview of the subject matter, gleaned from the statement of purpose and research questions established. This study will be conducted qualitatively, so relying entirely upon the theories is insufficient. The study attempts to understand and interpret the Halal certification system and Halal Executives' industry experience. Hence, the study is required to develop a conceptual framework as guidance. Thus, the adaptation of these two theories in the study is necessary. Procured from the theories, the study identified essential variables to be utilised as guidance for the study. These variables were then restructured in a framework manner to be a guiding foundation of the study in collecting the data. This guiding foundation is labelled as the conceptual framework of the study. Figure 4. illustrates the process undergone by the study in developing its conceptual framework.

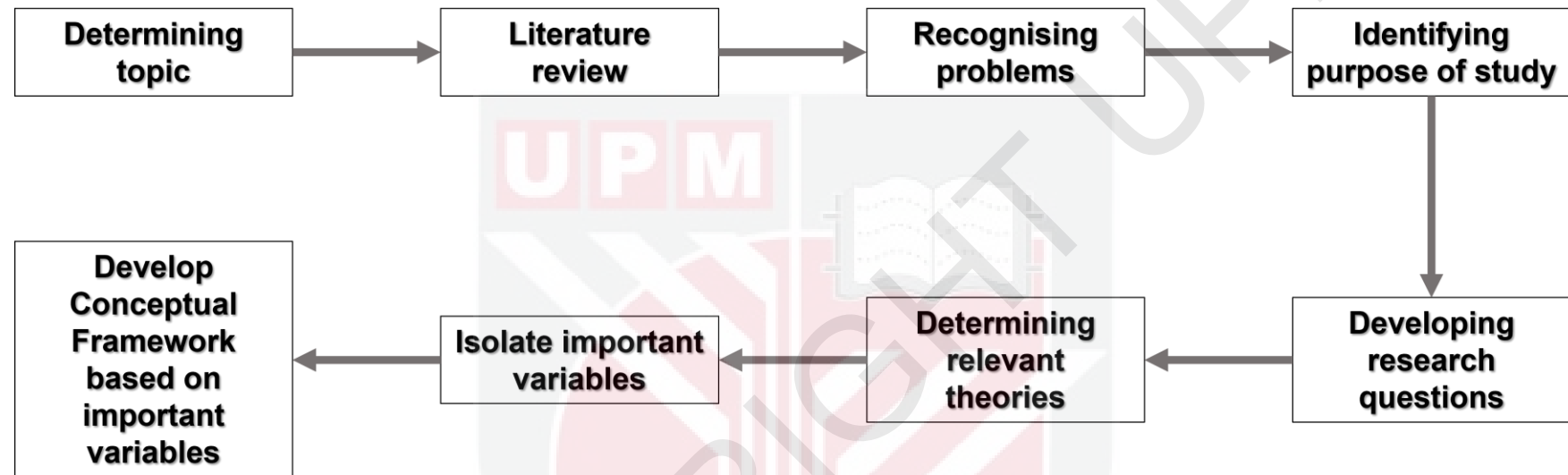


Figure 4 : Process Flow of Developing the Conceptual Framework for Halal Certification and Halal Executive Study

These two theories alone are insufficient to aid in understanding the whole phenomenon. Limitations of both theories are also considered in developing the study's guiding foundation. Both theories do not cover elements such as knowledge (in this context, academic requirement) and pre-requisite skillsets. It is important to investigate these elements as the position of Halal Executives requires distinctive knowledge and skill sets to ensure that the products and services produced by the industry comply with Sharia law.

For instance, Halal Executives might encounter difficulties requiring knowledge of food science and *fiqh Istihalah*, as well as the transformation and conversion of substances to other materials (Kashim et al., 2018) upon completing their tasks. With these limitations, the study should prepare itself to manage the whole worldview of the subject matter. It should be open to any possibilities relating to this element during data collection. Apart from that, neither theory covers other elements of the food industry, such as logistics, supply chain management, training, and the career development of executives.

Based on the process flow of conceptual framework development, whilst considering all elements covered in the study's theoretical foundation and its limitations, a conceptual framework of the study is adequately established. Figure 5 illustrates the conceptual framework of this study.

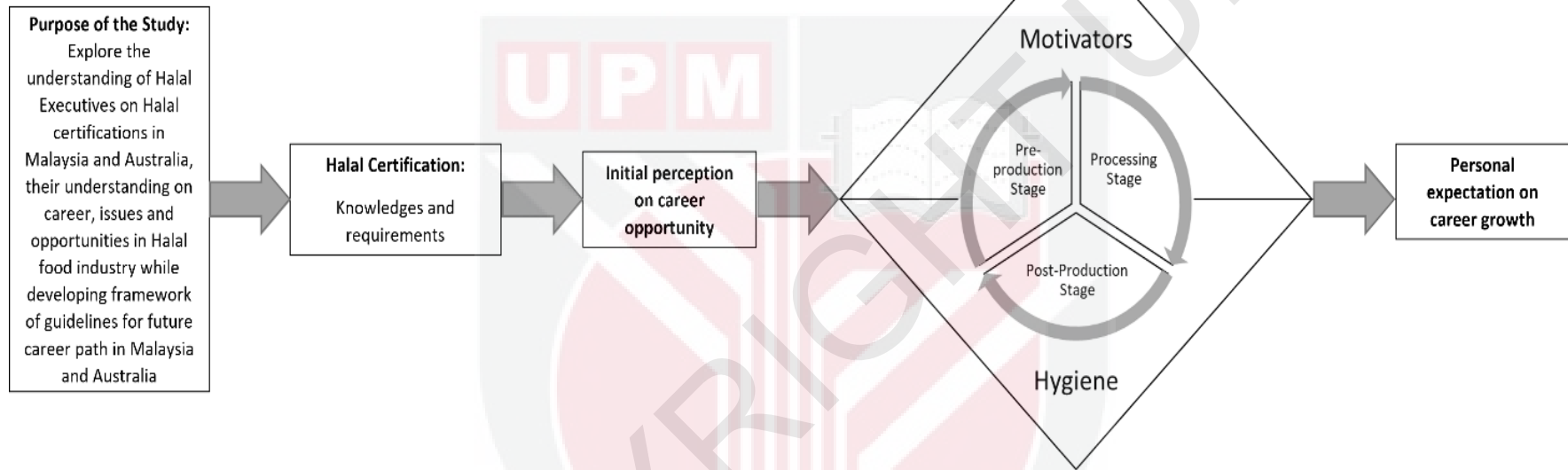


Figure 5 : Conceptual Framework of Halal Executives' Career Growth

According to the conceptual framework illustrated above, initially, the conceptual framework is derived from the purpose of the study as the first phase of the framework, which is to explore the understanding of Halal Executives on Halal certifications in Malaysia and Australia, their understanding of career, issues, and opportunities in the food industry. The grey arrows represent the framework's steps, as one phase should be completed beforehand to proceed to the next phase. As Halal Executive positions are created initially to aid in acquiring Halal certification (be it as part of the certification requirement or as based on their expertise on the matter of Halal), their knowledge of the certification itself should be explored, along with the requirements and qualifications in best fitting the position in the initial period of the hiring process. This circumstance will be discovered within the second phase of the framework.

The framework's third phase will focus on their initial perceptions of career opportunities in the food industry, especially during the initial period of hiring or involvement in the industry. This perception will then be followed by an exploration of the experience during the working process. This phase is where the Two Factor Theory and Halal Food Model come about throughout the Pre-Production Stage, Processing Stage, and Post-Production Stage, as well as the kind of challenges and opportunities Halal Executives face in conducting daily tasks related to their position. Motivator and Hygiene factors will be assessed during this stage. These two factors are designed within a diamond shape as they will contribute to the satisfaction or dissatisfaction of these Halal Executives. The upward angle of the diamond represents the executives' satisfaction, while the downward angle represents dissatisfaction. The entire production process is placed in a third pie chart to represent the continuity of the work industry. The third pie chart of the production process is then placed within

the diamond shape to represent the experience and perception of these executives derived from motivator and hygiene factors.

The whole framework will end with the personal expectation of career growth. This element will be explored in the final phase of the framework after the discovery of the Halal Executives' experiences within the workplace while holding their position in the food industry. It is safe to conclude that this phase will be compared with the third phase of the framework (perception of career opportunity); do they still have the same perception and expectation of career growth, or has it changed after going through the whole work within the industry? By completing this framework, it is hoped that the study will achieve the purpose of the study and the expected outcome.

2.10 Summary of the Chapter

This chapter provided a comprehensive view of the literature contributing to the study. The chapter begins by narrating the global Halal market, whereby the Halal market continues to boom around the globe in many countries. The COVID-19 pandemic worldwide in 2019-2021 did not impact the market as statistically; the Halal food market was able to sustain itself astonishingly and is expected to grow post-pandemic. This chapter has also provided a brief understanding of the Halal certification system in Malaysia and Australia and how these two countries apply two distinctive systems. Malaysia has a more centralised Halal certification system, while Australia upholds a decentralised system. The literature reviewed in the study was related to global Halal certification and its issues. Literature on Halal Executives' positions was also examined to understand the subject matter better. Prominent research on these two subjects was adequately analysed and discussed in this chapter, and this contributed

to the research gap. The underpinning theory of the study, the Two Factor Theory by Herzberg, and the Halal Food Model by Riaz and Chaudry are also discussed extensively in this chapter. The placement of these two theory models merely acted as a ‘lens’ to give a brief understanding of the case. These theories were then utilised in the development of the conceptual framework of the study, whereby the elements of the Two Factor Theory and Halal Food Model were combined and redesigned to best suit the study. In conclusion, exploring the literature and theories aims to examine the gaps within the literature and provide a framework to guide understanding of the whole study.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Chapter Overview

This chapter explains the study's research methodology for analysing the Halal certification system and Halal Executives' experience in the food industry in Malaysia and Australia. This chapter explains the philosophical paradigm of the study, approaches of the study, strategies chosen for the study, and the methodological aspects of the study, followed by techniques and procedures of samplings. The unit of analysis and its criteria have been predetermined for data collection and will be explained further in this chapter. Upon the completion of data collection explanations, data analysis procedures and tools will also be disclosed, and all procedural measures will be explained further. The positionality statement of the researcher will also be inculcated in this chapter to help readers understand the researcher's standpoint within the context of the study in investigating the subject matter. Ethical considerations about this research will be highlighted as they will aid in the data's validity and reliability. This chapter will also cover procedural data management to ensure the data is secured interminably. Finally, the chapter ends with an explanation of the validity and reliability of the data and the findings related to the study. It is hoped that by approaching the end of the chapter, readers will be equipped with a comprehensive understanding of the study's methodological aspect.

3.2 Research Paradigm

Fundamentally, a study needs to identify its philosophical paradigm before deciding on its methodological implementation. Scholars generally explain that in conducting

scientific research, one has to define a fundamental belief system and approach to relevant theories before conducting comprehensive research, which addresses the following matters in consequential manners: ontology, epistemology, methodology, and method (Rehman & Alharthi, 2016). This study enforces the following ontological and epistemological beliefs, followed by its approach to the theories explained in Chapter 2.

3.2.1 Ontology

Subjectivist ontological beliefs that entities are made up of speech and that existent or socially created reality could only be studied through social constructs such as awareness, experience, and language (Myers, 2008). Based on the argument above, ontologically, the study believes that there are multiple realities concerning the positions of Halal Executives. To comprehend these positions, an adaptation of the relativism ontological stance is deemed most suitable. The experience of Halal Executives is socially constructed and subjective, highly relying on the individuals, knowledge, experience, organisation, location, community and even country.

3.2.2 Epistemology

Meanwhile, epistemologically, the study revolves around interpreting the multiple realities that exist around these positions. It examines the nature and scope of knowledge surrounding these multiple realities within this position. This study is built on interpretivist epistemology, which focuses on understanding the subjective realities and meanings of Halal Executives in the food industry. Interpretivism implies that knowledge is built through social interactions and is intricately intertwined and deeply rooted in context.

The discovery of Halal Executives' experience within the food industry can only be made by interpreting their perceptions and beliefs within multiple realities, utilising ontological assumptions. The study approached the executives personally to understand the reality they face to gain access to their perceptions and beliefs. Multiple approaches of these executives created access to multiple realities experienced by these executives. Multiple evidence of these realities was reported in themes primarily derived from the actual words of these executives. Creswell and Poth (2018) narrated how ontological problems can be observed through different realities, and these realities will emerge from different perspectives as themes developed in the findings.

3.2.3 Approach to Theory Development

Based on the relativism and interpretivism discussed above, the study establishes its methodological approach, which best reflects its ontology and epistemology. The adaptation of Saunders's Research Onion Model helps the study explore its methodological approach, which is derived from its ontology and epistemology stances. Saunders et al. (2011) discussed at least three distinctive measures in approaching the theory development in a scientific study: deductive, inductive, and abductive. While deductive is mainly used to test the existing theory and abductive lies in between induction or deduction of the theory, this study, however, aims to execute qualitatively, inculcated an inductive approach.

The inductive approach is chosen mainly because of the existing theory's lack of theory or inadequacy in explaining a phenomenon (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). In the inductive approach, a study usually starts with an observation or other data collection, proceeding to the description and data analysis, which later will be developed into a

theory (Melnikovas, 2018). Although initially the Two Factor Theory and Halal Food Model were referred to, these two theories acted merely as a lens to give a broad understanding of the phenomenon of Halal Executives' position and Halal certification. Not only will it not be tested in the study, but the study was receptive and accepting of all additional findings along the research process. Apart from that, the framework of guidelines for the future career growth of Halal Executives is developed at the end of the study. Hence, a deduction of a theory does not fit the whole purpose of the study.

3.3 Research Design Overview

The methodology of a study involves a set of beliefs and philosophical assumptions that impact how the research topics are understood and how research methodologies are chosen (Melnikovas, 2018) which has been previously explained. A study should consider various facets, especially data collection methods. As this study aims to be conducted qualitatively, generated from the Research Onion Model (Saunders et al., 2011), the study will unfold the methodological aspect by using the onion layers suggested by these scholars. Saunders et al. (2011) explained that there are six different layers of the onion and how each layer carries a distinct role and eventually narrowed down to data collection and analysis, which is the philosophy of the study, approach chosen, strategy of the study, methodological choices, time horizons and techniques and procedures of the study. Nevertheless, the adaptation of this model is according to the suitability of this study.

3.3.1 Methodological Choice: Qualitative Study

Modern researchers more profoundly conduct multi-method or mixed-method studies as it is believed that collecting data from several sources makes logical sense using various approaches to build an effective design (Almalki, 2016). Notwithstanding, for this study, based on the philosophical aspect of the study (which is interpretivism) and approach to the theory development (via inductive approach), it only makes sense that the study is conducted qualitatively. Qualitative studies rely heavily on conversations and stories that people share with researchers, focusing more on the social world than nature (Yin, 2009). As this study explored the experience of Halal Executives in the food industry, the study dealt with the subjective experience of these executives, and the understanding and experience may vary depending on the time and setting (Dew, 2007).

Qualitative studies should be more changeable and adaptable in their approach than quantitative methods (Yin, 2009). The qualitative method was chosen for this study as it did not test any theory (by being entirely inductive). In contrast, the nature of the study leans towards an interpretive view of the subject matter. To unfold the future career growth of Halal Executives, the experience and perception of relevant stakeholders are obligatory as the discovery will contribute to the relevancy of these positions to grow even further, optimistically, to more critical positions in the industry. This approach's fluidity and flexibility will aid in gaining more insights from the samples. Some insights, primarily intangible experience, go beyond numbers and paperwork.

3.3.2 Time Horizon of the Study: Cross-Sectional

Acquiring data for qualitative study is time-consuming. It requires immense communication and observation as its mission is to interpret the subject matter. Saunders (2011) narrated that there are at least two types of time horizons in acquiring data: longitudinal and cross-sectional. Longitudinal data collection is technically associated with studies that require a lengthy observation, typically related to changes in the subject matter over time (Corden & Millar, 2007). On the other hand, cross-sectional studies normally may be conducted on subject matters that are not time-associated (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). As this study is an attempt to pursue the status quo interpretation of Halal certification and Halal Executives' experience in food industries and it has no correlation to timely changes of the subject matter, this study approached the data collection in a cross-sectional manner.

The informants were approached simultaneously to acquire the data. By doing so, the study will be able to constantly compare the findings of the data gathered from the informants during the thematic analysis process via a constant comparative approach. As this study will be executed within two distinctive settings, it acquired the data within seven months, from June 2022 until January 2023, as communication with fellow informants highly relied on their availability and the researcher's mobility from Malaysia to Australia. Communication with Malaysian informants was executed from June 2022 until October 2022, whereas communication with Australian informants was carried through from November 2022 until January 2023.

3.3.3 Strategies for Acquiring Data: Case Study Approach

Acquiring data in qualitative studies is commonly practised as it is more flexible and fluid, with no grounded structure, as it cherishes the inductive approach of the study. In this study, however, a strategy for collecting data was fostered as it has given the study more direction while collecting data. Based on the context of the research, the study installed a case study approach as it was an effort of the empirical inquest that explores a contemporary phenomenon (in this context: it is referred to as the ‘case’) within its authentic context, especially when the dividing line between the phenomenon and the context is not assuredly visible (Merriam & Tisdale, 2016). Creswell and Poth (2018) divided case studies into three segments: single instrumental case study, multiple or collective case study and intrinsic case study.

3.3.3.1 Multiple Case Study Approach

This study employed a multiple case study strategy as it was conducted in two different settings, Malaysia, and Australia. The study provides analytic procedures for detailing each case description (Creswell & Poth, 2018) that best reflect Halal Executive’s’ experience in both settings. Nevertheless, these multiple case study settings were not to compare these two settings but rather to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the subject matter in various settings. Although there were some dissimilarities in the data gathered, most of the data collected from both settings shared more prominent similarities. By having two different settings as cases, it provided richer data. These data and findings were treated as the same without having them collated with each other.

Based on the premises narrated above, the Halal food industry in Malaysia was treated as one case, and another was the Halal food industry in Australia. Case sampling in Malaysia was situated around Kuala Lumpur, Selangor, Negeri Sembilan, Melaka and Johor area as the Halal food industry is profoundly established around central and southern regions of peninsular Malaysia (due to the high population of these areas with better facilities and accessibilities compared to other regions). Besides, the central office of the Halal certification body of Malaysia, JAKIM, is within reach of this area, which should be the study's focus point.

Case sampling in Australia was carried out around the whole country. Initially, the study focused on the New South Wales (NSW) region, particularly Sydney and its surrounding areas. The sampling was later expanded to other regions across the country due to the challenges of engaging with Halal food manufacturers, given their limited presence in Australia. Nevertheless, despite these efforts to engage as many companies as possible within different regions of the country, only companies located in New South Wales have finally accepted the interview invitations disseminated by the study. Only a limited number of manufacturers agreed to participate in this study. While the study does not aim to quantify the sample size, aligning with its initial objectives, it is more pragmatic to conduct research within this specific region, as accessibility to this sector presents a strategic advantage.

The present study is best suited to a multiple case study approach as outlined by Creswell and Poth (2018), rather than methodologies such as comparative analysis (Herzfeld, 2001; Van der Veer, 2016), and multi-sited ethnography (Marcus, 2012). The study does not seek to engage in a structured comparison between Malaysia and

Australia but instead aims to explore and explain the significance of the Halal Executive role within the food industry. As such, a comparative methodology is not appropriate, as it is primarily designed to systematically evaluate cultural, social, or institutional differences across multiple settings.

Likewise, multi-sited ethnography, which follows people, ideas, or objects across distinct locations to understand transnational networks, does not align with the study's objectives, as the study does not track the movement of Halal Executives but rather investigates their roles within distinct industry contexts. Furthermore, the framework of *Of What is This a Case?* (Lund, 2014) is focused on defining and theorising case selection in qualitative research, which is not the primary concern of this study. Instead, Creswell and Poth's (2018) multiple case study approach provides a suitable methodological framework, as it enables an in-depth exploration of the experiences and career trajectories of Halal Executives in different settings while maintaining the flexibility necessary for qualitative inquiry. This approach ensures that the study effectively captures the complexities of the Halal Executive profession and its implications within the food industries of Malaysia and Australia.

3.3.4 In-Depth Interviews

This present study, delving into a topic that has not received much attention from past researchers, has chosen to collaborate with the primary information source, the Halal Executives, to gain a deeper understanding of their role within the food industry. As the first unit of analysis, the study used semi-structured interviews to gain insights from these executives. The study derived the interview questions from the two theories

explained in Chapter 2, as they directly reflected the research purpose (as narrated in Chapter 1).

However, given the emerging nature of this topic within the food industry, the study recognises that relying solely on a structured interview that focuses on the theories will not be sufficient. The study has been probing and exploring other relevant topics that arose during the interview sessions. Hence, adopting semi-structured interviews best reflects its mission to understand the subject matter deeply.

3.3.4.1 Informants Criteria

Establishing informants' criteria is pivotal, as the reliability and validity of the data could be tarnished by the inability to pick righteous informants. The study has pre-determined exclusive criteria for the informants of the study. Any candidates who did not fit the criteria shall not be listed in the informant list. For this study, two units of analysis have been identified as suitable for examination in terms of fitting the Halal certification and Halal Executives study. The first unit of analysis for this study is the Halal Executives themselves, and the second unit is the official documents published by the Malaysian and Australian governments as guidelines for Halal food manufacturing businesses. For Halal Executives in Malaysia or Australia, the informants hold an official position as Halal Executive or at least any other executive-level position that has performed Halal-related tasks with more than two years of experience in the food industry. In Malaysia, the study recruited official Halal Executives as informants. This position is widely employed and accessible within the industry due to Halal certification requirements by the government agency, JAKIM. Contradictory, the criteria were not as rigid in Australia as they did not possess such a

requirement in the country. Engagement with the informants varied. Some informants were engaged through gatekeepers, and others were engaged by direct email to the companies. The remaining informants were engaged through the Halal Executive Facebook community group page named *Job Vacancy in Halal Food Industry*.

To ensure that the study engaged with the most appropriate informants, a series of background verification measures were implemented in addition to the pre-established selection criteria. Pre-interview sessions were conducted to assess the informants' suitability, during which they were asked to provide details such as their job title, company name, nature of business, Halal Executive training certification (for Malaysian executives only), their company's Halal certification status, and their employment status. These measures were undertaken to ensure that only eligible and relevant informants were interviewed, thereby enhancing the reliability and validity of the data collected.

3.3.4.2 Development of Interview Questions and Protocol

To direct the interview sessions towards achieving the study's aim, it is crucial to formulate the interview questions and protocol. While an interview protocol is important, the researcher must also be responsive and actively contribute to the refinement of the interview questions (Dunwoodie et al., 2023). The present study formulated the interview questions by following a series of procedures to specifically address the issues highlighted in the study. First, the study derived the interview questions from the research questions discussed in Chapter 1. To ensure that the interview questions directly address the research issues, this study developed the questions by evaluating two theories that form its basis: Herzberg's two-factor theory

and the Halal food model. However, given the novelty of this issue in the academic field, the study did not solely rely on theoretical frameworks, as neither theory addressed many crucial elements surrounding the position of Halal Executives. Hence, the study produced a conceptual framework (see Chapter 2), which has served as the study's guide, especially in developing interview questions. Subsequently, the study generated 17 prospective interview questions to effectively address the issues and achieve the research purpose, as detailed in the appendix. It is important to note that this study utilised semi-structured interview sessions, which increased the likelihood of asking probing questions depending on the responses provided by the informants. As a result, new supplementary questions surfaced during the session, prompting the elimination of others.

This study adapted Rabionet's (2011) seven-phase interview framework. These steps include selecting the type of interview to conduct, formulating the ethical guidelines, developing the interview process (establishing rapport and formulating probing questions), carrying out and documenting the interview, conducting an analysis and summarising the interview, and then reporting the findings (Rabionet, 2011). However, the conduct of the interview sessions was subjective, contingent upon the rapport established with the informants and their level of accessibility. Some informants were able to openly voice their opinions on the subjects, while others were more guarded. The study addressed these issues by asking probing questions and setting boundaries as needed.

3.3.5 Document Analysis

The second unit of analysis was the official documents published by the governments in Malaysia and Australia. In Malaysia, two primary documents established by the local government are utilised as guidance for applying Halal certifications in Malaysia, typically referred by any food manufacturers, locally and internationally, to acquire Malaysia's JAKIM Halal certification. These documents are the primary reference for Halal program facilitations in the respective countries. The documents are Manual Prosedur Persijilan Halal Malaysia – Domestik (or, in English, Malaysian Halal Certification Procedure Manual – Domestic, MPPHM 2020) and Sistem Pengurusan Halal Malaysia (or, in English, named Malaysian Halal Management System, MHMS 2020). These documents are acquired through JAKIM's official Halal website: www.Halal.gov.my.

Representing Australia's official document, Approved Arrangement Guidelines for the Australian Government Authorised Halal Program – Approved Islamic Organisations (AAG-AIO 2022) was selected as another unit of analysis. This document can be retrieved from the Department of Agriculture Fisheries and Forestry, Australian Government's official website: www.agriculture.gov.au. Table 4 below illustrates the unit of analysis for the document analysis method.

Table 4 : Documents for Halal Executives' Career Growth Study

Document Analysed	Source	Country
Manual Prosedur Persijilan Halal Malaysia – Domestik (MPPHM 2020)	JAKIM's Halal Official Website www.Halal.gov.my	Malaysia
Sistem Pengurusan Halal Malaysia (MHMS 2020).	JAKIM's Halal Official Website www.Halal.gov.my	Malaysia
Approved Arrangement Guidelines for The Australian Government Authorised Halal Program – Approved Islamic Organisations (AAG-AIO 2022)	The Department of Agriculture Fisheries and Forestry, Australian Government's Official Website: www.agriculture.gov.au	Australia

3.3.6 Sampling Techniques

The sampling technique in a qualitative study is not as tedious as quantitative study as the finding of a quantitative study to represent the population, with the aim of generalizability of the findings as the critical indicator. In contrast, qualitative study typically deeply examines a phenomenon (Gill, 2020). Customarily, the qualitative study was not subject to pre-establishing sample size, at least to the saturation point. However, present days show that qualitative studies are sometimes expected to pre-establish their sample size for distinct reasons, such as human ethical research review or ethics committees, grant proposals or funding reports to sponsoring agencies (Young & Case, 2019). This study, however, did not specify any number of informants needed to achieve by the end of the research. Initially, the study intended to interview at least 20 informants from Malaysia and Australia to understand their career growth in the Halal food industry. However, the study halted at 14. This number is determined solely by the saturation of the data; it describes the extent to which fresh data duplicates what was previously presented, also known as data redundancy or replication (Fusch & Ness, 2015; Sebele-Mpofu, 2020).

Sebele-Mpofu (2020) highlighted in their study several prominent qualitative scholars' recommendations on the study's sample size and the rationale behind those recommendations. However, the study still believes that pre-determinant of sample size may inculcate limitations or create an overwhelming circumstance if the sample size is too small or too plentiful even though the data saturation is achieved; only the researcher has the information on only what they have discovered (Tran et al., 2017; Guest et al., 2020).

Consequently, in this case, two sampling techniques were employed to collect data: purposive and snowballing data collection techniques. Purposive sampling, also commonly known as purposeful sampling, is a technique whereby the study chooses well-educated informants about the subject matter or the examined phenomenon (Polit & Beck, 2017; Gill, 2020). As the pre-determined criteria were officially established, purposive sampling came in handy as an informant who fits the criteria is eligible to be part of the samplings. Purposive sampling was adopted mainly among informants from the Facebook community page and official companies' emails. Their criteria were assessed before the interview to ensure they were suited for the study. The study adopted snowball techniques for this study, mainly from the recommendation of the existing informants and gatekeepers based on the criteria established provided the willingness of the informants to accommodate the study (Polit & Beck, 2017; Gill, 2020).

Identifying informants specifically in Australia was challenging as most Halal food manufacturers hesitated to be part of the study for various reasons such as resource constraints, classified information, intellectual property and unwillingness to share

information on Halal. Hence, that was the main reason the sampling extended to the whole country instead of focusing on one region, compared to Malaysia. The interview invitations disseminated cover a wide range of Halal-certified product companies, including Halal meat suppliers and manufacturers and poultry products. Despite concerted efforts to engage a diverse range of Halal-certified producers, including those within the meat and poultry sectors, participation in interviews was ultimately confined to representatives of the Halal food industry. This outcome highlights a notable limitation in the study's methodological scope, suggesting potential barriers to broader sectoral engagement or disparities in stakeholder prioritisation of certification visibility.

Combining these two techniques was vital as the number of informants was continuously added until data saturation was achieved. Typically, Halal Executives have built unofficial connections amongst colleagues in the same position across the country's food industry. These connections are typically built during Halal Executives' training programs organised by JAKIM or any other certified Halal training providers in the country or based on various other reasons, such as similar tertiary educational backgrounds. A gatekeeper also suggested the Facebook community page mentioned previously. Hence, adopting both sampling techniques was advantageous to this study.

3.3.7 Data Collection Techniques

Qualitative data comprises actual quotations from individuals on their experience, perceptions, knowledge, and beliefs acquired from interviews and comprehensive explanations of individuals' affairs, attitudes, and attributes recorded in observations

and extracted from a passage from various kinds of documents (Patto, 2015; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Qualitative studies are widely known for data collection through the abovementioned methods. There is no exception to this study; the study adopted two data collection methods: private interview sessions and document analysis.

By having two different units of analysis as informants of this study, both units of analysis were assessed through different methods. The study utilised a private conversation for the interview session to generate a more insightful meaning of Halal certification data and Halal Executives' positions in the industry. The study employed semi-structured interview sessions to allow for flexible questioning (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016), particularly in obtaining specific data from informants regarding their perceptions and experiences of the phenomenon or subject matter. Revisit interview sessions were done (mainly through email and WhatsApp messenger) as some of the data acquired in the initial stage needs further clarification.

Document analysis is implemented to analyse the information available in the documents. The document analysis acted as secondary information compared to the semi-structured interview session. The interview was the primary source of data. Information shared by the informants was compared with the information available in the documents. Ironically, the data the informants shared was more remarkable, exhaustive, and informative than the information in the documents, which will be explained extensively in Chapter 4.

The COVID-19 pandemic has created a whole new era of digitalisation, especially in academia. Many modern-era studies have begun to fully utilise modern technologies,

especially regarding data collection and analysis. This study has not ruled out the utilisation of modern technological interview applications for interviewing purposes. With various video, audio, chat functions, screen sharing and video recording functions, applications such as Zoom (Lobe et al., 2020) were utilised mainly when mobility and location occur. A set of interview questions derived from the Interview Protocol (IP) and Consent and Anonymity Form (CAF) was disseminated before the interview in such a way that the informants could brainstorm experiences that were potentially sharable to the study beforehand and provide assurance to them on their anonymity in the study. Even with the utilisation of the application, these two documents were disseminated quickly using email or any preferred communication tools of the informants.

The employment of this application has eased the study's transcription efforts. *Zoom* application, for instance, instils a distinctive feature that offers simultaneous transcription of the whole conversation of interviews (Lobe et al., 2020). With this function and video recording function in the application, the study could quickly revisit the whole conversation-transcription session when necessary if recommunication with informants is not required. This was the primary reason why the interview sessions were conducted primarily via the *Zoom* application.

3.3.8 Data Analysis Strategy

Data acquired from interview sessions were technically raw and must undergo a data analysis before presenting findings. In qualitative studies, various approaches are used to analyse the data. Constant comparative analysis, content analysis, thematic analysis, fundamental interpretive analysis, discourse analysis, template analysis (Lester et al.,

2020) and other types of analysis are commonly found within the qualitative approach. For this study, as the data were collected through interview sessions and later transcribed verbatim (mostly manually while some were with the assistance of a transcribing application), the data underwent a thematic analysis procedure.

Thematic analysis is an umbrella term with various approaches to identifying patterns and similarities across qualitative data sets (Braun et al., 2019). Lester et al. (2020) suggested several steps in analysing data through thematic analysis, which, throughout this study, was adjusted accordingly. Firstly, the data was prepared and organised for analysis. In this step, the data is organised chronologically, making it more accessible for revisitation. Through this stage, the data has been fully transcribed verbatim, and the recorded audio/video is ready along with the transcription version.

The next phase is the familiarity with the data. The data has been completely familiarised, organised, and transcribed. During this stage, the study started to recall any data easily and their placement within the transcription or the recordings. The study familiarised with the data and its organisation as it acquired abundant data and could be overwhelmed by circumstances that may jeopardise the entire analysis process; thus, it was circumvented immediately.

Subsequently, the familiarised data was followed by memoing. The memoing process is a process of reflecting the whole data collection process through the data that we have in hand. They are designed to grasp the emergent understanding and signify potential biases that could influence the data's interpretation processes (Lester et al., 2020). Through this process, the study began coding the data concerning the study.

With the emergent data analysis applications, the memos noted by the study have easily attached and linked directly to the primary data.

The collected data was processed by coding them according to the information/ idea relevant to answering the research questions. Coding is a process of segmenting data into small categories of information and seeking proof of the code from various databases used in a study, which will later be labelled to the code (Creswell & Poth, 2018). In actuality, the data is coded to discover any relevant evidence to answer the study's research questions. During this course, the study coded the data entirely before preparing the data to find similarities. CoCaT, the coding, category, and themes process is employed once data similarities are discovered, whereby similar codes are gathered into a category, and a group of the same category is compartmentalised in themes. By this stage, the study discovered themes that addressed the research questions.

Apart from utilising technological data collection tools for recording and transcribing, the study also utilised the *Atlas.ti* software during this course of analysing the data. The utilisation of *Atlas.ti* version 22 has increased the transparency of a study and make it duplicable (Hwang, 2008). Thus, with this tool's assistance, memoing, coding, categorising, and theme construction were more efficient as the tool provides comprehensive features for qualitative data analytics. Figure 6 illustrates the study's methodological aspects on the Halal certification system and Halal Executives' experience in Malaysia's and Australia's food industry derived from Saunder's Research Onion Model.

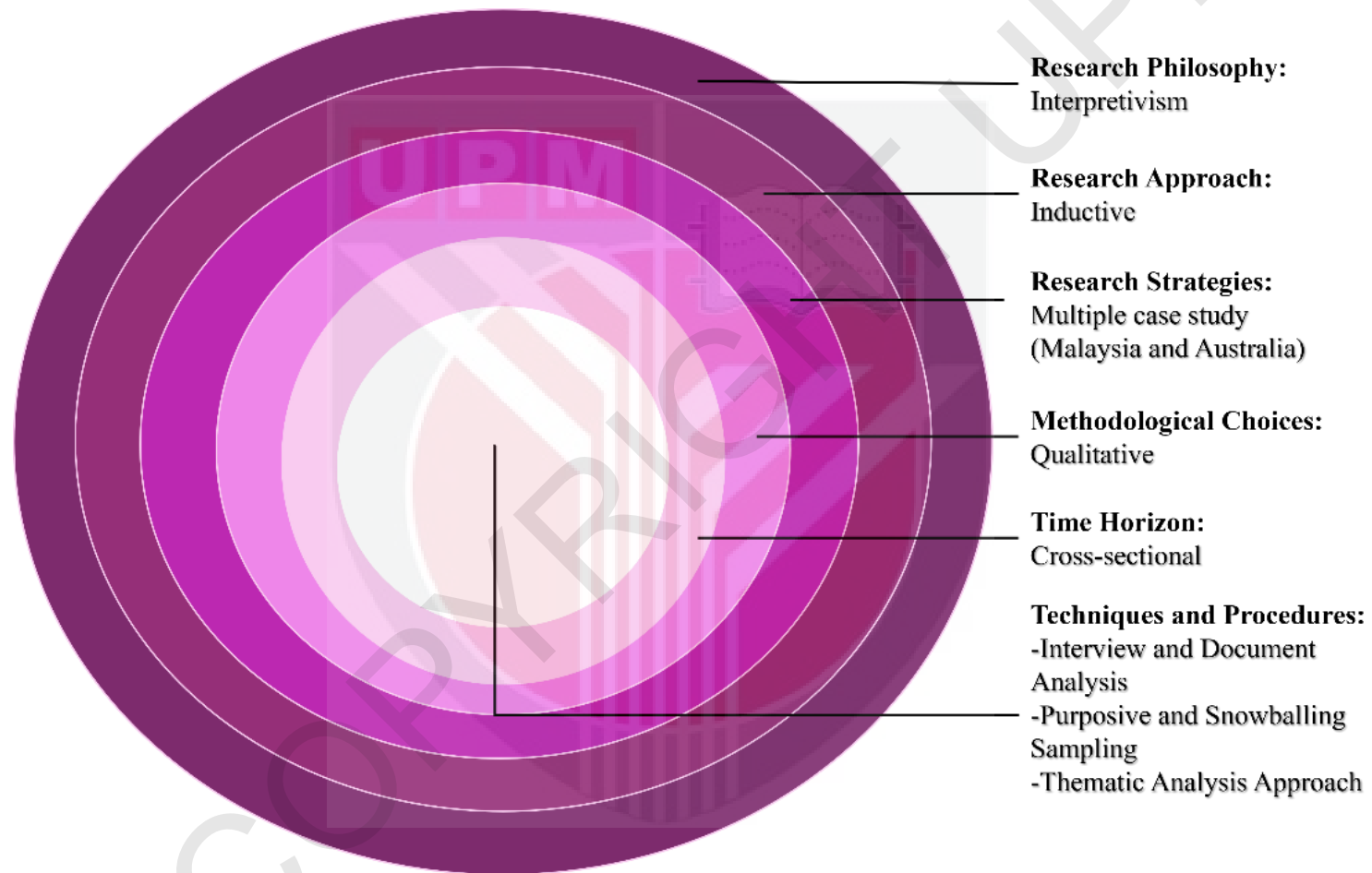


Figure 6 : Research Onion Model for Halal Executives' Career Growth Study

3.4 Pilot Study and Gatekeepers

Before the actual data collection, the study began communicating with potential informants through pilot studies to get preliminary information regarding the subject matter and observe which method and medium best suited all informants. Due to mobility and time constraints, most informants favoured virtual interviews over physical ones. Aligning the schedule of potential informants for interview sessions will be challenging if the study requires the informants to commute and station in one place. A follow-up session (member checking) was needed on certain occasions for verification purposes. Hence, to avoid these perplexities, the interviews were conducted virtually with the consent of all informants.

Communication with the potential informants through pilot studies has somewhat contributed to the direction of the study. Some information shared by the potential informants was in line with the narrative discovered in the literature review processes, and some were contradictory. Indeed, the study has moulded its direction based on the literature review findings yet indirectly influenced by the information they shared. The study decided to pursue its own direction based on the information gathered from the pilot studies. This scenario shows that communication with potential informants prior to the data collection is substantial as it has somewhat influenced the study's narrative and direction.

Besides, the study has consulted with gatekeepers to find the best-suited informants for the study. Gatekeepers are persons in an organisation with the right to deny access to people or situations for research reasons' (De Laine et al., 2000). The study recognises that the conventional definition of gatekeepers primarily refers to

individuals or entities that regulate access to resources or “benefits” valued by their “clients” (Corra & Willer, 2002). This concept is particularly relevant to Malaysia’s JAKIM and certified Halal bodies in Australia. However, as the study did not have direct access to these entities, alternative strategies were employed to engage with potential informants.

In this study, however, the gatekeepers were not necessarily the authority or the superior positions of the Halal Executives. Instead, they were individuals with direct access to these informants. Gatekeeper for Halal Executives in Malaysia was an alumnus from the same undergraduate institution as the researcher. The researcher did not have direct access to these executives. Hence, the connection through this gatekeeper was crucial to initiate this study. This gatekeeper was an employee, to be exact, a Halal Executive at one of the world-renowned glove supplies in Malaysia. As they do not fit the study’s criteria, the researcher acquired their assistance to connect with other Halal Executives in the food industry. Despite working in different industries, some of the Halal Executives built a good rapport with each other through professional associations and groups, especially those who had undergone similar Halal training sessions before embarking on the industries. Hence, based on the criteria prepared by the study, this gatekeeper liaised with potential informants of the study. They requested the informants’ permission to connect with the study, and thankfully, they willingly participated.

3.5 Positionality of the Researcher: Relationship with Subject Matter and Informants

Compared to quantitative studies which adopt numerical evidence as part of the instrumental in collecting data, qualitative scholars emphasise the functionality of researchers as the main instrument in qualitative studies (Creswell, 2008; Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). As the main instrument of the study, the researchers must manage themselves so that any collected data, analysis of data, interpretation of data and findings presented by a qualitative study are valid and reliable. Hence, despite having a clear direction for the study, the researcher's positionality is still an element to ponder, ensuring all elements of bias and presumption could be avoidable or justifiable. Chiseri-Strater (1996) highlighted that subjective-contextual factors such as personal life involvement and the history of a researcher could imply a contributing factor in positioning himself in the research.

In this case, the researcher does not possess any first-hand experience regarding the Halal certification system and Halal Executives' position in the food industry, whether in Malaysia or Australia. Nonetheless, the researcher has relatable connections with the subject matter due to his educational background. Before proposing the study, the researcher managed to enact pilot study sessions (preliminary data collection) with several Halal Executives in Malaysia to acquire brief insight into their work nature and their challenges. The gatekeepers and the pilot study samples possess an educational relationship with the researcher due to the similarity in educational background.

Through these preliminary data collection sessions, the researcher built professional rapport with these Halal Executives, who could be considered acquaintances to him. Thus, the method of communication and interactions amongst these practitioners may be distinctive compared to the other informants. Although this could be presumptions that may lead to biases (during the course, the researcher has yet to collect the actual data with other informants such as other Halal Executives, some of the questions/discussions were also not based on literature review and through a lens of relevant theories) and the relationship that he possessed with these Halal Executives may influence the quality of the data, the researcher should be able to bracket himself during data collection processes so that the amassed data will be reliable and valid.

3.5.1 Managing Presumptions and Biasness

Barry et al. (1999) stressed self-awareness among researchers because they have influenced the direction of the research toward the informants, what area to research, framing the questions, and probing answers. Hence, biases could be conspicuous and should be managed in the earlier stage. In this exploration of Halal Executives' experience, as discussed earlier, presumptions occurred during the preliminary data collection sessions with a couple of Halal Executives, which may lead to biases during the actual data collection amongst other informants.

The word 'presumption' is used in this context as the researcher was technically partially convinced by the narrations shared during the preliminary data collection sessions with Halal Executives before the study. However, it could be the reverse as those were considered informal and technically raw preliminary data, which is debatable; undoubtedly, it should be managed beforehand. Reflexivity is crucial

because data gathered from the informants should be treated from a fresh perspective, without any biases and judgment. Fook (1999) described reflexivity as the “ability to position oneself in the setting, to understand, and factor in, how and what he is observing is influenced by his way of seeing things, and how his very presence and attitude of the study influence the situation in which he is searching”. Conceding to the presence of these presumptions is an act of reflexivity, which has helped the researcher to manage these presumptions in the earlier stage.

Thus, throughout this entire process of reflexivity, the researcher asked several questions germane to his positionality in this study:

1. What role does the researcher position himself to play during this research, especially as the main instrument of the study?
2. Do preliminary data (brief insight) from the preliminary data collection session affect his judgement during the interactions with the informants?
3. How did the researcher use his positionality as a stranger and acquaintance in different contexts?
4. Does his positionality/relationship with fellow informants affect the quality of the data they share?

Creswell and Poth (2018) used the word ‘epoche’ or ‘bracketing’ in which researchers eliminate their experience temporarily as much as possible and gather fresh perspectives from the phenomenon under investigation. In this study context, the researcher did not face such trouble in bracketing himself as he does not possess such experience working as a Halal Executive. Nonetheless, the preliminary data acquired preceding the study may hinder the entire data collection process, and applying epoche in such a situation is inevitable. The researcher bracketed himself in every data

collection session (in the interview sessions) by treating all data as first-time occurrences or fresh perspectives. The questions above were constantly recalled, and the researcher was reminded to manage bias and presumptions. Bracketing himself in every interview has enhanced the data quality as it is more reliable and valid to assess and analyse.

3.6 Ethical Consideration

Ethical consideration is a dispensable element that should be pondered in the qualitative study. In this study segmentation, one must carefully consider relevant ethics in performing and authoring a qualitative report (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Smythe and Murray (2000) generated several steps to guide fellow researchers in contemplating ethical issues. These steps have been fabricated and adapted according to the needs of the study.

The first element to ponder regarding ethical issues was the informants' consensus. One might think that the informants' verbal consent and agreement are sufficient to accommodate the study. Every study should take precautions in handling informants by being oblivious to specific situations that might expose oneself to vulnerability and threats. Hence, in this case, preparing a consensual document on the agreement of informants was necessary as it protects the study from unnecessary threats and legal actions and protects the informants themselves. Consequently, the study prepared a Consent and Anonymity Form (CAF) to disseminate to fellow informants. After properly briefing them on the study and engagement, they left their official signature in the CAF.

On the same note of anonymity of the informants, the study will not expose and label the informants by their actual name and official position in their organisation, especially in this report writing. Their anonymity has always remained unsullied as some information shared by the fellow informants was sensitive experience yet valuable to the study, which not only could tarnish the image of the informants but also could potentially harm the study and the organisations represented by the study and the informants. Hence, to protect one's rights, the study will portray its integrity by protecting the privacy and confidentiality (Smyth & Murray, 2000) of the data and the informants. Trust built with fellow informants is treated with integrity.

As a testament to the study's commitment to ethical research, it has diligently sought and obtained Research Ethical Committee approval. This process, despite the diversity of national and international regulations, is a prerequisite for most international scientific publication journals (Lemaire, 2006). In line with this, the study has successfully secured two research ethical committee approvals, one from Malaysia (Universiti Putra Malaysia's Ethics Committee for Research Involving Human Subjects; approval ID: JKEUPM-2022-245) and the other from Australia (the University of Newcastle's Human Research Ethics Committee; approval ID: H-2022-0284).

In addition to the ethical approvals listed above, the study also considered other ethical issues, such as conflict of interest and deception of the data acquired from the informants. Requests for validation from the informants (to seek the consistency of the shared information) were continuously made to ensure the answers received were constant and understood as they were. After the interviews, follow-up questions and

clarification were also carried out among informants to validate some of the data received.

3.7 Data Management

The data management system is a cornerstone of the qualitative study, enabling fellow researchers to meticulously track, assess, and document the available data. This analytical approach, as highlighted by Wickham and Woods (2005), was rigorously applied in this study. The study's proactive data management measures facilitated the preparation of comprehensive findings and reports, ensuring their accessibility while safeguarding them from any undesirable consequences. As Lin (2009) aptly put it, a robust data management system allows studies to accumulate information in various forms and locations for diverse purposes, all while maintaining the data's security.

The first measure of data management was recording management. The modern era has provided many aiding technologies to accelerate daily human activities. In this case, the study has fully utilised modern technologies to aid the record management process. Apart from keeping a physical file of all memos, Interview Protocol (IP), Consent and Anonymity Form (CAF), audit trail and most importantly, the transcribed data acquired from the interviews with Halal Executives, the study has also stored all the relevant data and documents on the virtual filing systems. These virtual files are only available on the researcher's laptop and stored on the cloud, *OneDrive*, and *Google Drive*. Having data stored in various places, physically and virtually, rectifies all unnecessary circumstances immediately while providing accessibility of the data regardless of time and location. Installing the latest version of firewall and antivirus

in all relevant devices is part of data management and security. Hence, the study must constantly update all firewall and antivirus systems.

Additionally, the record management of the data is organised by the audit trail process. Having this audit trail not only keeps a record of every data and literature in one proper filing system, but it also stores a comprehensive recording version of it by providing all changes information implemented to the study, when the changes were made, what and why changes were done (White, 2012). The study manages an audit trail system using Microsoft Word documents, emails, and notebooks. For instance, the study jotted down and saved every minute of meetings with colleagues regarding the study, along with the time and location of the meeting, as most of the changes happened after the meeting sessions with colleagues. During the data collection process, the study generated a chronological record of all sessions conducted and of data retrieved, acquired, and changed throughout the study's entire journey. An audit trail is a perpetual process; hence, it is anticipated to be conducted continuously until the study is ready for reporting and publishing. The data storage is also being organised and kept according to Universiti Putra Malaysia and the University of Newcastle's data management policy: <http://infohub.upm.edu.my/index.php/rdm/> - UPM data management website and <https://policies.newcastle.edu.au/document/view-current.php?id=72#minor1> - UON data management website.

3.8 Validity and Reliability

To secure the findings from being criticised as non-valid and non-reliable, proactive measures should be taken and moulded from the initial process of the study. According to Creswell and Poth (2018), the validation process assesses the accuracy of the data

and findings as best described by the researcher and the informants. On the same note, Merriam and Tisdell (2016) have outlined several proactive measures and strategies to uphold and promote the validity and reliability of this study, as detailed below.

3.8.1 Data Triangulation

Primarily, the study triangulated the data as one of the strategies to increase the validity and reliability. In this study, the data were acquired from two distinctive sources: the Halal Executives who work within the food industry in Malaysia and the Australian food industry, as well as the official Halal documents published by the Malaysian and Australian governments. These two data acquisitions conveyed two unique perspectives of the data: the executives' side and the official requirement's side.

3.8.2 Member Check

Besides, the study constantly performed member checks. Merriam and Tisdell (2016) explained that member checking is a process of verifying input gathered from the informants to secure the desired messages portrayed by the informants. Adopting this measure was crucial as it aided in avoiding any misinterpretation of the data, which would eventually contribute to misleading findings. The study performed this measure attentively, especially regarding confusing information the informants conferred.

3.8.3 Extended Engagement with the Data and Process

Additionally, the study spent adequate time engaging in the data collection process. Securing the data acquired is up to the exhaustive stage or saturated is crucial. Data

collection is a tedious process and is vulnerable to deception and confusion as the study might be overwhelmed by the variety of input received from the informants. Hence, the entire process was executed carefully and attentively.

3.8.4 Development Interview Protocol and Consent and Anonymous Form (CAF)

Furthermore, as mentioned previously, this study prepared a set of Interview Protocols and disseminated CAF to the informants. Despite having a semi-structured interview session, the study believed that preparing an interview protocol assisted in having guided sessions with the informants with the standard set of questions to answer the whole purpose of the study. The CAF read and signed by the informants proved that informants are fully aware of being interviewed with their consent and willingness.

3.8.5 Self-Reflection and Bias Management

Act of self-reflection is also part of the recommendations. Critical reflexivity by the researcher on the assumptions, point of view, biases, theoretical adaptations, and relationship towards the research may affect the entire process of the study (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). With the preparation of the positionality statement in the previous section, the study inculcated the realisation of oneself to the study in every section of the data collection, data analysis and result discussion to avoid (or at least manage) biases towards the data and findings.

3.8.6 Peer Review

Peer review is another strategy for increasing the study's validity and reliability. The acquired data and the entire study are verified and examined closely by fellow experts

in various fields to ensure the data and the findings reported by the end of the study are valid and reliable as a scientific study. This study was fortunate as fellow experts from various fields were interested in verifying and supervising the study. Experts from Food Heritage, Food Science, Hospitality Management, Qualitative Methods, and Human Resource Management studies directly contributed to verifying and supervising the study. Hence, the data's validity and reliability are hoped to be indubitable.

3.8.7 Comprehensive, In-Depth, and Thick Description

Finally, the study provided a detailed and thick description of the case and data. Merriam and Tisdell (2016) narrated a detailed and thick description that will be achieved by providing sufficient elucidation to contextualise the research so that readers can ascertain the extent to which their circumstances parallel the research context and, thus, whether the study findings are transferrable. As this study is a multi-setting study, a detailed and thick description was necessary to portray the actual observation and represent both settings so that readers' confusion and future research can be avoided. Figure 7 illustrates the research flow of the study.

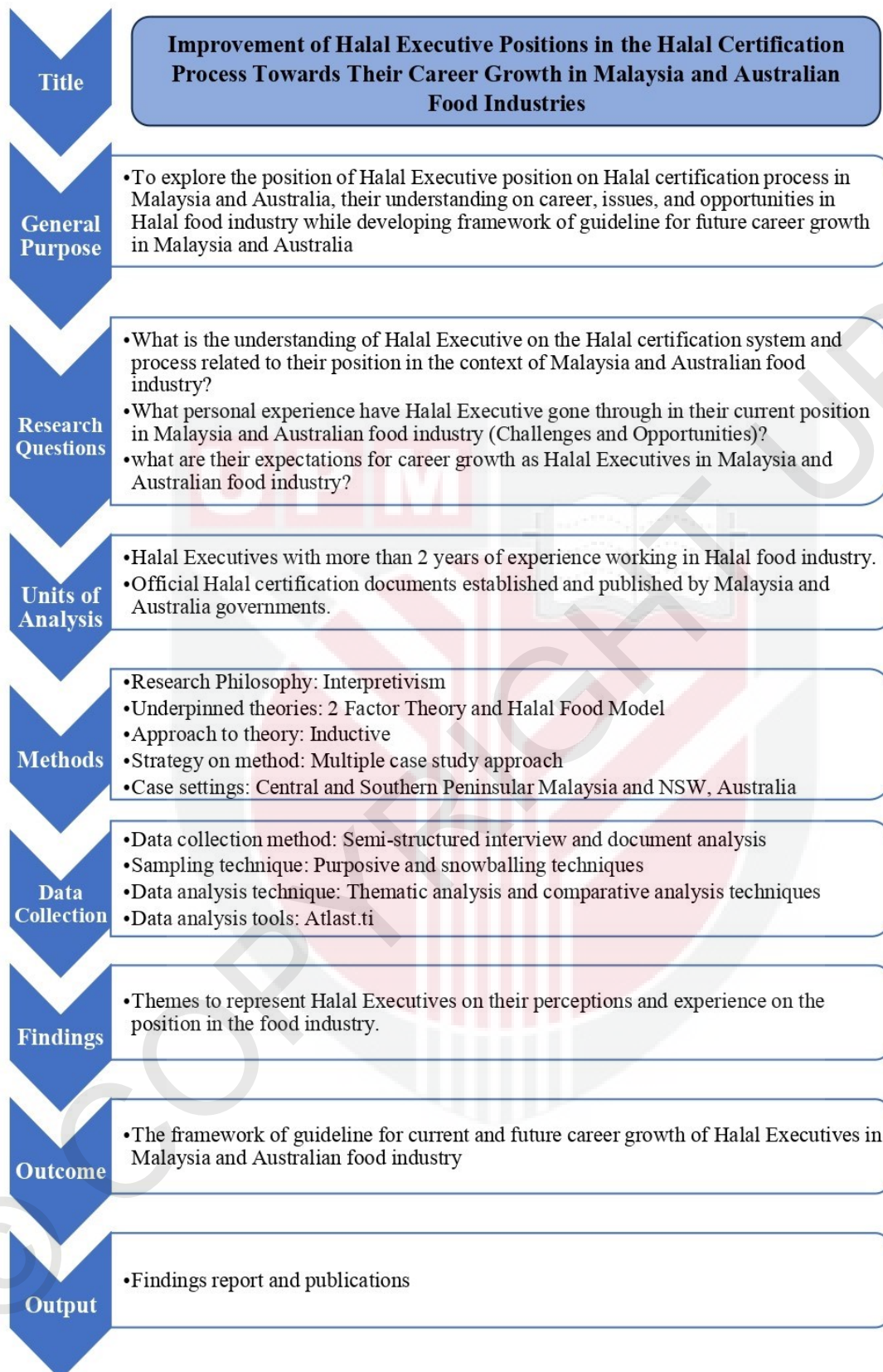


Figure 7 : Research Flow of Halal Executives' Career Growth Study

3.9 Summary of the Chapter

This chapter extensively covered the methodological aspect of the study. It started with an overview of the research design, and the chapter continued by explaining the philosophy that best represented the study: interpretivism. Apart from that, the chapter also explicitly claimed it would be an inductive approach to the theories. Derived from the philosophy and approach of the study, the study explained narratively that it was carried out qualitatively. This chapter continued by narrating the strategy employed in the study, which uses a multi-case study, as this study was conducted within two different settings: Malaysia and Australia. The chapter also discussed the study's informants, Halal Executives and official Halal documents established by the governments through this narration. The criteria of the informants were also established and explained in this chapter. Purposive and snowballing techniques have been discussed explicitly in this chapter, as both samplings were utilised in this study. The interview method is chosen as the data collection method of the study as it best reflects the experience of each Halal Executive in the food industry. This chapter continued to explain the data analysis used in the study, which is the thematic analysis approach. As this is a qualitative study, the chapter has instilled a positionality statement of the researcher to assist the readers in understanding the researcher's worldview. Ethical consideration, data management and validity and reliability of the study were also extensively discussed in the chapter to safeguard the study and its findings.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the findings on the experience of Halal Executives in Malaysia and Australia's food industry, especially regarding their career growth in the food industry. The study triangulates the data from several viewpoints and uses various methods to verify information gathered from the data collection processes. The primary data collection method involves in-depth interviews among Halal Executives in Malaysia and Australia's food industry. These Halal Executives came from different food companies, representing their countries of origin, which were mentioned in Chapter 3. The other method utilised in this study is document analysis. Three substantial documents representing the Halal food policy of each country have been analysed to support the findings of the interviews, which offer relevant insight into the subject matter. The chapter begins with the informants' backgrounds, followed by information from the official documents that were analysed.

Additionally, it is divided into three research questions to represent the results based on the primary and secondary data obtained from the collection process. It examines the potential career growth of Halal Executives in Malaysia and Australia by looking into their experience in Halal programs within their respective countries through the Halal certification system. It also focuses on the processes related to Halal Executive positions (RQ 1), their personal experience manoeuvring Halal programs (RQ 2) and finally, the perception and expectation of career growth of Halal Executives (RQ 3).

4.2 Profile of Interviewed Informants

This study interviewed fourteen informants to investigate their experiences as Halal Executives in the food industry, using the criteria outlined in Chapter 3. Out of these informants, eight were from Malaysia, while the remaining six were from Australia. Eight of these individuals were working in multinational companies (MNCs), while the remaining six were engaged in small and medium-sized firms (SMEs). Out of fourteen informants who were recruited, four of them were engaged through gatekeepers, and five were engaged through a Facebook group for Halal positions named *Job Vacancy in Halal Food Industry*, which has approximately 131000 members (<https://www.facebook.com/groups/139167109447776/>), and the other five were approached through email.

Out of the informants from Malaysia, six were located in the central region of the peninsular, while the other two were from the southern region of Peninsular Malaysia. All six informants from Australia are situated in the state of New South Wales (NSW). Halal Executives were employed in different food industry businesses, such as the manufacturing of various sauces and pasta pastes and the production of a variety of spices, drinks, chocolates, and sweets. In addition, three informants were hired in chain restaurants operating from a central kitchen. One of the informants was employed at an event centre, where he serves in the central kitchen as his company manages several eateries and offers catering services. The job titles of these executives vary significantly. The following table presents a comprehensive overview of each informant's background.

Table 5 : Informants' Background for Halal Executive Career Growth Study

Label	Connection	Size	Type of Business	Location	Position Title	Working Experience	Country	Interview Date
Informant A	Gatekeeper	MNC	Assorted Sauces, Pastes, Assorted Pastas, Dressings and Purees	Central Region of Malaysia	Halal and System Executive	6 Years	Malaysia	7-Jun-22
Informant B	Gatekeeper	SME	Nata De Coco, Jelly, Pudding, Ice Tube & Swiss Roll	Central Region of Malaysia	Senior Quality Insurance cum Halal Executive	5 Years	Malaysia	7-Jun-22
Informant C	Facebook	SME	Assorted spices	Central Region of Malaysia	Assistant Operation Manager cum Halal Executives	13 years	Malaysia	14-Sep-22
Informant D	Facebook	MNC	Fast food Central Kitchen and franchises	Central Region of Malaysia	Senior Halal Executives	4 Years	Malaysia	16-Jun-22
Informant E	Gatekeeper	SME	Restaurant - Central Kitchen	Southern Region of Peninsular Malaysia	Halal Office cum QC	7 Years	Malaysia	17-Sep-02
Informant F	Facebook	SME	Drinks	Southern Region of Peninsular Malaysia	Halal Executive	6 Years	Malaysia	24-Sep-22
Informant G	Facebook	MNC	Buffet Franchises	Central Region of Malaysia	Halal Executives	4 Years	Malaysia	28-Sep-22
Informant H	Facebook	SME	Event Centre	Central Region of Malaysia	Halal Executive	6 years	Malaysia	13-Oct-22
Informant I	Email	MNC	Chocolate and Candies	New South Wales	SRA Compliance Technologist	4 Years	Australia	10-Nov-22

Table 5 : Continued

Informant J	Gatekeeper	SME	Food, Beverages, Flavours, Fragrances, Cosmetics, Personal Care Pharmaceutical/Health and Wellness	New South Wales	Regulatory Affairs Specialist	30 Years	Australia	11-Jan-23
Informant K	Email	MNC	Pasta Sauces	New South Wales	Scientific & Regulatory Affairs Officer	5 Years	Australia	09-Nov-22
Informant L	Email	MNC	Assorted Rice	New South Wales	Food Technologist	5 Years	Australia	28-Oct-22
Informant M	Email	MNC	Spread	New South Wales	Scientific & Regulatory Compliance Officer	5 Years	Australia	28-Oct-22
Informant N	Email	MNC	Asian/Cuisine Cooking Pastes	New South Wales	Scientific & Regulatory Affairs Manager	5 Years	Australia	09-Nov-22

All informants from both Malaysia and Australia were provided with the same interview protocol (refer to *Appendix A*), which contained a standardised set of interview questions. This protocol was disseminated a few days before the interview sessions to allow participants sufficient time to reflect on key aspects relevant to the study, ensuring a more thoughtful and informed discussion during the interviews. Typically, the study only highlighted notable responses, particularly when multiple informants expressed similar perspectives, reinforcing shared connotations. Conversely, different connotations were also acknowledged in the analysis to capture varied perspectives and enrich the discussion. In general, all informants successfully provided valuable insights during the interview sessions, except where explicitly stated otherwise. Additionally, some insights were obtained post-interview through the member-checking process, particularly when further clarification was required from the informants. To ensure transparency and enhance reader understanding, the study has disclosed all relevant information and key insights in the analysis section, providing clarity on the findings.

The analysis of the interview sessions above was supported by official Halal documents established by the government and was presented according to the study's research question. It began with a comprehensive analysis of Halal certification and processes related to Halal Executive positions (RQ1). The analysis continues with an examination of Halal Executives' personal experience in managing Halal programs in the food industry (RQ2). The analysis ends with the career growth expectations of these executives in the food industry (RQ3). This present study labels the themes as subheadings of each subchapter and bolds the categories or subthemes in the paragraph to aid readers in navigating through the results.

4.3 Research Question 1: Halal Certification System and Process Related to Halal Executive Position

The main focus of the first research question was to explore Malaysia and Australia's certification systems, which include the requirement to apply for Halal certification in the respective countries. Within this section, from the data gathered, the study has identified several critical important information related to the subject matter. Some of the identified information includes requirements to obtain the Halal certification system, requirements to be hired as Halal Executives and the job scopes of Halal Executives.

4.3.1 Halal Certification Requirements

Food manufacturers need to fulfil several requirements to obtain Halal certification. Some requirements may be subjected to local authorities, while others may be expected globally. One of the basic requirements acknowledged by the informants is **business licencing**:

"So, every outlet needs one Business License." Informant D

This information is also supported by Informant H:

"We need a business license for every outlet we have, as well as FoSIM." Informant H

FoSIM, in this context, refers to Malaysia's Food Safety Information. This information is available in Malaysia's Halal Certification Procedure Manual (also known as MPPHM) -Domestic, 2020 as one of the requirements to operate a food business with legitimate Halal certification, which is not only applicable to food manufacturers but also to all Halal schemes enlisted by the Malaysian's authority:

“...Possess a license or approval from PBT (local authority) or a confirmation letter or letter of support that is still valid from any government agency...”

Based on the requirement stated in the *Approved Arrangement Guidelines for the Australian Government Authorised Halal Program* established by the Australian government, there is no specific requirement for registering and demonstrating the business license of the manufacturers in applying for Halal certification. However, it is mentioned in the guidelines that every exporting Halal meat activity is subjected to the Export Control Act 2020 and the Export Control (Meat and Meat Products) Rules 2021.

Informants also discussed how **documentation** is crucial in applying for Halal certification, which explicitly mentioned manual documentation and uploading the documents in the Halal application system provided by the Halal certification provider. Informant E, for instance, talked about how, in Malaysia, JAKIM requires applicants to prepare application documentation in both methods: softcopy (upload in the MYeHalal system) and manually (print and send them to JAKIM's office).

Informant E said,

"...even though you must register by the system, you still need supporting documents (hardcopy) to submit..."

Informant G also supported this notion;

"...and I called an officer (JAKIM), they said, "Can you send a hardcopy as soon as possible? Because it is difficult to check with a soft copy. I prefer hardcopy..."

However, in Australia, the application system is different as they rely solely on an online system where applicants will make an official application and upload all the relevant documents in the system provided by the certifiers. Informant I mentioned;

"...em. And then, when we have a product that we want to certify, we put it in the portal. We use those supply raw material Halal Certificates in there to show that all of the ingredients that we are using in this product, we want to certify all of the ingredients are individually certified as well..."

It is mentioned in JAKIM's application manual that all Halal certification applications should be made by uploading the documents to the MYeHalal system. As mentioned in the MPPHM (Domestic) 2020,

"...completed documents must be submitted to the competent authority (as specified in the applicant's MyeHalal system) within five working days after the MYeHalal application form is submitted online..."

Nonetheless, in the mentioned manual, the researcher failed to identify any clause mentioning or discussing hardcopy application submission to the JAKIM's office, as most of the clauses refer to online submissions, either for new applications or updating new documents for existing applications. These circumstances confused applicants and portrayed the de-standardisation of JAKIM's system.

The informants have also disclosed the importance of **audits** in acquiring Halal certification. In the application, certifiers require at least two critical auditing aspects:

Internal Audit Committee and system and **Halal audit training**. According to Informant A, for instance, an individual must possess a qualification or certification for auditing to be appointed an internal auditor. Informant A said.

"...we have hired some auditors, internal auditors. And all certified..."

However, the researcher noticed that specific organisations used different terms to refer to any internal Halal audit program. In this case, the researcher could observe that Informant D disclosed in their respective company that they used the term Adequacy Audit, which refers to any manufacturing activities in their company that will be audited and adequate to national Halal standards and requirements. Informant D mentioned;

"...so, what we usually do is an Adequacy Audit. It is like, okay, this person wants to come, but if he is near, I will go physically. If not, I will do it online. I have given you a list of what needs to be prepared. Then we will have an online one-to-one session to explain; then we will update the status..."

Informant B also disclosed the importance of conducting an internal audit, which monitors the adherence to the regulations and as a medium to continuously educate employees from other departments, as it may be confusing for people from different expertise to understand the whole structure of Halal requirements and clauses.

Informant B said,

"...internal audit is the most important because they each want to be audited by other departments. So, they want to understand what their role is. What questions do you want to remove from the clauses of the certificate they got? They must understand. They have to know what they have to do..."

As someone who managed the Halal program in a reputable organisation, Halal Executives are knowledgeable about the program and its requirements. However, people from different backgrounds and positions must be informed, especially since they are technically involved in producing Halal products. Hence, this initiative taken by the informant is applaudable.

The purpose of an internal Halal audit is straightforward. It is established that the production of ingredients and activities should be monitored regularly, adhering to Halal standards and regulations. One situation shared by Informant H;

"...Halal Cert, we have a department there. Because there is an issue with the fake Halal logo. Sometimes, there is no Halal logo. So, as an example, when I went to the internal audit session, I checked that the milk did not have the Halal logo. So, I will talk to my purchaser; okay, stop buying this milk, and buy only Gold Coin and F&N (brand name) milk because we register every raw material. So, near ABCC (the name of the company), we have 1400 items that we register as raw materials. We registered 1400 items. So, we must make sure we have a purchaser who will buy only these 1400 items. We cannot buy other items other than the ones I have registered for. It is like that..."

Using non-certified and non-registered ingredients in preparing food may cause additional queries from the certifier, and in the worst-case scenario, Halal certification is revoked. Hence, Halal Executives play a vital role in executing internal audits regularly to ensure their production activities adhere to the rule and the certification is still in force (Kamaruddin et al., 2021). The establishment of an internal Halal audit is explicitly mentioned several times in the guidelines of both countries. In MHMS 2020, for instance, JAKIM explained the criteria for appointing an internal Halal auditor. Mentioned in MHMS 202;

"... Internal Halal Auditor: Individuals appointed by the Internal Halal Committee who are qualified, experienced and competent to conduct internal Halal audits..."

However, the Australian' government, through AAG-AIO, has not disclosed the specific requirement for appointing an internal Halal auditor. Nevertheless, it is mentioned that a verification system is required to ensure the regulation is adhered to, and an internal audit is part of the recommendation for verification purposes. In AAG-AIO 2022;

"...using the section headings and checklists described within this guideline may assist in developing verification systems, such as internal audits. It may also

provide a framework for verification that will encourage more consistent application of verification activities and their reporting... ”.

Another substantial requirement for acquiring Halal certification is the **appointment of a Halal Executive**. The position of Halal Executive has been defined by JAKIM in its MPPHM (Domestic) 2020;

“...Halal Executive means an individual responsible for ensuring Halal compliance in a company or premises. Halal Executive must meet the following requirements: Muslim, Malaysian citizen, hold a permanent position, hold a minimum diploma in Halal Management or any qualification equivalent to it or have experience in Halal Management for at least five years and possess Halal Executive experience in preparing Halal training registered under Halal Professional Board (HPB) JAKIM... ”.

Also, JAKIM extended the definition with another clause for every certified food industry manufacturer. In MPPHM (Domestic) 2020;

“Halal Executive must be appointed in each branch of the premises” MPPHM (Domestic) 2020

Hence, with this clause, all Halal certification applicants must appoint at least one Halal Executive to monitor the manufacturing activities internally and fulfil the requirement. Ironically, due to this requirement, the industry players consider this position not as vital but rather just an appointment required by the authority with no essential function. This scenario can be observed from this expression shared by Informant A;

“...If in this place (company) is a Halal Exec (is appreciated), some companies consider Halal as a complement to the existing certificate... ”.

Informant A's view is based on this experience and the experience shared by colleagues from other companies. Many companies (especially owners) appoint Halal

Executives not because of their expertise or the needs of the position. Instead, it is just part of the requirement of local authority.

Within Australian territories, in the AAG-AIO, the researcher identified clauses explaining the necessity of **employing Muslim Personnel** onsite for Halal manufacturing products. Mentioned in AAG-AIO 2022;

“...members of the onsite Halal team. Positions include Muslim Slaughterman, Halal Supervisors, Halal Head Checker (Beef pneumatic stun establishments only) and other positions as required by the Importing country...”

However, this clause does not directly refer to the exact position of Halal Executive as it portrays different definitions of the job scope of the positions. AAG-AIO 2022 only cover the onsite positions, not as a whole organisation. Application and maintenance of Halal certifications and programs are done mainly by people in executive/managerial positions, not onsite personnel, such as Food Technologist and Regulatory Affairs Officers/Managers, as mentioned by Informant K;

“...I also look after programs like Halal. Mainly Halal. On-site as well. So, making sure we are compliant with the standards that we provided. Also taking into account our export market as well...”

Informant K is a Scientific and Regulatory Affairs Officer who oversees the company's regulatory affairs, including Halal certification programs. Adding to that, as non-Muslim personnel of their organisation, although they overlook the program administratively, they are not physically involved with slaughtering part of the animal as this will be contradicting to AAG-AIO 2022, which also confirms expressly in Australia, the Halal Executive position is not part of the requirement to obtain Halal certification. Other organisations can see a similar situation based on the information gathered from Informants I, J, L, M and N.

Another prominent requirement for applying for Halal certification is establishing and involving the **Internal Halal Committee (IHC)**. The members of the committees are various according to the organisations. For instance, Informant L disclosed in their organisation that IHC is representative of Supply Quality Assurance, Onsite Quality Assurance, Production Manager, Product Development Manager, and Food Technologist. Informant L said,

"...we all get reviewed, and that gets disseminated to the Halal management team. So, you are looking at supply quality assurance, at site quality assurance and production manager and my manager and the product development team as well..."

Additionally, other informants discussed how the management of their organisation is involved in applying for Halal certification by reviewing the necessary documents for applications. According to Informant I,

"...so, all the people that are involved will have something to do with Halal would also be involved in that. And we have a management review as well. So, reviewing any issues that have come through, any consumer contact, whether there has been an issue internal and external audits and finding a resolution and any Gap assessment as well..."

A similar situation can be seen in Malaysia, where Informants F and C disclosed that other departments of their organisations are involved as committee members. Informants F and C said, respectively;

"...I have Quality Assurance (Officer) and JAIM (Department of Islamic Religion, State of Melaka). If you are in Melaka, I am (under the jurisdiction of) JAIM. Usually, there are 3 of us. Or two people with me in the factory. And the involvement of JAIM. If it is like the lower part (within the organisation), my part (Halal programs) has a committee. We called it the IHC: Internal Halal Committee..."

"...for Halal application, I am (the only person) who is involved. However, my team Halal Committee will be involved during the audit..."

JAKIM, in MHMS 2020 and MPPHM 2020, stated that in every premise of the certification, holders are required to have their own IHC, along with the headquarters committees, in two different clauses, in MPPHM (Domestic) 2020;

“...an internal Halal committee should be established at the company’s management level or the central kitchen...”.

“...an internal Halal committee must be established for food premises and each branch of food premises that has different operational management...”.

From Australia’s standpoint, no specific clause is mentioned about establishing IHC as part of the requirement to obtain Halal certification. The closest clause that reflects the involvement of other personnel or departments in applying Halal certification is a clause on the involvement of internal audit and management review. In AAG-AIO;

“...internal audits and management reviews are conducted regularly to assess suitability, adequacy, effectiveness and compliance with the AIO’s approved arrangement and legislative requirements...”.

Most informants discussed the importance of **food safety requirements** when applying for certification. Some of them mentioned how the auditing session conducted by the external auditor (certifier) was critical on the safety aspect, despite the audit’s main agenda being meant for Halal certification. Expressed by Informant G;

“...it feels like it is (Halal external auditing) going to food safety. They want to go (lean towards) HACCP. They (external auditor) want us to create all kinds of forms so that we are doing things right...”.

Informant I observed the scenario in Australia. Typically, the certifier will authorise two auditors to audit the factories/sites; one auditor is a Halal expert, and the other is a food technology expert. Hence, the sites’ safety aspect will be considered when approving Halal certification. Informant I explained;

“...it depends on the auditor. Typically, they have two auditors that come on-site. One will be focused on general Food Safety and HACCP and all more food technical stuff. The other auditor will focus on specific religious requirements in Halal Standard. And so those auditors that focus more on the Food Safety elements and are independently certified to do so...”

Informant H also discussed how food safety knowledge is crucial to mastering Halal Executives; other personnel may query the decisions or opinions given by Halal Executives. By comprehending such knowledge, Halal Executives can justify their decisions. Informant H explained;

“...but for me, (the knowledge of) Food Safety is very important because Food Safety is big. I am not even an expert in food safety. I still have a lot to learn. About bacteria, food diseases, and shelf life, why can milk be stored, for example, for three months or six months? What is the difference? The shelf life of the food itself. So, if we have this knowledge and if the staff (other departments) asks why, we know how to respond...”

Information shared by the informants is explicitly reflected in the MPPHM of JAKIM, where any food industry that is not compliant with food safety, especially in high-risk circumstances, may be subject to revocation of certification. In MPPHM 2020;

“...non-conformities related to GMP specifically pertaining to premises, environment, sanitation and equipment that pose a high risk to product safety...”

In Australia, the government also highlighted the importance of food safety adherence by all certified Halal food producers. Mentioned in AAG-AIO 2022;

“...must have adequate regulatory conformance (including hygiene and other areas) to avoid any compromise to the meat safety standards and regulatory standards (i.e., The Australian Standard for the Hygienic Production and Transportation of Meat and Meat Products for Human Consumption AS 4696:2007)...”

It is safe to conclude that any food and product safety requirements enlisted by the local government, such as GMP and HACCP, should be obtained and adhered to for

the Halal certification application. For Malaysia and Australia specifically, non-conformities of the food safety requirement may reflect revocation of Halal certification (Kamaruddin et al., 2021).

Some of the informants also emphasise the **traceability system**. Due to unforeseen defects related to the manufactured and distributed products and goods, especially concerning packaging and or harmful chemicals/ ingredients, circumstances such as product recall may occur to ensure the safety of the consumer. JAKIM required all applicants to establish a traceability system for their products specifically for this situation. Mentioned in MHMS 2020;

“...company and/or applicant must create a traceability procedure in writing to ensure product withdrawal/recall can be made in the event of any Halal non-compliance/contamination of the product that has been produced...”.

In this requirement, JAKIM provides a traceability system reference template in its MHMS 2020 for the applicant to refer to in preparation for a traceability system for their products. This system covers a wide range of information, such as Label Determination Methods, Distributor/Reseller Information, and Product Withdrawal/ Recall Procedures. Informant M also disclosed their traceability system experience in their company, where they must update the system jive with the Halal certification details. Informant M said,

“...providing extra traceability information at the moment, actually, so, making sure that the product information form that we have provided has all the numbers that are linked to this product. Em. Slightly change the name so that it reflects the Halal Certificate a bit better in one section. They are not compromising the legal name that we have the product traded as. Em. And providing a certificate number when we say it is Halal Certified and stuff like that. So, providing that extra traceability piece but also trying to communicate that we do not have a link in traceability, if you contact us about this product, we cannot identify it straight away and work back from there. So, em.. yeah. I think some of the information was

misunderstood initially. It particularly works for reference code and stuff like that. However, hopefully, that should all be cleared up now..."

JAKIM mentioned that all certified business entities need to execute a mock recall at least once a year (MHMS, 2020) to ensure the traceability of the companies' systems is compelling. Figure 8 illustrates the requirement for applying Halal certification disclosed by informants and compares it to the official documents of both countries, generated from the data acquired and analysed via *Atlas.ti*.



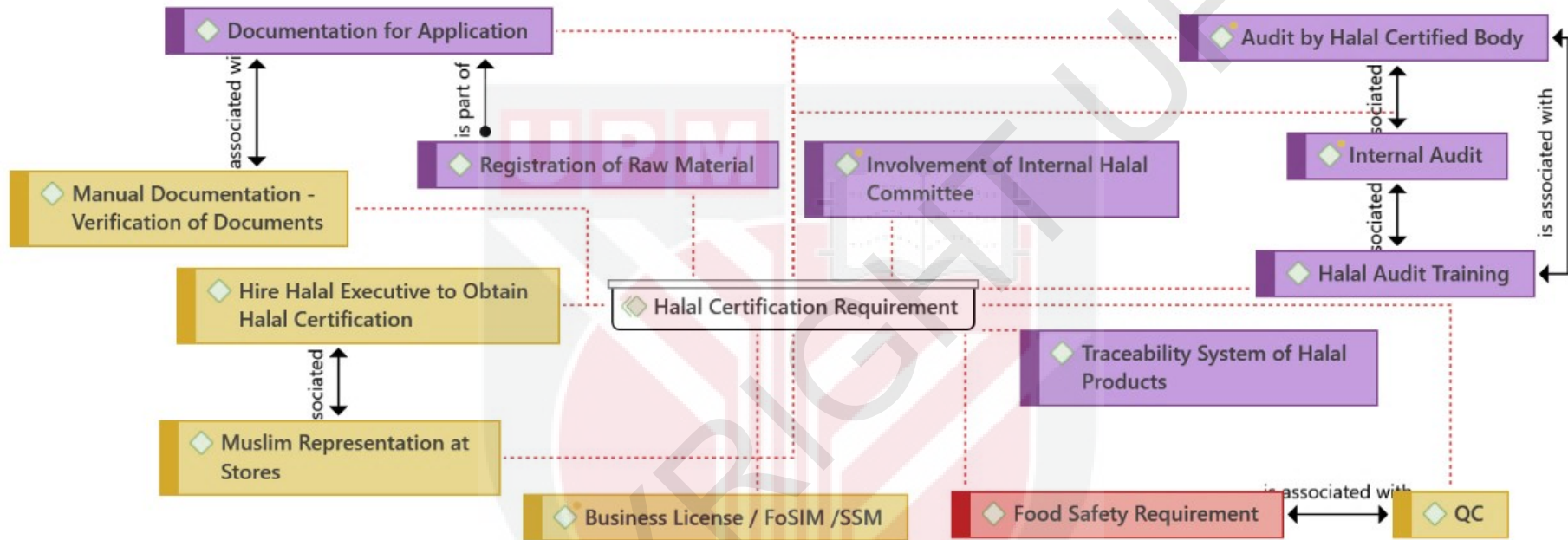


Figure 8 : Atlas.ti Visual Representation of Halal Certification Requirements

4.3.2 Requirement of Halal Position Appointment

According to the information and experience shared by the informants, the appointment requirement for Halal Executives varies, depending on the company's size, job scope and the level of the positions offered. However, collectively, the informants shared the same aspiration of requirements to ensure future applicants are fully equipped with standard knowledge to fit in these positions.

The first requirement to be appointed as Halal Executive is that the applicant has to be a **Muslim**. Although this is seen to be rather obvious and a little ethnocentric, Halal Executives need to be Muslim as they customarily embody the teachings and beliefs of Islam and Sharia law as their working culture and job scope mainly derived from the teaching of this religion. Informant B and F mentioned respectfully;

"...the Halal Executive (position) must be taken care of (hold) by Muslims. Islam Muslim. Not Malay (do not have to be), Muslim, Muslim. Because what if the other people who take care of this (we) do not know what kind of understanding people have..."

"...it means it is really important. Usually, non-Muslim (owned) companies seem to take things lightly. They apply Halal; they make it themselves, and then they just let it be. So, if no one can really handle it, later, any arising issues will become very big. So, like now, there is this position of Halal Exec, and this is good. Slowly yet surely, it gets to improve the quality (Halal quality) in the company..."

These scenarios are expressed by the informants talking about how Halal Executives need to be Muslims as the understanding of Halal and believing the concept should come simultaneously. Halal is part of the Sharia law, a robust Islamic teaching pillar. Hence, hiring Muslims in such a position is necessary. This information shared by the informants tallies with the requirement established by the local government. Mentioned in MPPHM (Domestic) 2020;

“...Halal Executive means an individual responsible for ensuring Halal compliance in a company or premises. Halal Executive must meet the following requirements: Muslim, Malaysian citizen, hold a permanent position, hold a minimum diploma in Halal Management or any qualification equivalent to it or have experience in Halal Management for at least five years and possess Halal Executive experience in preparing Halal training registered under Halal Professional Board (HPB) JAKIM... ”.

On the other hand, in Australia, the requirement for religious belief is only subject to other positions that physically and technically handle the Halal product processes. Any executives or administrators of Halal programs are not required to be Muslims if onsite personnel such as slaughtermen and Halal Head Checkers are Muslim. All our informants from Australia, the Halal Executives or Halal program coordinators, are non-Muslims. Mentioned in AAG-AIO 2022;

“...members of the onsite Halal team. Positions include Muslim Slaughterman, Halal Supervisors, Halal Head Checker (Beef pneumatic stun establishments only) and other positions as required by the Importing country... ”.

Another prominent requirement for appointing a Halal Executive is obtaining actual **Halal Executive training**. In Malaysia, to be appointed as a Halal Executive, a person should at least undergo the Halal Executive training provided by organizations recognized by the Halal Professional Board (HPB). As stated in MHMS 2020;

“...possess a Halal Executive certificate from a Halal training provider registered under the HPB... ”.

Informant A mentioned the need for Halal Executive certificate training;

“...If it is (the position) the same, there must be a Halal Executive certificate. Halal Certified Executive... ”.

Informant B explained that from a biotechnology background, attending Halal Executive training provides the required knowledge to become a Halal Executive.

Informant B explained;

"...okay, like myself, I entered the Food Industry with zero knowledge of Halal (industry). I graduated in biotech in the field of nutrition, but I (decided) to join (employed) even though I had no experience. But I recommend that anyone who wants to join Halal Executive has a position to go to training. At least get exposure..."

Thirty-two organizations or companies are registered to provide Halal training to individuals (JAKIM, 2021). The training is not limited to executive training but includes Halal audit, logistics, and awareness training. Each training is provided by various organisations, such as public universities and training academies and centres (Hashim et al., 2016). Some of the institutions provide different levels of training, which include diploma level, bachelor's degree, certificates, and postgraduate studies (Hashim et al., 2016).

The guideline mentions no specific Halal Executive training requirements in Australia. However, it was mentioned that companies should provide training related to any Halal activities and programs to ensure that the personnel are equipped with sufficient knowledge and skills related to Halal. Mentioned in AAG-AIO 2022;

"...provide information on the training for on-site Muslim personnel. This may include but is not limited to religious requirements of Halal slaughter, stunning requirements, Halal slaughter techniques, product segregation, control of official marks/stamps, document/records control, inventory controls, requirements of the meat industry, understanding of the Halal procedures in the establishment where they will work..."

Based on the conversation with the informants, as Halal program coordinators or Halal Executives in Australia, they are not required to be trained to handle Halal-related

programs. The only training that they had was mainly on-the-job training and conversations with certifiers. Informant J said;

"...yes. So, we do not need any; currently, we do not need any external qualifications, but it is more on-the-job training and learning through audits as well as through external audits (certifiers). We have internal audits. Gap assessment. That one is self-taught, so that is another great way to learn the standards and requirements, too..."

Other informants from Australia, such as I, K, M and N, also shared similar experiences. The researcher believes that external training provided by qualified and authorized training providers is crucial as it will aid a better understanding of the idea behind Halal concepts, procedures, market, and certification to avoid misinformation and confusion on the subject matter. Also, without having actual training provided by subject matter experts, it can be inferred that manufacturers are not fully committed and on board in pursuing Halal programs.

The informants have also expressed that to be a Halal Executives, one should know **food safety**. The central concept of Halal is derived from an Arabic phrase of *Halalan Toyyiban*, which technically means it is essential for every food consumed to be suitable for the human body, clean, healthy, and will not cause any harm or danger to the human body (Mas'ad & Hisham, 2018). Halal food is not only permissible per Sharia law but also needs to be safe to consume, with nutritional values.

According to Informant H;

"...it does not matter if Food Safety has training. GMP training, HACCP training, err, what do we call it, food quality training, and all kinds of related things, right? Why is it that when we do this food safety training? From here, we will learn examples such as why we must heat food at a temperature of 70 or above. Why do we have to keep food warm at 60 Celsius for only 4 hours? For more than 4 hours, we must toss it away. It is like that. Why do we have to store the cake at 0-4 Celsius?..."

Informant H shared how technical knowledge and skills are highly needed, especially concerning food safety. Although technically, as a Halal Executive, they will not deal with this issue daily, information related to this is required as it will be part of the filing and auditing system. The safety of the consumers is also on the line. Informant B said,

"...when we read the description (vacancy advertisement), we have to take care of HACCP..."

On the superficial level, during the recruitment processes, informants expressed how most companies search for potential executives with knowledge of HACCP and food safety. Although typically in Malaysia, food safety regulations and maintenance are the responsibility of Quality Assurance, most companies require knowledgeable candidates. According to Informant G;

"...the (companies) advertise looking for a Halal Executive; they will say they want someone who has basic knowledge in HACCP or GMP or ISO 22000, or even higher FFSC 22000, which is usually found in Food Tech graduates..."

The same observation was made by Informant G, where some companies required additional food safety training certificates for applicants, including GMP, ISO 22000, and even FFSC 22000. Informant F shared added;

"...some of the certified training requirements, like the Halal Assurance System. Internal Halal Audit. Then, if he is in the field of HACCP, GMP, he is still eligible to become a Halal Executive..."

Informant F shared that having extensive Halal training certifications would be a plus for the applicants for this position. However, having HACCP and GMP training certifications would also be an added value for the application. Hence, it can be concluded that to secure a Halal Executive position, one should possess knowledge of

Halal and Sharia law and be equipped with food safety information such as HACCP, GMP and other relevant international/local food safety requirements.

In the AAG-AIO of Australia, there is a particular clause that requires Muslim personnel to have adequate understanding and training related to safety. In AAG-AIO 2022;

“...provide information on the assessment criteria for Muslim personnel. The personnel • must have adequate training and understanding to comply with animal welfare standards. • must have adequate regulatory conformance (including hygiene and other areas) to avoid any compromise to the meat safety standards and regulatory standards (i.e., The Australian Standard for the Hygienic Production and Transportation of Meat and Meat Products for Human Consumption AS4696:2007)...”

Every Muslim personnel working directly in the production site of Halal products is required to possess relevant knowledge of meat safety and animal welfare standards. However, this requirement only applies to onsite-Muslim personnel, not Halal program coordinators or administrators, as the current status quo shows that no dedicated Halal program coordinator is available in most food companies in Australia. Hence, such a requirement is unavailable in the government’s official guidelines.

Astonishingly, the informants believe that a Halal Executive should be able to **communicate in more than one language**. For instance, Informant C disclosed that they received an offer to be a Halal Executive in one of the biggest food manufacturers in Japan. However, they declined the offer as they were uncomfortable speaking foreign languages, especially English and Japanese. Informant C sighed;

“...another (reason) is the language problem. My English is not very good. And wanting to go to Japan with Japanese language (ability) is... It is really tough for me...”

Informant D also shared their thoughts that comprehension of English is necessary to be appointed Halal Executive these days. Most of the major food manufacturers in Malaysia have English-speaking environments. Hence, to make sure that Halal Executives excel in their job, it is recommended that they understand and speak English moderately. Informant D said;

"Indeed, there are many soft skills; look for other soft skills to improve ourselves. If our boss really likes to speak English, they really look down on people who are not good at English, for example, so you go and learn English."

Apart from that, Informant F also explained how there are many opportunities for Halal Executives globally if applicants can comprehend more than one language. Ideally, speaking English professionally will be an essential language requirement for working abroad. Informant F said;

"...if he has the ability (language), he can go (work) to Australia, New Zealand, Korea and Japan. If you look at these four countries, they really take care of Halal (program); they do really care about it. I also think their requirement (Halal) is better than Malaysia's..."

In reality, foreign language proficiency is not limited to the working environment. As the Halal market is getting more recognition globally, many countries focus on Halal ventures by developing and establishing internationally recognised policies, certifications, and systems. Hence, Halal Executives, specifically those working in major manufacturing industries, will have to assess these official documents for import and export purposes. Besides, communication with the targeted countries may be required in a foreign language, especially in English. Thus, this requirement should not be taken lightly as it plays a vital role in appointing Halal Executives. The demand for in-house Halal experts is increasing (Hashim & Shariff, 2016) to cater for the needs of this segmented market.

In terms of **educational background**, Informants shared different ideas and opinions. Informant G, for instance, believed that Sharia law / Islamic education graduates would have a slimmer chance of getting hired by local companies. Although applicants may have undergone Halal Executive training, companies hire candidates from other educational backgrounds, mostly with a minimum bachelor's degree.

"...so, if you want to apply for a job when people (recruiter) screen your resume, everything is about Sharia (educational background), maybe he will have a little trouble (in getting hired). Unless, if the place really wants a Halal Executive, they usually really want to focus on this one thing (Halal only), like international things (companies), you know. Like Japan (Japanese companies), they want to focus on people who have knowledge about Islam (Sharia law)..."

From a different perspective, Informant A shared that food companies appointed them because of their educational background in Islamic studies. According to the informant, two companies where they worked previously have an in-house food science expert. Hence, food companies require other personnel who understand the religious regulatory aspect of food consumption and preparation to balance their knowledge, food science perspective, and Islamic knowledge. Informant A also said;

"...they want to take (hire) Islamic Studies (graduate/candidate) so that they can balance that background at the company..."

On the other hand, Informant H thought that Halal Executives should possess culinary certifications or training as culinary graduates typically have more insights about raw material and food preparation.

According to Informant H;

"...another person from Culinary. People from Culinary itself. I mean, the chef will cook. He knows how to prepare food. He knows how to choose raw materials..."

Informant H made this remark based on their experience working in their current company. This company has several central kitchens for their business and caters to high-end events with many diners and visitors. However, this requirement is limited to food catering companies or event organisations, as typical culinary graduates would not have the knowledge and experience in developing food products for consumer production.

Most informants believed that food science and technology graduates were better suited to be appointed as Halal Executives, as they possessed food processing and production knowledge. Most courses in food sciences cover food safety modules. For instance, Informant E discussed a scenario where Halal Executive candidates with a food science study background are favourable to hiring, especially in food manufacturing businesses. Expressed Informant E;

"...frankly speaking, I am actually saying that the marketability for the industry is for this Halal Executive if the company is given an option, let us say there are two candidates who come. One has a certified Halal Executive, but his background course field before that was from a course that did not relate at all (to food science), and he/she did not learn about Food Tech, Food Science and so on. Compared with another person who has a Halal Executive certificate, he/she has a background of maybe a Bachelor of Food Biotech and so on. If it is like a factory, he would prefer those with a Food Tech background over those with no background at all. Why? Because, okay. Like the Food Biotech or Food Handling training, people (from food science/biotech backgrounds) have been dealing with those things for a long time. He has an example (from the university courses), such as a Bachelor of Food Biotech..."

A similar opinion was also shared by Informant F;

"...to me, I fully support hiring a Halal Executive with food science or food technology (educational background). They will understand better elements in the food and the reasons that make it Halal as they have an educational background in food composition and food processing. That is why food technology (graduates) is better. Plus, the additional training on Halal and Islamic knowledge from Halal Executive training, Halal Assurance system training, and Halal internal audit training will add to the required knowledge. Plus, in food science (courses)

graduates are trained with HACCP and GMP, they are more qualified in becoming Halal Executives...".

Informant G also shared the same thought that people from food science or food technology backgrounds have better knowledge of food safety in general, hence favourable compared to other graduates. According to Informant G;

"...most F&B, the advertisement in looking for a Halal Executive, they will say they want someone who has basic knowledge in HACCP or GMP or ISO 22000, or even higher FFSC 22000, which is usually found in Food Tech graduates..."

Nonetheless, the experience shared by fellow informants is dissimilar to the minimum requirement of Halal Executive positions stated in MPPHM 2020. Based on the informants' educational level and aspiration, Halal Executives should at least have a bachelor's degree on top of a Halal Executive training certificate. Halal program coordinators in Australia also have minimum bachelor's degree certificates. However, according to MPPHM 2020, a minimum diploma in relevant qualification is sufficient for a Halal Executive;

"...Halal Executive means an individual responsible for ensuring Halal compliance in a company or premises. Halal Executive must meet the following requirements: Muslim, Malaysian citizen, hold a permanent position, hold a minimum diploma in Halal Management or any qualification equivalent to it or have experience in Halal Management for at least five years and possess Halal Executive experience in preparing Halal training registered under Halal Professional Board (HPB) JAKIM..."

Contradictory to Malaysian requirements, there is no specific requirement to be appointed as a Halal program coordinator or Halal Executive in Australia. However, based on the clause below, it can be concluded that this program coordinator should have sufficient knowledge of species, boning, offal processing, product processing, and others related to it. Mentioned in AAG-AIO 2022;

“...the approved arrangement will identify the AIO/s operating on the establishment and the scope of the Halal production process, e.g., species, boning, offal processing, further processing, by-products preparation, storage, and where applicable transportation...”

Hence, it is safe to say that the best candidates for Halal Executives in the food industry are candidates with food science backgrounds who acquired Halal Executive training.

These personnel need to handle and comprehend information and processes related to food and its safety, as well as Halal-related processes. Although MHMS 2020 specifies a minimum diploma to hold these positions, the present study believes that college graduates are more suitable to hold this critical position as bachelor's degree programs offer a specialised and career-oriented approach to applying the abilities obtained in the topic of study pursued throughout the bachelor's degree (Wall, 2021). Individuals with a college degree tend to possess more advantages than individuals without a degree (Horowitz, 2018), especially in concrete technological advances and economic development (Acemoglu & Autor, 2012; Goldin & Katz, 2009). Figure 9 illustrates the requirements of Halal Executives in Malaysia and Australia generated by *Atlas.ti* from the data acquired.

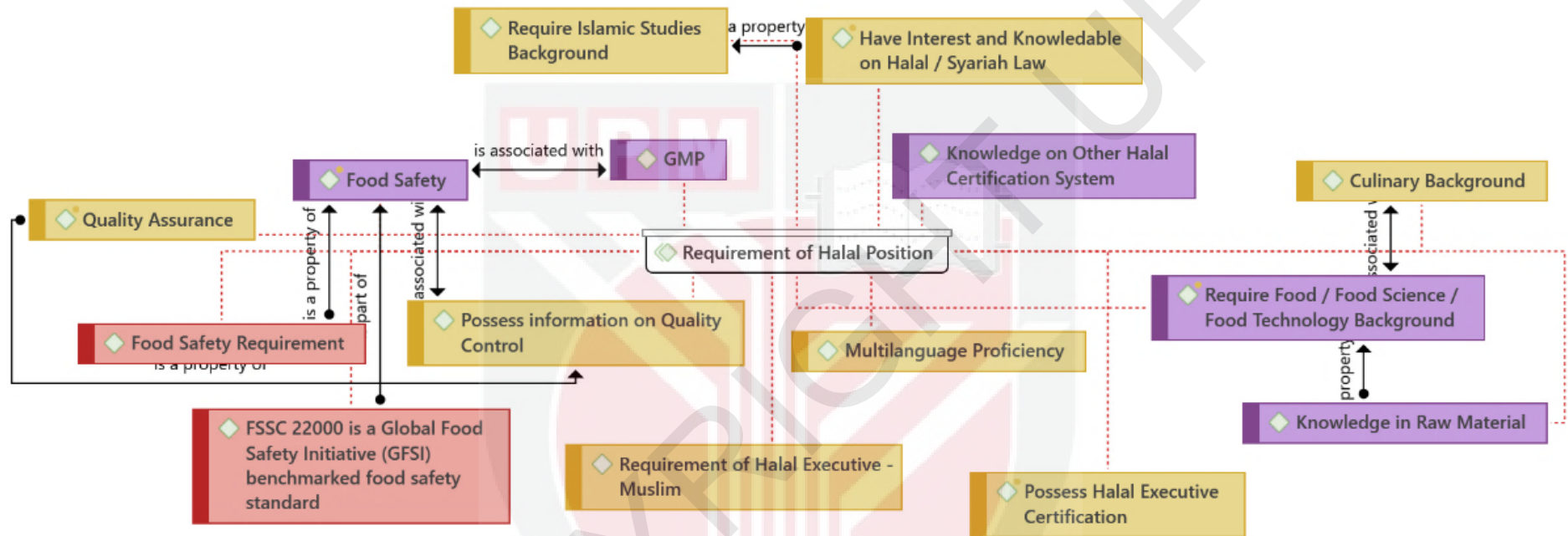


Figure 9 : Atlas.ti Visual Representation of Halal Executives' Requirements

4.3.3 Job Scope of Halal Executive

The title of the position reflects itself; the primary job scope of Halal Executives is to facilitate anything related to Halal programs at their respective companies, especially related to **Halal certification application and maintenance**. The information shared their experience in applying for Halal certification for their companies. Informant C explained the whole process of application submission, starting from document preparation, the internal process flow of documentation, preparing the application through the online system, MYeHalal and hardcopy of all documents uploaded, making payment for the application, and auditing session by JAKIM or State Islamic Religion Department (depending on which state your companies situated and applied from). Informant C mentioned;

"...to start the process for this Halal certificate, it is most important for us to have internal documentation. Ok, what does that mean? We have the flow chart, and we have the product specs. Then, we have a list of raw materials and suppliers that must be available. So, these are the documents we must prepare first. Then, when we prepared the hard copy, we keyed on the MyeHalal system. So, when we put it in MYeHalal, we keyed in and completed everything, and we sent the application online, then we submitted it, and we have a hard copy. We will wait for the JAKIM to process. If (in) Selangor is JAIS - Selangor Islamic Religion Department (jurisdiction). If JAIS, they will first audit the document. So, all the documents are completed, and we will get a letter for payment; payment for them to come audit. But if the document is incomplete, they will chase us for the (remaining) document until it is complete. Or if we cannot really complete the document. For example, if we have the raw material, but the raw material is from abroad. It is hard to get it (Halal certification for that raw material). Because we make small purchases, it is hard to get. So, we have to either remove the product from the list or remove the raw material from our list. When everything is complete, they have received all the payments, they will give us a letter for us to audit. While waiting for them to issue an audit date, I will have an internal committee meeting; everyone has to be on standby (mode). Be ready. I must look back on all documents, invoices and so on. So that is how we process (an application). And they (JAIS/JAKIM) come for an audit..."

Informant B also stated that during the application process, while preparing for submission, companies (through Halal Executives) should refer to JAKIM's website

for the requirements of the application and check which Halal scheme is relevant to our companies. Some of the documents include (but are not limited to) company registration documents, financial proof, and building layout. According to them, application documentation must be prepared in two different copies: online (upload and submit on the MYeHalal portal) and hardcopy versions. Informant B said;

"...we have to get a list of what we need from JAKIM's website on the Halal section. They have listed all schemes and depending on the scheme (we are applying for), we must follow it. They want SSM (Companies Commission of Malaysia) Registration ID. Financial documents, and so on. MyIPO (Intellectual Property Corporation of Malaysia) ID, and so on. We follow what people (JAKIM) want and get to the flow chart and so on. That is the first thing we need to know what we want (for Halal certification). Then we process. Follow and prepare according to the process in an orderly manner. When everything is ready for the annexe (appendix of the application), we must disclose the layout of the building and so on; when they come, they will audit this. Then, they will check. First, they will check the documents, and then he will check on the site for this. Usually, after the audit, he will issue an NCR letter if it is not good (non-conformance); if it is good, then they will not issue the letter. After the letter is out, they want us to complete the NCR. If the NCR is successfully resolved, they will close the case. They will decide whether to come or not (for another visit), depending on NCR. If NCR is a major, they will first verify before they approve. If you do not pass it, you will not get the Halal Certificate. If you pass, only then will they issue a Halal Certificate. As for the verification of the difference, it will take around 3 to 6 months to complete..."

Informants B and D shared that during the application, sometimes the auditors will issue an NCR (Non-conformance report), stating that some of the company's procedures or materials are not in line with JAKIM's/ Halal certification bodies' requirements. Hence, applicants should address this NCR and revert to the certification bodies for re-evaluation, and if the matter is resolved, they will issue certification. Informant D said;

"...it is like we are issuing NCR (Non-Conformance Report) for people (other departments) to answer. Okay, (once) it is close, then we will reply to (back) JAKIM. It is like that. Then wait for the decision..."

The Halal certification procedure in Australia is not significantly different from that in Malaysia. However, one noticeable distinction between Malaysia's and Australia's Halal certification status is the certification bodies issued. In Malaysia, manufacturers will typically apply Halal certification for all products they produce, and all products will receive Halal certifications from JAKIM. Any changes in the ingredients of the existing products or the production of new additional products will have to go through an update notification or an application of the latest certification to JAKIM. Hence, the manufacturers or the premises will be labelled as Halal-certified brands/manufacturers/premises. On the other hand, in Australia, Halal certifications are issued only to certain products, depending on the application. Hence, consumers may notice that some products from a company may be Halal certified while others may not. Informant: I shared their experience as Halal program coordinators in their company when applying for Halal certifications. Informant I said;

"...but the general procedure would be reaching out to say, for example, JKC (Halal Certification Authority). Em.. and connecting with them, receiving their requirements, making sure that you are able to implement that and then they will audit you to see whether you can be certified. That is what I believe the general process is. In regard to our products, we do not specifically manufacture them; we do not manufacture them specifically for Halal. We manufacture products, and then if an export market or customer would like that to be certified, we assess the product. So, we assess the recipe to make sure that, honestly, there are not any ingredients in there that are not certified themselves. If that is okay, then we add that into the online portal that JKC has; we have that recipe in, and we provide the supplier certificates for the ingredients. Then we just em.. submit that for review. Then, contact JKC to ask them to physically add it to the certificate. And so, prior to all that assessment, we also assessed our line capability to make sure that the lines that we produce have been certified by JKC, too. And em.. compliant. So, make sure the cleaning is correct and that we are not running any non-Halal material before running a Halal-certified product. So on and so forth..."

Another standard job scope of Halal Executive is related to **monitoring raw materials**. Some Halal Executives may have to act as procurement personnel to purchase and acquire raw materials for production. However, most Halal Executives

will have to prepare and monitor documentation and storage related to raw materials.

Informant A mentioned that it is the responsibility of Halal Executives to monitor the ingredients used in the production. Informant A said;

"...we have to monitor all ingredients used in the company..."

Informant C expressed that to apply for Halal certification, they must remove certain ingredients or raw materials from the list of ingredients as the material does not meet the certification's specifications. They may require approval from higher-ups to remove certain ingredients, especially if they are the main ingredients to produce a specific product. Informant C said;

"...usually, to remove this raw material from the list (ingredient and for certification application), I will discuss it with my director first. If the raw material is not a main ingredient, then I can remove (from the list) myself..."

Informant C continued;

"...but if it is critical, for example, we want to make the cheese sauce. The Cheese to get certified Halal cheese is a bit difficult, especially for the industry (manufacturers) that buys in small quantities. If they buy in bulky quantities, that is no problem. We asked the vendor. So, if there is not any, I decided to let this product out first (from the list) for us to apply Halal..."

Similar points were shared by Informant H. Halal Executives are responsible for ensuring that every raw material acquired is Halal certified, and communication with suppliers is vital to ensure relevant documentation is completed and provided.

Informant H said;

"...and we must make sure our raw material is ready to go (ready for Halal certification). The raw material we buy from our supplier must make sure all the raw material has a Halal Certificate..."

Another vital job scope of a Halal Executive is to **develop, update and maintain the Halal Assurance System** of the companies. Informant C stressed that developing a Halal assurance system in their company helps to ensure that all steps and procedures taken by all personnel are essential and how the Halal assurance system acts as an oath taken by everyone to commit to the Halal program to ensure everything is following the Sharia law. Informant C discussed;

"...the Halal policy actually helps. That is, when we have drafted one policy, it means that we make our oath to commit, with the whole company deciding to commit. Okay. So, when we have an oath, it is like making a promise. It means we can follow that thing. So, it is beneficial; it is like a warning if we forget..."

Informant F acknowledged that as a Halal Executive, it is part of their responsibility to develop and establish a Halal assurance system in the company and ensure all personnel adhere to it. They have introduced every company policy, including the Halal assurance system to the newcomers during the orientation period to ensure everyone is on board. Informant F said;

"...Halal policy, I made (develop) it. So, I have told all the staff, and even the boss already knows. He has taken notes. So, now we are really committed to our policy because we must take care of our certification. So, during training or if there is a new staff, we will tell all our policies, especially the Halal policy. We have a way of handling everything. How to care or what the company must do. So, everyone understands. Have to follow..."

In Australia, despite producing Halal and non-Halal (also known as Haram) products within the same business entity, most Halal-certified companies develop a system to ensure that the Halal certification they acquire will not be revoked. For instance, they developed a production system that segregated the production of Halal and non-Halal products, including the storage procedures. Hence, the Halal program coordinators are responsible for ensuring that the company's policy and Halal assurance system

complement one another to ensure everything follows the regulations. Informant N said;

"...our policy stated that obviously, we, as a business, are committed at all levels to the continuous improvement and review of our programs (including Halal) on-site, that we take the program seriously and that no non-Halal or Haram ingredients are used in our products or and are segregated and stored appropriately as not to affect the products that are certified. So, it is complimentary, and it is complementary to our general business processes and such..."

Spreading awareness amongst companies' personnel, especially on Halal programs and initiatives, is another vital role of Halal Executives. Ideally, awareness and reminders are done through **audit training**. Informant B firmly stated that an internal Halal audit is essential to spread employee awareness. Through this measure, Halal Executives could educate relevant departments and personnel on the proper etiquette in handling Halal programs, especially concerning certification. Informant B explained;

"...internal Halal Audit is very important. Internal audits are the most important because they each want to be audited by other departments. So, they want to understand what his role is. What questions do you want to ask in relation to the clauses of the certificate he got? They must understand. He (the employee) has to know what he has to do..."

Indeed, complying with Halal programs and certification is everyone's commitment, and to minimise errors and delays in production, every personnel directly working with Halal production should adequately understand Halal and not rely only on the Halal Executive to keep tabs on everything. Informant A also shared their experience that Halal Executives ought to provide sufficient training to all personnel to ensure the aspiration of the Halal program in the company is comprehended and practised. They also mentioned that as Halal Executives, it is vital to upskill themselves by attending other training (typically externally) as in their organisations, they are trainers to other

personnel. Upskills in the context are not limited to Halal-related training such as audit and certification training. It has also expanded to other ventures, such as Training for Trainers (ToT) and communication training. Informant A said;

"...Halal Executive has many job scopes, one of which is to give awareness training to the staff. And that is compulsory for training. So, to up skills, improve yourself, attend the training..."

In Australia, the function of internal audits is also the same; it is a form of communicating and educating. Halal program coordinators typically conduct several series of internal audit sessions to continuously educate and communicate with other departments to ensure that Halal programs comply with the regulations and certification. As an example, Informant K shared;

"...in regard to saying the office environment, again, the main form of communication is training, and we do internal audits..."

Food safety and quality measures are also part of Halal Executives' responsibility. The informants shared their experience catering to some responsibilities related to quality assurance, quality control, and safety. For instance, Informant H explained that they must monitor and prepare documents for many safety certifications and safety-related processes such as HACCP. They must ensure that employees directly catering and handling food fulfil safety requirements such as typhoid injection and wear specific manufacturing attire during production. Informant H explained;

"...we have some certifications, such as HACCP certification. The certification itself is a form of marketing. We want to assure you that we have buyers; okay, we have HCCAP. Confirm that our food is clean. If we have Halal, confirm that our food is Halal. It is pure from excrement (non-Halal elements), pig meat, alcohol, other non-Halal sources, and other animals. Or are the workers here all proper (fit to work in the food industry)? Proper clothes. Get a typhoid shot. Everyone has gone to training. It is like that. Then, when there is something like that, when things like that are enforced, indirectly, the Halal Executive position will be respected. So, people will say, 'Oo Halal is important, so who wants to keep Halal?', Halal Executive. So, Halal Executive has to be there too..."

Certification is a part of the marketing strategy. Of course, some certifications are required by local authorities as part of the basic requirements for operating a business. However, some may observe it as a marketing move, especially the Halal certifications. A business could cater to different market segmentations, especially among Muslim consumers when they have additional Halal certification for their products (Africa, 2018), as the products are now available for consumption for both, Muslim and non-Muslim consumers.

Another informant mentioned that Halal is and should be treated as a **quality measure**. Halal is not only limited to permissible ingredients but also related to quality and safety. Halal products should be safe to consume and free from impurities, especially things that are physically harmful to the body (Arif & Sidek, 2015). In this case, Informant B shared their thoughts about how Halal should be treated as a quality measure. Halal Executives should monitor food production thoroughly with the intention of ensuring quality and controlling it. Informant B explained;

"...first, Halal is the same as quality. The journey does not end. It continues forever. It means that we are looking for something that is Halal; it is something that continues because it is not limited to Halal. Halal Topyiban. So, what do they (components in Halal) have? Our product is Halal, our raw material is Halal, and the process also must be Halal. Do you follow Sharia and so on? Does this thing bring danger to us or something like that? So, this thing has a long way to go. We have to see (monitor) this thing further, and it is safer to eat. For example, our product has a lot of machinery (using machines to produce products). So, if we sell raw material products that are Halal and so on, yes, the product is Halal, but we do not know that there might be iron fragments, dirty fragments, etc. That thing must go through machines that can detect iron and so on. We can ensure that the products we produce are safe as well. Not Halal but safe..."

Informant H also shared that Halal Executives should equip themselves with additional knowledge related to food safety. Food quality is vital as Halal Executives may encounter other scenarios beyond the context of Halal matters. Coming from a

significant food catering company, they discussed that sometimes they must be prepared on the food preservation questions and concerns typically mastered by employees with food science and food technology educational/training backgrounds.

Informant H said,

"...it does not matter if Food Safety has training. GMP training, HACCP training, err, what do we call it, food quality training, and all kinds of related things, right? Why is it that when we do this food safety training? From here, we will learn examples such as why we must heat food at a temperature of 70 or above. Why do we have to keep food warm at 60 Celsius for only 4 hours? For more than 4 hours, we must toss it away. It is like that. Why do we have to store the cake at 0-4 Celsius?...".

Informant D also shared that on some occasions, Halal Executives must cover the safety requirements of the productions; in this case, knowledge of HACCP and GMP is highly needed. The job scope discussed by the informants seems to be larger, beyond Halal issues and quality management. Informant D said,

"...because if it is a small industry, HE (Halal Executive) does not just take care of the Halal certificate; he takes care of other systems like HAACP and all that. So those two pieces of knowledge must be there. Then, the system in terms of layout. Imagine if it is like entering a new place, then we want to see what to rearrange the layout; if we do not have experience or knowledge of what kind of layout is needed, then it is quite difficult there...".

A similar scenario is observed in Australia, where Halal program coordinators typically cater to every regulation and requirement. Typically, Halal coordinators will have to prepare information about the local authority's requirements, especially safety and quality. Besides, if a company provides Kosher services and products, for instance, Halal program coordinators will have to cater for that program, especially since there are no specific employees dedicated to Halal and Kosher programs in Australia's food industry. Informant L expressed;

"...we request different pieces of documentation, says its product information, like Kosher certificate, Halal Certificate, process flows like other quality food safety information. Em. And then when we have a product that we want to certify, and we put it in the portal, and we use those supply raw material Halal Certificates in there to show that all the ingredients that we are using in this product, we want to certify all the ingredients are individually certified as well..."

Halal Executives should also oversee the traceability system of the products, especially concerning the Halal traceability system. Developing a traceability system is part of the requirement enlisted by certification bodies; thus, typically, companies will assign this task to Halal Executives to establish the system, and the production and labelling site will develop the products based on the established traceability system. Informant F shared that there should be a holistic and comprehensive traceability system accessible by the public or at least by fellow food industry players, starting from the raw material, ingredients, manufacturing, or productions, and retailing. Informant F said;

"...or another way that we can trace what the product is like, to know if it is Halal or not. Like now, maybe, in my opinion, JAKIM has to do away with (establish)..."

Informant D also shared that Halal Executives should directly establish a traceability system for Halal products as they will play a check-and-balance entity for the whole system. It is crucial to involve Halal Executives in the traceability system to ensure the certification is not revoked due to blind auditing visits by certifiers and to minimise the tendency of product withdrawal due to issues about Halal. Informant D explained;

"...so, after that, for example, related to Halal products, for traceability. We already know what general traceability is like. So, if you say we need to study more about traceability, what areas and processes do they (other departments) need to improve, we (Halal Executives) want to help, we have the need to have knowledge about traceability A to Z..."

Undoubtedly, Halal program coordinators in food companies play several roles in Australia and are expected to provide a traceability system for their products. For example, Informant M discussed how a certifier requests additional information related to their traceability system to ensure that comprehensive information is gathered and submitted. This information is crucial for product recall due to defects. Some products are exported to different countries. For this circumstance, Halal program coordinators have to prepare different sets of applications and documentation as different Halal certification bodies (or governments) typically have different requirements. Informant M discussed;

"...providing extra traceability information at the moment, actually, so, making sure that the product information form that we have provided has all the numbers that are linked to this product. Em. Slightly change the name so that it reflects the Halal Certificate a bit better in one section. They are not compromising the legal name that we have the product traded as. Em. And providing a certificate number when we say it is Halal Certified and stuff like that. So, providing that extra traceability piece but also trying to communicate that we do not have a link in traceability, if you contact us about this product, we cannot identify it straight away and work back from there. So, em.. yeah. I think some of the information was misunderstood initially. It particularly works for reference code and stuff like that. However, hopefully, that should all be cleared up now..."

Ironically, the job scope of Halal Executives is varied, depending on the type of food production, size of the companies, number of personnel, background of expertise and many other factors. Communication with informants produces a variety of job scopes; some works are partially related to Halal food productions, while others may seem far beyond the typical Halal Executives' capacity. For instance, in one scenario where a Halal Executive is supervising different departments in their company, under their supervision, they oversee the Quality Assurance unit, Quality Control unit and Halal unit. Typically, for small and medium enterprises, Halal and quality sections are

combined and supervised under one segmentation; hence, it is understandable that

Informant C administers three different units. Informant C said;

"...under my supervision, I also have to monitor QA. Below me is a QA Exec. Then there is QC Exec. And then there is the production supervisor. So, mostly for the job scope, we divide it into 3. One for QA has a section, quality control, and then Halal has a section. Then, the operation part. The operation means something like hiring employees. Then, for us, we purchase raw materials. Sometimes, I am involved with the clients too, like they have questions about purchasing a product, that is it..."

Another astonishing piece of information shared by the informants is that the majority of them are involved in **Halal original equipment manufacturer (OEM) activities** which customarily, food companies provide products and services to other companies by using their excess production/ service capacity (Huang et al., 2017). Typically, food companies will create and develop new products for other companies to sell. However, in this case, these companies, through their Halal Executives, provide Halal certification consultations and services to other companies, especially among SMEs. Informant C shared their experience of how an SME entity dealt with Halal certification applications for months due to the inability to provide a Halal certification of an ingredient of their product. SMEs typically use small ingredients from farmers, local supermarkets, or suppliers to develop their products. Of course, ingredients produced on a small scale and homemade typically would not have a Halal certification, especially from Halal ingredients like palm sugar. Informant C explained;

"...he (external company applying for Halal certificate) came seeking help with the Halal application process, which was endless, for a year. A year. Imagine it is a small company. The company uses an herbal process, like an herbal drink. But he has a very small SME. Tiny company. It is because he has unapproved raw materials; the raw materials were, if I am not mistaken, homemade palm sugar. Where can that person get a Halal certificate for it?..."

Informant E also shared that the company director encouraged them to join Halal OEM services. Of course, it will be more profitable for a company to provide such a service on top of the developed products in the market. The services provided by the Halal Executives for certification consultation are charged in various ways, based on time, consultation provided, and filling out the application and submission. Informant E shared;

"...at the same time, I must handle another company's application process. Because for me, it is like I work at this company. I have a good boss. A very understanding boss..."

In Australia, OEM services, specifically for Halal certification, are not noticeable as food manufacturers will typically employ Halal certification bodies directly to assist them in their application. However, Informant I expressed that due to their experience and expertise, external companies seek guidance on how to apply for Halal certification to export to Muslim countries. Informant I said;

"...we had that recently with another company who actually would reach us and knew we had Halal certifications and were looking to export a product to a market that required Halal Certifications. So, they reached out to ask for some guidance. So that would not happen if I did not have that knowledge base..."

This experience proves that knowing Halal product development and certifications is substantial, especially for the global market, and will be a valuable skill set. It also indicates that although Halal OEM services are rare in Australia, knowledge sharing among food manufacturers on Halal exists as companies pay more attention to this segmented market.

Apart from that, **labelling** is also part of the job scope in which Halal Executives are involved. The label prepared and available on the product packaging should align with

the requirements enlisted by Halal certifiers. Informant J explained how they must monitor and verify that the labelling process is executed following the regulation of the certifications. According to Informant J;

"...currently, my scope includes, as mentioned before, outline labelling. So, regarding all the labelling you see on the pack, I look after compliance with all of that—the same thing with our raw material specifications. Making sure of what we are getting in compliance. Em.. Managing any issues that come up. I also look after programs like Halal. Mainly Halal. On-site as well. So, we need to make sure we are compliant with the standards that we provided, taking into account our export market as well. And what else is there? I think that is mostly as I manage the program outside..."

As discussed, different countries recognise different Halal-certified bodies, which adopt different procedures and requirements when awarding their certifications. Hence, as explained by Informant J, especially in Australia, food manufacturers will have to prepare additional documentation to market their products depending on the countries they are exporting. This circumstance is a drawback of decentralising Halal certification in Australia and globally.

Besides, some Halal Executives were bearing other tasks in their companies that were beyond the capacity of Halal Executives. For instance, clarification was sought from Informant C about the work they performed in the company, especially regarding the **recruitment of employees**. They explained that they have been performing different tasks and roles in their company as the size is small. The way they narrated, it seemed like they were the on-site directors of the company. All tasks and decisions within the manufacturing side are their responsibility, and the company's owner relies on them to oversee every part of the manufacturing sites. Informant C said;

"...yes. Because this company is not significant, it is not a big company. So, we do not have any HR personnel. So, what I can do (to help) I do..."

Analysis from MHMS 2020, MPPHM (Domestic) 2020, and AAG-AIO 2022 showed that the governments are not establishing any specific clause discussing the job scope of Halal Executives in companies. Hence, the job scopes of these executives solely depend on the companies' administrations' ability to utilise these personnel based on the availability of human resources, financial stability, size of the industry, and many other factors. Figure 10 illustrates the Job scopes of Halal Executives, shared by the informants, generated by *Atlas.ti*.



4.3.4 Soft Skills Requirements

The responsibilities of Halal Executives in the food industry go beyond applying for Halal certifications. As discussed previously, Halal Executives are expected to wear different hats to accommodate different roles in the industry. Hence, based on the experience shared by the informants, some unspoken-required skills needed to be attained to execute tasks given to them.

The informants discussed how Halal Executives must find and create opportunities in the workplace, as there are no standard guidelines on what or how Halal Executives should work in the industry. In other words, **creative and analytical thinking and problem-solving thinking** are expected amongst Halal Executives in the food industry. Informant A expressed;

"...execs (Halal Executives) have to be smart to look for opportunities and (to some people) Halal seems easy (tasks), but that is important to make sure that Halal exists and becomes more important in the company..."

As this position is part of the local authority's requirement to attain Halal certification, traditionally, companies have not established any specific and detailed job scopes for Halal Executives, which is one of the reasons, based on the previous discussion, Halal Executives are playing different roles. Hence, to provide a positive impression of the position, most Halal Executives need to create opportunities in the industry, such as developing a Halal Assurance System, Halal Traceability System, and Halal Internal Audit System.

Supporting that idea, Informant C shared their experience whereby one product of their clients is using non-Halal certified raw material; hence, as the product developer

(OEM), they must alter the recipe so that the final result of the product can be Halal-certified. Informant C said;

"...had to find another alternative to replace that thing (raw material). Although the flavour will not be the same, we must deliver it as our client requested. Because the client has their own recipes, when the client says they accept the new changes, we will try to work things out..."

Halal Executives are expected to solve these problems (or at least recommend solutions) as, typically, they are the ones who point out non-compliant substances in production through auditing or any other ventures. Hence, being creative and analytical, besides comprehending food science and technology knowledge, is important in dealing with problems like this. Halal Executives seem to be highly technical people who determine the Halal status of a product, and this position is crucial to the success of the organisation in marketing Halal products.

Informant D also discussed the importance of being creative, analytical, and able to solve problems as it will reflect on the whole position of Halal Executives within the industry, not only the person who occupies the position. Halal Executive positions are some of the requirements established by the authority and are not employed based on the companies' administrative decisions. Thus, manufacturers and business owners may have certain connotations about this position, especially since it is initially appointed not with their own will, especially when they expense these hirings, not the government. Informant D sighed;

"...because you have management expect the ideas from you. They hope you have a solution. So, you must give ideas. Solve problems—critical thinking. You must think outside the box. If the candidate, the Halal Exec, cannot (deliver ideas), none of these two things (critical thinking and problem-solving). It is hard. It is hard. So, any time the management will say.. ' Oh, this position is not important. No problem, the salary is low for this position.' Because they will think whoever sits in that position is not forward thinking..."

The company has to understand that hiring Halal Executives is crucial to marketing Halal goods. Reluctant to Halal Executives just for the sake of fulfilling the Halal certification requirements may jeopardise the production quality of Halal goods. Hence, with these underrated perceptions of companies towards Halal Executive positions, these executives need to ensure that they are delivering the job very well to stay relevant and to have promising future career growth.

Other prominent skills demanded from Halal Executives are **communication and negotiation skills**. Their experience shows that good communication skills can cater to most problems. Communicating with different crowds in the office requires different communication styles. Informant E expressed their experience of dealing with employees on the sites. People at the executive and managerial levels may have more insights and knowledge about things due to their level of education and others. However, people from lower positions might have different levels of understanding. Hence, Halal Executives should manoeuvre their communication styles according to the audience. Informant E said;

"...so, to be honest, I say that it is a communication issue with employees because I used to be in the factory (production site), I used to be a QA. Under me (supervision) is a QC. So, QC and I will discuss anything related to cooperation. Because we have people under us who help us handle it, right? It is like in the factory; the QA will deal with things on the site half the time. Sometimes, he is outside (production site), but most of the time, he is in the office doing documentation and so on. However, it is different when we work in the food chain franchise outlets; we work directly with the workers (on the site). There is no one to help us. Actually, this thing is tiring..."

Similar connotation expressed by Informant B;

"...most importantly, negotiate. It means the way we negotiate or the way we communicate with our superiors. Another thing is the way we communicate with our team (subordinates). Because you are in the middle. (Between management and subordinates) Ok. When you want to set up for Halal (program), you want to apply

for Halal OK. We want (our company) to become a Halal-listed company. So, you are in the middle. What do you have to do? You must deal with your management—the boss. Then you must communicate with other staff and team members for cooperation. If you do not have this, it is hard. It is a challenge for me. Because sometimes, I have met a boss who does not understand why this is not possible. Why not that? Why do we have to change our layout? Why? Why? So, if he does not want to. He does not understand. Then, he did not want to cooperate but wanted a Halal certificate. Ha, that is a big deal. And sometimes, a new candidate (Halal Executive) comes in. That is where it will be difficult for him to become a Halal Exec. Huh? So, the biggest challenge is there: communication. You must know how you want to negotiate because you cannot be firm even with the enforcement people. Sometimes, you must be gentle (speak nicely and professionally), but sometimes, you have to be firm. That is the main challenge, I think...".

Extending to the previous connotation, Informant D explained that sometimes top management makes some impossible requests, especially things beyond their control and jurisdiction, such as applying Halal certification for new products or menus on short notice. This scenario proves that communication skills are helpful, as they explained that acquiring Halal certification for a new product or menu will take time, as certifiers will review the documentation, the raw material, and the process. They will also have to pay a visit for audit purposes to verify the submitted document tally with the production site. Thus, to justify this situation, Halal Executives should communicate professionally why they could not deliver the request, as in this scenario, communication is key in making such vital decisions (Putra & Ali, 2022). Informant D shared;

"...we need to have strong justification. For example, we have a promotional menu. For example, if they want to launch a new menu tomorrow and only today, let me know. On the same day, they want to apply for Halal (certification). He (top management) told me to make sure it is Halal (certified) tomorrow; I will tell them it is impossible. I will share what the risks are. So next time, I will suggest, 'next time you want to make a promotional menu, you have to inform us (The Halal team) how long we have already given the time frame; it should be at least two months before launching' ...".

Another scenario was shared by an informant regarding owning and keeping a dog within the manufacturing compound. To the logic of top management, if the products and their packaging are free from impurities, it should not be a Halal issue, especially if the dog is outside of the building. However, a special MPPHM (Domestic) clause stated that manufacturing premises should be free of pets and animals. Mentioned in MPPHM (Domestic);

"...the Processing Area must be free of any raw materials or products that are not Halal or of doubtful Halal status...".

Adding to that, another clause in MPPHM explaining pets in the premise;

"...the premises must be fenced or have a control mechanism to prevent domestic or wild animals, insects and pests from entering or being in the area of the premises...".

Hence, the informant professionally argued with the top management why keeping dogs in the compound or premises is not allowed, as they would not be granting Halal certification. Top management may not see the logic behind this clause. Hence, as someone who understands Sharia law and the Halal certification system, it is the Halal Executive's responsibility to explain and educate the reasons behind this ruling (Affendi et al., 2022). Informant C shared their experience dealing with this scenario;

"...because it was a problem with dogs at that time, I explained that dogs cannot be in the manufacturing compound. We must give reasons why dogs cannot be in the compound. This dog has fur and saliva. Suppose it sticks to it (products/packaging). We cannot. It is impurities (against Halal) and so on. We must explain to him (the company's director). It was easy for me because I am a firm. I said, 'If you cannot fulfil this, I cannot continue with the Halal application either. You choose between these two. Do you want a Halal certificate, or do you want to choose to do you have a dog? If you choose your dog, I will hold the application. And you have products that cannot be exported. So, if you still want to continue, let us put this dog in another place. We built a house a little far away. But he can still monitor the factory' like that. So, we must do something like this. He had to follow what I said. As I said, I do not dare to be responsible if this dog suddenly comes into the production site, especially when we are manufacturing. Or at night, I do not see it. The way I explained it to him was nice. And initially, he

was very unsatisfied. But I said I could not do anything either. This is a requirement. This is the Islamic law that we must obey to get this application. This is not man-made law, I said to him. This is really what we have in Islam. We have Islamic law, I said. This is true. If you do not meet the above criteria, I said you cannot continue to get the certification. So, he is ok. Take your time. After a week of discussion, he agreed. As I said, we want to export to many countries. So, our Halal cert can be exported. There is no Halal certificate; you cannot export. Even if you want to enter the market, you cannot. So, that is my experience...".

Halal Executives must also possess **leadership and managerial skills** to work within the food industry. Expressed Informant D;

"...because when you are promoted to a higher level, you will no longer focus on execution skills like how do you do (deal) all these things? You will (focus more on) managing people. So, if you are promoted to a managerial level but have no subordinates, then you cannot polish the leadership skills...".

Depending on the food industry type, Halal Executives will typically have to accommodate executive and managerial tasks simultaneously. Hence, Halal Executives are expected to juggle these two tasks, primarily when they must internally compete for higher positions amongst quality personnel/food technologists. Other than that, the experience shared in the previous sections demonstrated that Halal Executives typically have subordinates handling various tasks. Thus, managerial and leadership skills are highly demanding to fill in this position. A similar narrative was mentioned by Informant A;

"...you have to show leadership quality. If there is any event or program, we have to take part, volunteer to take leadership roles, and show we are potential leaders...".

Halal Executives ought to take the opportunity to stand out even during non-official tasks and events. Unofficial tasks, especially about company events such as company gatherings, public promotions, corporate social responsibilities events and even unions, are beneficial mediums for Halal Executives to demonstrate their leadership

skills, especially amongst top management and other personnel who did not work directly with them. Creating a social image amongst colleagues and top management in the workplace is vital to remain competitive. Frequently participating employees in unofficial tasks, including corporate volunteering initiatives, have better opportunities for career progression (Mazanec, 2022). Figure 11 illustrates soft skill requirements for Halal Executives positions generated by *Atlas.ti*.



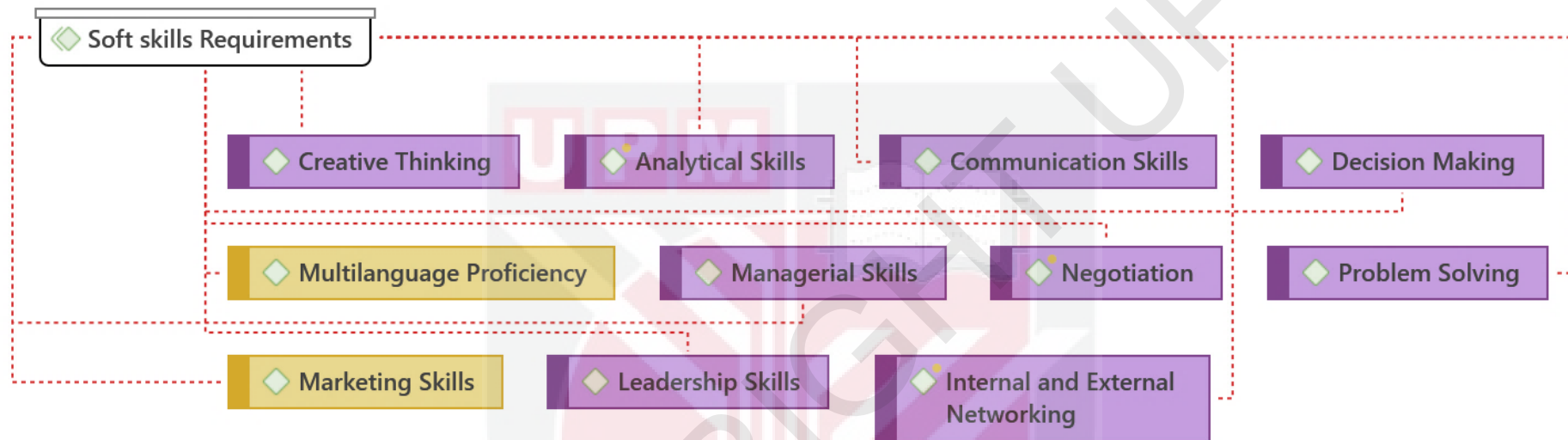


Figure 11 : Atlas.ti Visual Representation of Soft Skills Requirements for Halal Executives' Position

4.3.5 Training Requirements

Training is part of the requirements for handling Halal food products manufacturing. AAG-AIO 2022, MHMS 2020, and MPPHM 2020 disclosed generic training requirements for Halal-related personnel. For instance, AAG-AIO 2022 mentioned how onsite Muslim personnel must be consistently trained to carry out Halal-related activities, especially slaughtering;

“...the AIO must ensure the consistent training and ongoing assessment of nominated on-site Muslim personnel who carry out Halal meat certification operations on registered establishments (directly related to the religious slaughter such as slaughterman and supervisors) is maintained...”

AAG-AIO 2022 provides a guideline on a list of trainings highly recommended for on-site Muslim personnel to enrol and master whilst carrying out tasks. Nevertheless, these requirements are only subject to on-site Muslim personnel; Halal program coordinators/ Halal Executives are not required to master these skills. AAG-AIO recommended at least nine acquired skills for Halal on-site tasks, especially related to animal/ meat preparation for slaughtering;

“...provide information on the training for on-site Muslim personnel. This may include but is not limited to a) Religious requirements of Halal slaughter, b) stunning requirements, c) Halal slaughter techniques, d) product segregation, e) control of official marks/stamps, f) document/records control, g) inventory controls h) requirements of the meat industry, i) understanding of the Halal procedures in the establishment where they will work...”

In Malaysia, the government highlighted basic training requirements for Halal manufacturers, especially for Halal Executives and on-site Halal personnel (MHMS, 2020). In juxtaposition with Australia’s requirement, Halal trainings in Malaysia leans toward the fundamental knowledge of Halal, Sharia law and business, which is the expected skill and knowledge for Halal Executives to coordinate and facilitate Halal

programs in their companies. Mentioned in MHMS 2020 and MPPHM (Domestic) 2020;

“...Halal competency training must be conducted by a training provider registered under HPB JAKIM or an authoritative authority that includes the following scope: a) understanding of Sharia and fatwa, b) Malaysian Standard (MS), c) Malaysian Halal certification procedure manual, d) Malaysian Halal management system, e) Halal-related legislation and f) critical ingredients (if relevant) ...”.

A fatwa is an explanation based on a reference to sharia of any Islamic legal issue doubtful by an individual or group. Fatwa is the official viewpoint of an authoritative Muslim scholar (mufti) or a group of Muslim scholars in a committee (Isa et al., 2015). According to MHMS 2020 and MPPHM (Domestic) 2020, Halal awareness training must be conducted at least every three years by all employees to ensure the related knowledge is up-to-date and refreshed. Fatwas and Halal-related rulings will also progress and change, aligning with modern food technologies and innovations. Hence, this requirement is substantial to ensure that all employees are well-versed on current/new food technologies and their impact on food production and fatwa rulings. According to MPPHM and MHMS,

“...Halal awareness training must be carried out at least once every three years on all employees involved in processing and service activities ...”.

Comparative to real scenarios dealt with by Halal Executives in the food industry, the informants disclosed some insights on the relevant training of these positions. Training required and provided by Halal Executives is subject to the companies and their working environment.

For instance, Halal Executives should understand the logistics of product systems. It is part of their responsibility that every manufacturing component of Halal products

complies with the Sharia law and Halal certification requirements, including logistics (Mokhtar, 2021). Hence, Informant D believes that Halal Executives should attend logistic training to ensure that they can improve the system and avoid unnecessary risk during the logistical process. Informant D said,

"...I have mastered it and know how to apply for Halal (certification). The next area of improvement that I want to go to is the transportation section. After that, there is the logistics scheme, right? So, we do not want to go to the logistics (execute logistic tasks), but we want to see what kind of risks can happen with the potential of logistics. So what I did was look for training related to logistics..."

One of the most crucial elements that Halal Executives need to acquire is training on traceability system. Informant D expressed that Halal Executives typically have limited knowledge about the traceability of products. Hence, to ensure that the system works as expected, Halal Executives must attend standard traceability training to help maintain and develop a better system in their organisation, supplementary to logistical aspects. Informant D said,

"...so, after that, for example, I want (check) some Halal (ingredients/products) with traceability. We already know what general traceability is like. So, if you say we need to study more about traceability, what areas of the process do we want to improve, we want to help, we have to have knowledge about traceability from A to Z..."

As mentioned in the official documents, **awareness training** is essential. All employees must be trained to ensure they have the necessary knowledge of Halal food operation and production. Informant H shared their experience during the application for Halal certification. According to them, during the submission planning of the application, Halal Executives will initiate certain tasks simultaneously, including Halal awareness training for the employees. Informant H explained;

"...so, when we prepare for the six months (for Halal certification application), we have our form ready, we have all the data ready, we have all our staff who have had typhoid injection, we have had food handler training, we have given awareness (Halal) training. For pest control, we have to make sure pest control is all in order. Every month, we have to do pest control around the kitchen area. When everything is ready, we submit it to JAKIM..."

This training is important because, during the external auditing conducted by Halal-certified bodies, they will access any relevant documents, machines, ingredients, and personnel to ensure that every aspect, including on-site personnel, complies with the certification. Hence, substantial awareness training should be provided before and during the application submission.

Apart from Halal awareness training, Halal Executives should also attend and provide **Halal competency training** to ensure they and related personnel are competent to carry out Halal-related tasks. Informant B disclosed that during this training, they would assess the competency and understanding of the personnel towards the real-case scenario. Halal competency training is supplementary to awareness training as it requires a more practical approach and assessment than awareness training. Informant B said,

"...I believe it should be there (Halal competency training) to assess their competence and understanding. However, this is only an internal effort. Of course, internal training is not recognised, right? We only do it internally to teach..."

Previous narration proves that Halal Executive is required to provide continuous training to employees. Due to that, Informant A believes that Halal Executives should equip themselves with relevant skills for training purposes to ensure that the message is delivered and well-received by the employees. Thus, Informant A mentioned that it is important that Halal Executives attend trainer training. Informant A said,

"... TOT. Training of Trainers. One of the Halal Executive's job scopes is to give awareness training to the staff. And that is compulsory training (required by the government). So, to improve your skills, we have to attend the training..."

Another important training for Halal Executives is the **raw material and food handling training**. Halal Executives typically execute tasks related to administration and documentation, which are far from on-site tasks. However, as Halal Executives deal with certification applications and external audits from certifiers, they must understand the manufacturing process flows, especially concerning food preparations and slaughtering (Hassan et al., 2015). Informant H expressed their ideas to attend training related to food handling;

"...and if possible, I would like to attend training as much as possible. Training regarding food safety, GMP, HACCP, Halal, slaughtering, or even food preparation because all these are related to my job..."

Halal Executives should also understand how materials work within their production perimeter. Food and on-site safety are equally important for food production. Hence, these executives should also acquire training related to any material, especially hazardous materials, as this will be beneficial during the application and auditing of Halal certification. Disclosed by Informant D;

"...what kind of chemicals do we use? The detergent we use. If the products do not have a Halal certificate, how do we go about that? The critical items that we want to know are Halal or not. So, from there, the technical knowledge has to be applied. If that is the case, I will look for more training related to active ingredients. It is like this chemical; if it says chemical, we can get the MSDS (Material Safety Data Sheets). That is how we want to interpret every breakdown (of the ingredients) to know whether or not the source is Halal. I will look for training related to that...."

Dealing with audits is one of the most essential aspects of Halal Executives' tasks. Halal Executives typically participate in auditing sessions several times a year, either internal audit or external audit. This is why most Halal Executives highly recommend

junior executives to attend **audit training**, specifically Halal audit training, to ensure that executives are able to organise audits. Informant B shared the importance of audits as part of educating employees, especially in understanding clauses within the certification provided by the certifiers:

"...internal Halal Audit is very important. It is the most important because other departments must be audited. So, they must understand what their role is. What questions will be issued from the (Halal) certificate clauses we got? Everyone has to understand. Everyone has to know what he has to do..."

The Halal Executive position in Malaysia is dedicated solely to Halal-related programs in companies. They are required to perform various tasks related to Halal, especially Halal requirements in Malaysia, which are fairly strict compared to other countries (Latif et al., 2014). Hence, based on the experience shared by informants previously, the researcher could identify many types of training required for them to attend to excel in this position.

Dissimilar to Australia, most Halal program coordinators should be self-sufficient in administering, maintaining, and supervising Halal-related programs. This task is a supplementary task that adds to their role. Thus, as shared by Informant L below, Halal program coordinators typically will only have **on-the-job training** related to Halal programs. Informant L said,

"...yes. So do not need any, currently do not need any external qualifications, but it is more on-the-job training and learning through audits as well..."

As mentioned previously, most food manufacturers in Australia do not produce Halal-only products as they also cater to different dietary requirements and guidelines, especially if they are only produced for the local market. Hence, efforts toward the Halal program are significantly lower than in other countries. In fact, the requirement

for Halal certification in Australia is lenient compared to Malaysia. Hence, Halal program coordinators are expected to self-train on most of their tasks, especially Halal-related tasks. Figure 12 illustrates training requirements for Halal Executives positions.



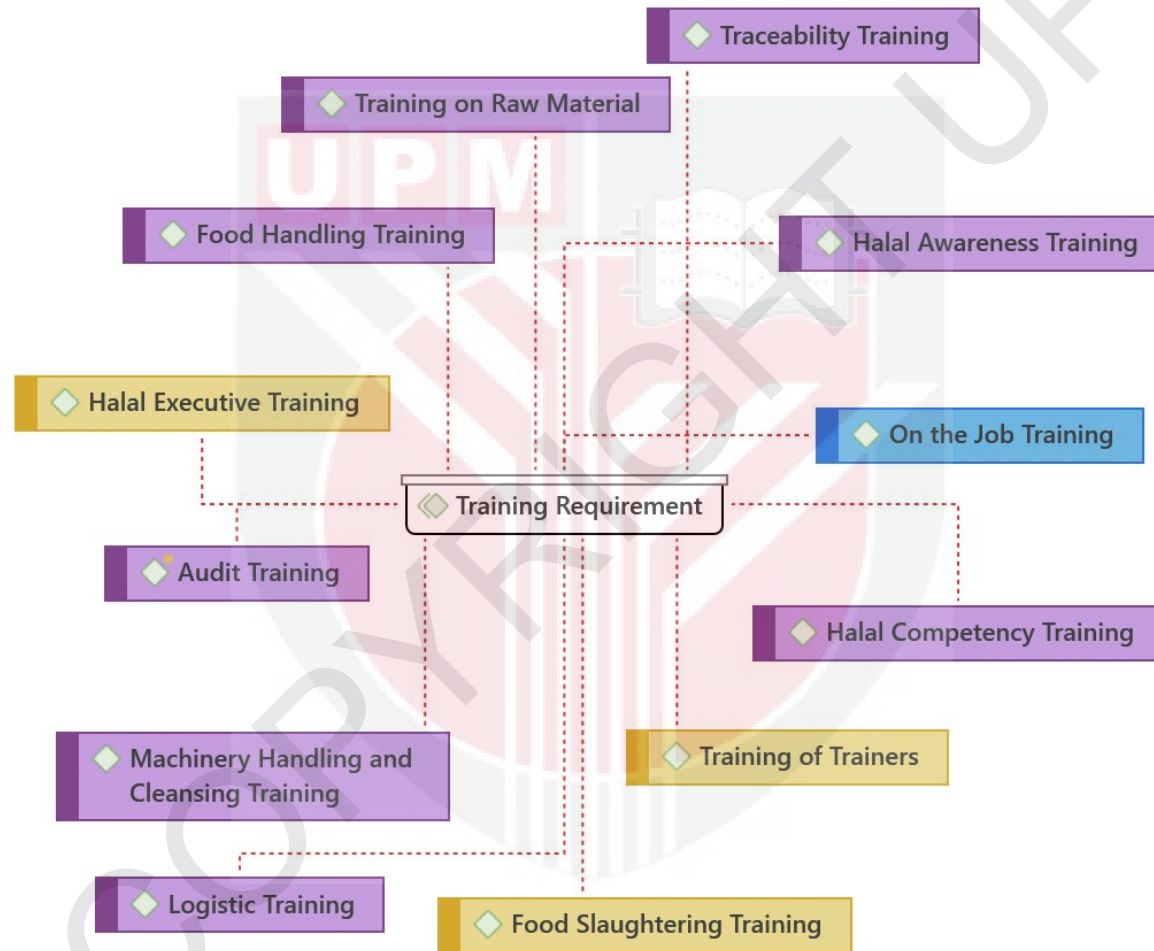


Figure 12 : Atlas.ti Visual Representation of Training Requirements for Halal Executive Position

4.3.6 Communication for Halal Certification

Halal certification is a continuous process for Halal food manufacturers. Fatwas and government requirements may occasionally change due to food innovation, formulation, and dynamic technological updates (Ahmad et al., 2018). Manufacturers will also produce new products and services to keep up with the demands of the markets. Hence, communication about Halal certification is essential to ensure that every stakeholder is on the same page.

There is no specific clause discussing communication in AAG-AIO 2022, especially for food manufacturers. One clause in AAG-AIO 2022 mentions that authorised Islamic organisations must demonstrate an organisational structure for Halal certification, including lines of communication. Mentioned in AAG-AIO 2022;

“...an organisational structure of the AIO, including lines of communication, management and personnel with certification or auditing responsibilities...”.

Hence, it is subject to food manufacturers to interpret the clause to suit their working environment and organisational structure. A similar scenario can be observed in Malaysia. Communication on Halal certification is not extensively discussed other than **meetings of the Internal Halal Committee**. According to MHMS 2020,

“...internal Halal Committee meetings must be held at least twice yearly and have a Halal-related discussion agenda...”.

Halal Executives discussed several important communications about Halal programs. Based on their experience, customarily, **communication about Halal programs is done through training**. Informant: I shared that it is easier to communicate with on-site employees about the Halal programs through training, especially when there is

confusion concerning this dietary requirement. As the Muslim population in Australia is relatively low, diligent efforts are needed to continuously educate employees in organisations on Halal programs and their significance to this religious belief.

Informant I said,

"...so, the main form of communication that we have is through training. Sometimes, it can be a little bit difficult for the operators to understand why it is important because, obviously, it is not a Food Safety risk. It is a religious requirement. So similar to a lifestyle claim like vegan or vegetarian..."

In addition, informants disclosed that official meetings are another communication form for Halal programs. Face-to-face communication is the best option to ensure the message is properly delivered. For instance, Informant C disclosed how Halal-related meetings are done every three months to ensure that issues related to Halal are continuously addressed. In Malaysia, customarily, minutes of meetings will be disseminated to all attendees to ensure that issues discussed are properly acknowledged and are expected to be addressed post-meeting. Informant C said,

"...the way we communicate is through meetings. We will call the meeting. As I said earlier, an example of a meeting is that we will have a meeting every three months—A Halal meeting. So, if anything is wrong or needs to be reprimanded, we will reprimand it during the Halal meeting..."

Communication with suppliers is also a substantial task for Halal Executives. Informant H expressed how some suppliers may not acquire Halal certification during the purchasing discussion. Hence, constant communication with the suppliers is needed to avoid additional risks, especially during external audits conducted by the Halal certification bodies. Informant H explained;

"...a critical example is cheese with meat. So, we have to ensure a Halal certificate (for both). The process is really long. We have to wait for a reply from Australia. This slaughterhouse is on its way to get a Halal certificate. So that will take more time. So, we have to push it since the beginning of the year; if you are lucky, you will get it within 1-2 months. Sometimes it is a drag. Sometimes, even a year (with

no certificate). Let us say that for one year, they still have not gotten a Halal certificate; we have to buy beef from India. That is one of the alternatives to get meat...".

Similar to training, **audit is another substantial communication** medium for Halal programs. Halal Executive will utilise the opportunity to communicate with respective personnel during the audit session. Internal Halal audits are typically done twice yearly, depending on the Halal certifiers' regulations and company working culture.

Informant N expressed:

"...in regard to saying the office environment, again, the main form of communication is training, and we do internal audits..."

Utilising social media as part of internal communication is common in Malaysia.

As disclosed by Informant E, issues on Halal and food safety are typically discussed in a WhatsApp group, as the information will be delivered in real-time. There are conversational records that help everyone track back any important information about Halal and food safety for reference. Informant E discussed;

"...besides that, we also made a WhatsApp group. Food Safety (committee) has a WhatsApp group. So, in the WhatsApp group, they are free to express what they want to say, what the challenge is, and what the difficulties are (related to Halal and safety). Alternatively, you can do it on WhatsApp if you have any questions. We will communicate so everyone will know about it..."

Figure 13 illustrates communications for Halal certifications disclosed by Halal Executives, generated by *Atlas.ti*.

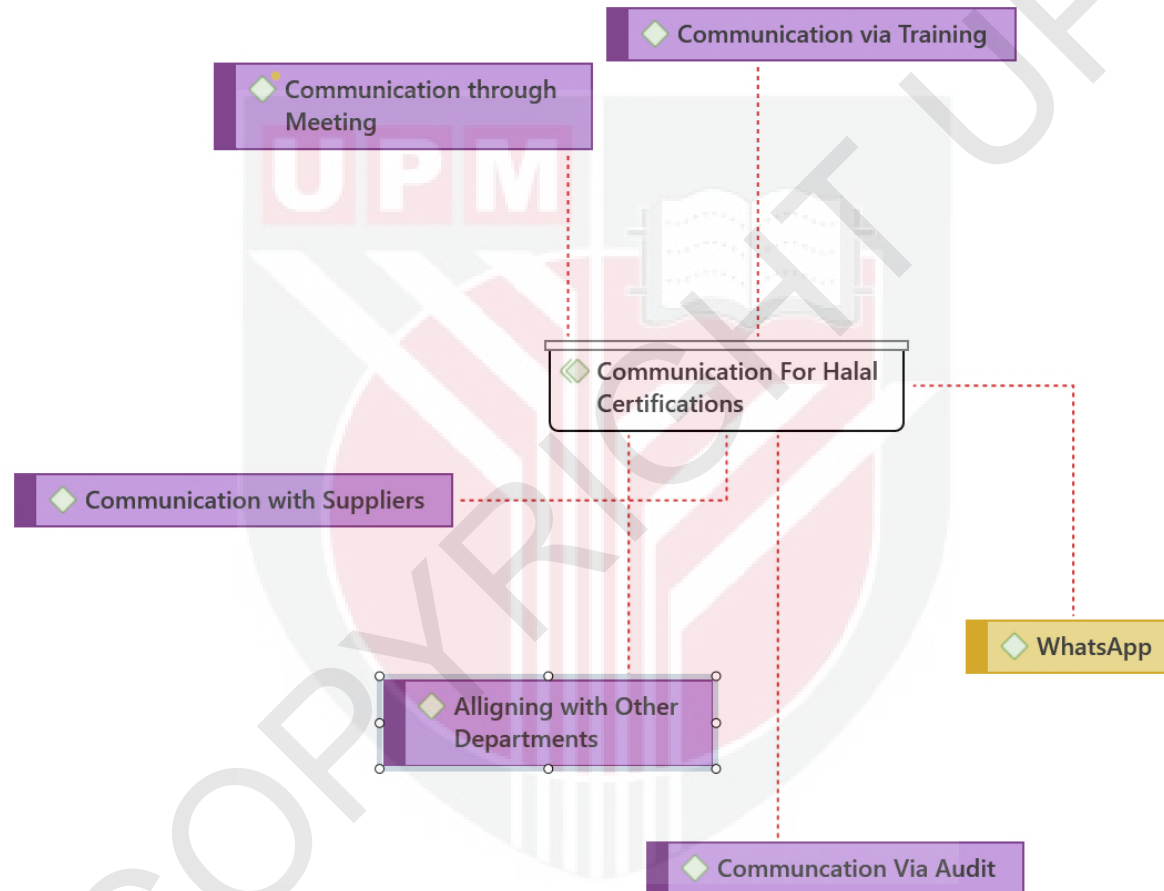


Figure 13 : Atlas.ti Visual Representation of Communications for Halal Certifications

4.3.7 Government Responsibility to Strengthen Halal

Informants are the regulatory officers in the organisations, and they deal with regulations established by the respective governments, especially Halal requirements. Hence, as the immediate stakeholders of Halal regulatory systems, they disclosed many insights on strengthening the Halal certification systems within a country. For instance, Informant H asserted that government should play a more active and proactive roles in raising awareness about the concept of Halal and Halal certification, particularly among non-Muslim consumers. Informant H said;

“...for example, if they have enough staff, they probably have a promotion unit; this unit can go to schools to promote why food has to be Halal. Why do we have to buy only Halal food? If awareness is high, and we can also give awareness to non-Muslims, and then people understand, I think it is easy. Because I think there are still many Chinese with Indians or non-Muslims (Malaysians), many still think Halal is all about no pork. This is not true...”

Although Malaysia is a Muslim-majority country, there are many misconceptions about the concept of Halal, especially among non-believers, as the concept of Halal goes beyond porks and carnivores. That is why the concept of Halal should be promoted in different settings, educational systems, and other measures. This is also important in the food manufacturers' settings, and the researcher could observe that non-Muslims are also involved in producing Halal products. Thus, the awareness should be in the earlier stages, along with different segmentations.

Another insight shared by the informants is the **development of better facilities for Halal products, especially for small and medium enterprises (SMEs)**. Informant B shared that if the government provides better platforms for SME applicants for Halal products to be marketed internationally, this will motivate more local manufacturers to pursue the global market. Informant B shared;

“...maybe in terms of international trading and so on. I think Halal has great potential. Maybe Malaysia should provide a simpler platform for overseas markets (export) because we do not want Halal to be limited here only (locally). We want this thing (Halal) to be global; this thing goes abroad. So, the government needs to do something about it, especially for entrepreneurs applying for Halal (certificate), to set up a platform that sells Halal goods more easily, cheaply, and faster. So, we do not want to be tied to the local market only; we have a bigger market (opportunity) abroad for Malaysia. When entrepreneurs see the efforts and platforms provided by the government like this, people will be interested in applying (Halal certificate)...”.

In Malaysia, for instance, the government provide financial support to SMEs for their business, such as Young Entrepreneur funding, Emergency Fund for SMEs, Soft Loans for SMEs, the Rural Economy Funding Scheme, Bumiputera Enterprise Enhancement Program, and more (Abdullah & Othman, 2019). Similar circumstances can be observed in Australia as the government provides funding assistance through subsidies and rebates such as Lighting for Small Business Projects, Commercial Refrigerator Rebates NSW and the Bin Trim Rebates Program (Durst & Gerstlberger, 2020). However, this assistance is limited to funding facilities; it should also create a better platform for SMEs to produce and market Halal products globally.

Besides, the informants believed that the governments should **strengthen the national Halal policy**. Informant H suggested that the government should extend the prohibition of serving alcohol to locations beyond Putrajaya, the administration capital of Malaysia. Informant H said;

“...JAKIM itself has to enforce and be firm. They have to make the enforcement stronger. For example, in Putrajaya, it is good. In Putrajaya, they made it compulsory for all food premises to be Halal (certified), only within Putrajaya territory. All food premises, meaning cafes, restaurants, or factories in Putrajaya, must be Halal (certified). Moreover, here you cannot serve alcohol, in Putrajaya...”.

This requirement, however, is impossible to expand nationwide in Malaysia and Australia as these countries have a multicultural society with a diverse composition of ethnicities and religious beliefs. However, the government should limit the permit for selling alcohol to certain premises, such as in Australia (Doherty & Roche, 2003), with a stricter permit request for alcohol manufacturing and selling. Currently, in Malaysia, alcohol is accessible everywhere in the country, especially in convenience stores, and it is under local council jurisdictions (Jamal & Anuar, 2012). Muslims will be fine if caught drinking alcohol in Malaysia, subject to the local state governments' Sharia Laws (Ismail, 2014). To strengthen the Halal policy, in Malaysia, for instance, the government could provide a better enforcement system where selling alcohol permits to specific stores with stricter requirements for selling and purchasing alcohol, such as age and religious requirements, and only available within the higher non-Muslim population areas. The government could also strengthen the policy by forbidding Muslims to handle anything concerning alcohol (including manufacturing, logistics, supplying, selling and purchasing), and permit holders (especially sellers) must be forbidden to sell alcohol to Muslims.

Through the same agenda of strengthening national Halal policy, the informants insist that the government should also **strengthen the Halal Executive positions** in the food industry. Informant A expressed:

“...specifically. There should be career development for Halal Executives or Halal training from the authorities to help them grow within a Halal career. Because sometimes we do not know what kind of training is needed...”

In Malaysia and Australia's official Halal requirement documents, there is no clause discussing the career path or career development of Halal Executives. Malaysia

documents, for instance, only specify the requirement on hiring Halal Executives in the food industry (MHMS, 2020) to produce Halal certified products. On the other hand, the Australian document only specify requirements for Muslim-onsite personnel requirement, which is technically different from Halal program coordinators. Both countries may have provided general training clauses related to Halal, but neither has provided a career progression plan for Halal Executives.

Informants also believed that the **current Halal Executives' syllabus is incomprehensive**, especially in Malaysia. According to Informant C, based on their experience interviewing new talents and recruitments, and while working with Halal Executives in the food industry, on top of communication with related government agencies dealing with Halal policy, the current syllabus of Halal Executives training is more conceptual and theoretical rather than practical and implementation of knowledge to real-case scenarios. Informant B expressed;

"...my only hope is for the university. Please review the syllabus. Then please do more practical. We have many theoretical graduates. Sometimes, they do not even remember the book (theories). So please be more practical. When the graduates have more practical knowledge, if they have food tech industry knowledge/background, they should join the industry (food production), not the research (based companies); that is not worth it (to become Halal Executive). Moreover, doing attachment for only 2-3 months, limited time, the industry cannot teach you much..."

Typically, trainees may receive a Halal Executive certificate by attending a ten-day training, and they can start practising in the industry as a certified Halal Executive. However, during this ten-day training, no practical activities were developed for the trainees. Besides, there is no compulsory attachment to the industry. Customarily, educational/ practical attachments are only available and compulsory for diploma and bachelor studies. Hence, allocating a practical attachment for a ten-day training

program is impossible. On that account, many Halal Executives trainees lack industrial knowledge as the existing syllabus is not inclusive of technical and digital skills (Borhan et al., 2023) to equip for industrial needs. Informant E also shared the same perception as Informant B, as the training provided only covers fundamental concepts of Halal certification practices. Informant E said;

“...So a person like (experienced) this already knows more than the one who just joined the Halal Executive courses, as they learn only the basics...”

Apart from that, Informant C believed that the government should also monitor the Halal training providers as they construe the syllabus for the training based on the requirements stated by the government. Hence, Informant C believed that the increasing number of Halal training providers affects the quality of Halal Executives as it is now profit-driven rather than quality-driven. Informant C shared;

“...I do not know the syllabus and requirements (to enrol in Halal courses). Those who want to enter this course should be screened. They (JAKIM/Ministry of Education) should do it like the Ministry of Health. Okay. In the Ministry of Health, for those who want to be a trainer for food handlers, I am a food handler trainer myself. Okay. So, to become food handler trainers, we must go there for a 3-day course. We have to prepare our module. We have to present to the committee (Ministry of Health training committee). Lastly, we have to answer a set of questions: It is like an exam question. Pass all three; only then can we become food handler trainers. Moreover, to apply for this (food handler trainer), we are screened for this training. For a food tech diploma, he has to spend five years. 5 years of work; only then can he enter. For the degree, I think there is no problem. He can enter, but he will first check how many years you have worked. Why? They (the Ministry of Health) want to link (knowledge) with experience. Okay. Not just like typical training. I think JAKIM or HDC is responsible for this module. As for the course (Halal training course), they have to change the trend, not simply permit anyone to be a Halal training provider. They have to screen the people who want to take this course. Not everyone can and should apply. So that is how we will develop a quality Halal Executives position. Alternatively, we will have incompetent Halal Executives who cannot stand firm in their decision (on Halal issues in the company)?...”

Halal Executives should stand firm on certain decisions, especially decisions that are fundamentally driven by the concept of *Halalan Toyyiban*. Certain decisions made by

the top management of the manufacturers are profit-driven, which is understandable in certain cases. Thus, as the in-house expert on Halal matters, all Halal Executives must be the check-and-balance system player on these decisions so that anything related to Halal is not jeopardised. Informant L said;

“...emm. Yes. So do not need any, currently do not need any external qualifications, but it is more on the job training and learning through audits as well...”

Unlike Malaysia, Australia lacks special training and qualifications for Halal Executives/ program coordinators. Hence, there is no standard syllabus for Halal program coordinators to follow and train. They will solely depend on the job trainings and communications with external Halal-certified bodies (through external audits) on necessary knowledge and skills for Halal-related activities.

The **government’s initiative to protect the Halal logo** is another concern Halal Executives expressed. Customarily, food manufacturers will emboss the Halal logo on their products to attract Muslim consumers to purchase and enjoy them confidently. However, there are some issues, as the logo is more likely to be exploited. Informant A shared that there are certain cases where manufacturers manipulate the logo despite not being Halal certified (Abdullah et al., 2018). Informant A said;

“... desperate to do it (market the products) quickly, so people just stamp a Halal logo (without approval). There is no Halal logo (endorsed by the certifier). The logo stamp is invalid as the certifier has not approved them. The product has not gone through the correct process to be included (Halal logo), but they stamp it anyway; they do not care. Even though I have warned him not to do so...”

Informant B expressed how these manipulations can be addressed by instilling better reporting/ complaining systems, such as the traffic complaining system introduced by the Road Transport Department of Malaysia. Informant B said;

“...like the example of JPJ (Road Transport Department), now it has apps for reports; if any vehicle breaks traffic rules, just open the app, and upload the picture. You can report. It will create a better environment for consumers to report misconduct or defiance of food products/manufacturers. If they can create this system, it will make manufacturers afraid of not complying...”

Also, the documents of the Halal certification system in Malaysia currently do not address any logo display manual/ requirement for Halal manufacturers to follow and comply with. Hence, it costs the manufacturers time and money if the logo embosses do not meet the specifications of JAKIM. Signed by Informant D on this matter concerning Halal logo removal from their product packaging;

“...okay, so when it comes to the logo (Halal), it involves packaging, it involves central things (kitchen/office), which is an example of advertisements like flyers, everything is controlled by central. It will impact everything if he (JAKIM) says it is impossible. Moreover, there is a huge cost, and it will take a very long time for us to change that thing. For example, the pizza box packaging itself has a Halal logo; we want to remove the Halal logo immediately, not for one night. No. Because it will take time to process the cost if we want to change it. Change the design of everything. That is another issue related to the Halal logo...”

According to them, there is no explanation clause in MPPHM (Domestic) or MHMS 2020 discussing logo display in detail. The study identifies the clause mentioned by Informant D in MPPHM (Domestic);

“...Malaysia’s Halal logo must not be used for advertising purposes unless it is attached to products and/or services that are Halal-certified and must be placed and displayed in an appropriate place...”

The phrase ‘appropriate place’ should be extensively discussed as interpretations of the manufacturers (also JAKIM’s officers) are subjective. Hence, embossing and removing the Halal logo from products meant to be distributed nationwide or worldwide will be costly.

Another concern these Halal Executives raise is the availability of the database of approved Halal products and services. According to Informant E, the database does not display company information despite the unique approval numbers used for validation purposes. Informant E shared:

“...the approval number is special for every company that has obtained Halal certification with JAKIM. However, there is an issue regarding that. Sometimes, we cannot trace the number in JAKIM’s system...”

This scenario could happen due to information available in the database not being updated promptly or the manufacturers manipulating the unique approval number available. Thus, the government should employ better countermeasures to overcome this database issue.

Another issue the informants highlighted concerns the certification/ auditing officer. These issues may be derived from **competency issues or lack of standardisation among officers**. For instance, Informant E expressed that during the application for the certification, different JAKIM officers instil different standards of practice;

“...but from my previous practices, I combined these five (applications) into one. For example, if I have many zones (outlets by regions), I will apply Halal in one application, right? I put all of this in one zone. So, it will save the cost. Isn’t that right? Instead of paying 1000 copies (of the application), I only pay 200, for example. So, suddenly, the officers came to audit, and they said it was incorrect. Okay. The officer did not allow us to combine all outlets in one application. You should apply the menu by zones. You cannot simply combine all zones in one application. Okay. Logic. So, the problem is that NC is not standardised when we accept it (non-conformance report from JAKIM’s officer). Only our company have to do it, but not other companies (they can combine the application). Other industries combined their application (for all zones). So when we question the officer (about the unstandardised practice), the officer cannot answer satisfactorily...”

During the application process, the documentation submission will technically depend on the officers on duty, as the clause in MPPHM did not specifically mention how the

documentation preparation and submission should be implemented. As stated in MPPHM (Domestic) 2020;

“...food chain premises that use the same brand must make an SPHM application for each chain of premises, and the application must be managed centrally...”

The clause mentioned above is not properly elaborated. Hence, this is one of the reasons why Halal Executives encounter such circumstances. Besides, the informants also discussed that, at times, internship program students perform the document verification and audit on behalf of the officers. According to Informant C;

“...it is troublesome. Then, during the document audit (by the certified body) process, sometimes, internship students are sent to check our documents and facility (for audit). We can easily identify whether they are students or officers...”

Ideally, only trained officers are permitted to carry out audits on behalf of the government to provide Halal certification, as they have acquired specific training, especially related to food manufacturing and auditing systems. As Halal is a religious matter, and it is now recognised internationally, the verification and audit sessions must be carried out by authorized and certified personnel only (Othman et al., 2016), as it will reflect on the system and the government agency's reputation. Perception of incompetency among officers must be avoided, even though the intention is to train and expose placement students to the processes, but they should not carry out the important role to avoid negligence and misconduct.

Informants have also expressed concerns about the **unsustainable practices during the Halal certification application process**. Informants discussed how the online application system (MyeHalal) is inadequate for document submission as some

officers may require the submission of hardcopy versions of the documents. Informant

G shared their experience in preparing documents for the certification;

“...but, during the COVID-19 pandemic, JAKIM said you can apply for Halal certification by softcopy (system). So, how do I send a softcopy? I have thousands of ingredients. So, what do I do? In Google Drive, we can share the folder. So, you can imagine, for example, that I have more than 1000 (ingredients) in one application. Each ingredient has a numbering. So, I created a Google Drive folder, and I put all the Halal certificates in it. However, I must do the numbering to match the e-Halal (MyeHalal) system. For example, item 300 on Google Drive is salt. So, the MyeHalal system should also be salt. So, you imagine I have to sort all the certificates. Sorting is one thing. It takes a long time. There are many applications (different products: different applications). I want to sort the ingredients one by one. Send the softcopy. The problem is that when you have sent the softcopy, you should be able to check it. Do you know what happened after that? An example of that time was when they lifted the movement restrictions. The border is open. After two weeks, they (JAKIM) received the application but still asked us to send the hard copy. Although they already received the soft copy. Why do you still need the hard copy? Like in my company (XYZ), we have many ingredients. The officer called again. Can you send a hard copy as soon as possible? Because it is difficult to check with a soft copy. I prefer hardcopy. After that, can you imagine preparing a hard copy in a day? Can it be ready? We have thousands of ingredients. We need something fast. So, I feel like how long will we have to accommodate this (outdated) system? That is the challenge. However, now that they are back to normal practice, there is no need to send a soft copy again...”

Informant C also shared their frustration during the application submission process due to unsustainable practices;

“...nevertheless, the process, the process is slow. Okay. Slow in what sense? In terms of making submissions online. Online is not a problem; the only problem is that there is no place where we can upload (the document) online. We can only key in the data in MyeHalal and then prepare the document (hardcopy). Moreover, we must make two copies—one for JAIS (religious state office) or JAKIM and one for us (for the auditing session with JAKIM/JAIS’s officer). So, I wonder why we must prepare and print a hard copy again when we have the online part to upload documents...”

Ironically, the online document should suffice for application as after the application submission, the officers will visit the factories/premises for document verification and site inspection. During the visit, the officers will validate the documents submitted in the system again, tally with the physical documents available in the factory, and

compare them with the general practices on the site. Thus, submission of hardcopy versions of the documents is unnecessary. Informant H expressed a similar situation regarding the impractical requirement of application submission. Informant H said;

“...we must physically deliver the hardcopy documents to the Department of Islamic Religion, Mr Amar. You know, it is very far. It is fine for us (their company) because our location is closer to JAKIM. I talked to a customer (Halal certificate applicant) from Sabak Bernam; they travelled. So, can you imagine a 3-hour journey to send the documents? If the form (documents) is incomplete, they have to come again. For me, that is very inconvenient. It is a pity that they have to deal with it. Maybe (JAKIM) should stick to it online...”

The establishment of the MyeHalal system is to assist and facilitate applicants and officers on duty for better practice related to Halal certification application, especially as it will be time and cost-efficient. If the officers still rely on manual practices, developing the MyeHalal system will be insufficient and unnecessary. Such a clause must be available in MHMS or MPPHM to avoid these unsustainable practices entirely.

The readiness of the current system to receive profusion certification applications is another concern the informants raised. Informants A and D both shared their concerns on this matter, respectively;

“...many companies are starting to apply. So, I am not sure if the authorities are ready...”

“...typically, it will take one month to get approval. 1-2 months. However, I have heard places like Johor, for example. They (another applicant) have applied and got no approval after six months of waiting...”

Based on their experience, a Halal certification application usually takes 1-2 months to receive feedback, although a previous study identified that the turnaround time for the Halal application process in Malaysia required an improvement as it took a long

time (Roslan et al., 2016). As Halal is exponentially growing globally, many food manufacturers have begun to be involved with Halal-related businesses, as they have great potential to grow continuously (Akram, 2022). Besides, Malaysia's Halal certification system is recognised globally as one of the most stringent requirements among other global Halal certification systems (Latif et al., 2014) due to their thorough assessments. Hence, with this high expectation, JAKIM must ensure their system is ready to receive abundant local and global applications.

Halal Executives have also expressed another concern related to the **enforcement of the Halal certification system**. Generally, the informant believed that enforcement remains unsatisfactory. For example, Informant B expressed how the Halal certification system is strict; however, the monitoring and enforcement system is still lacking. According to Informant B;

"...everything is kind of all right. It is just that one part; the enforcement is very ineffective for me. For this certification, it is okay. Because they (JAKIM) have strict (regulations), it will be too difficult for people to cheat (bend the rule). Well, it is possible to cheat, but it is not easy. Once you get caught, you are done. As I said earlier, the enforcement is lacking..."

Informant E also disclosed how lack of enforcement leads to non-compliance with the requirements, especially manipulating the Halal logo on products without approval (Md Ariffin et al., 2023). Informant E said;

"...there is this one case. Maybe there is a problem with their application. Maybe it gets rejected for some reason. However, he (the company) did not pull back (the products from the market). He did not do a product recall in the market, especially the products that still have the Halal logo with that number (Halal approval number). He did not remove it at all..."

Informant E continued, typically, inspections are only executed within two circumstances: during the application process and complaints from the public. There

will be rare occasions when certified bodies do regular blind inspections on the food factories. Informant E continued;

“...actually, frankly speaking, I am talking about enforcement in our country, right? In terms of enforcement, I can say that it is still ranked somewhat unsatisfactory due to the monitoring part of the government itself. Especially from JAKIM’s Halal Hub. Okay. Normally, there will be two types of monitoring: during the application submission or when there is a complaint from the public (blind inspection). So, if there is no complaint, no one will go to the market to monitor and check. They do not have (blind inspection) ...”.

This lack of enforcement is also derived from the **inadequate human resources** to facilitate, monitor and enforce the regulations. Informant H shared their experience working in different government agencies related to food regulatory enforcement, entailing limited human resources scenarios among government agencies in Malaysia.

Informant H expressed;

“...so, this causes difficulties for all of us as Halal Executive. Because based on my personal opinion, the Malaysian Halal Industry has lax enforcement for me. I have worked with KKM (Ministry of Health) before. Malacca State Health Department. So, every time we do a rush (blind inspection), we do an inspection; for example, in Melaka, there is this XYZ (cookies brand) factory, and there is a GHG (Instant noodle) factory. I gave an example within Melaka, right? There are too many food factories in Melaka. However, there are only 10 Food Technology Officers. So, for me, people do not even have time to check everything...”

Informant H continued:

“...for me, it is. In order to further strengthen this thing and strengthen Halal Certification in Malaysia, I think people need to add staff (officers). JAKIM and the Malaysian Ministry of Health are in the Food Quality department. Indeed, people need to add staff. Because when people add staff, monitoring, surveillance, everyone can do that more often...”.

Informant A also noticed the human resource constraint within this government agency;

“...they (JAKIM) may not have enough manpower...”.

Insufficient Halal-related laws, jurisdiction, enforcement and training and especially staff constraints are among enforcement issues related to Halal (Halim & Ahmad, 2014), which has been discussed for years by Halal scholars. Hence, these overdue issues must be addressed efficiently to ensure Malaysia's Halal status improves tremendously, especially since the global Halal market is paying extra attention to Malaysia's Halal market and Halal certification system.

The communication with the informants has also alluded to the Halal **training providers taking advantage of the Halal requirements**, mainly related to the compulsory requirement of hiring trained and certified Halal Executives for Halal certificates. According to the informants, Halal training providers are taking advantage of this as it is a business opportunity for training-providing companies to generate extra income as it has a great market, especially in Malaysia, among Halal food manufacturers. Informant C claimed that the syllabus of Halal-related trainings, particularly the Halal Executives training, should be revised following the needs of the industry. Informant C said;

"...then, too many external companies are providing Halal-related training. Other than the university. The university is also another thing. The other company is one thing. I do not know (their syllabus). They should screen the applicants and the providers (for certification and training). That is how the Ministry of Health does..."

According to Informant C, Halal training practices and syllabus should follow the general practices of the Ministry of Health as it has a stricter and more comprehensive training system for food handling certification (as mentioned previously). The same connotation is expressed by Informant A, as the training providers customarily focused on theoretical concepts of Halal practices rather than giving hands-on

experience to equip these executives with real-time cases and issues. Informant A expressed;

“...during Halal Executive trainings, they (the provider) taught a lot of Halal-related concepts, such as Halal slaughter, Halal pharmaceuticals and many more, but everything is only theoretical. No practical whatsoever...”

The issues about trainings were not only limited to the syllabus but also related to the acceptance of the trainees. Informant C expressed that some existing and practising Halal Executives do not possess any relevant educational background in food technology, Sharia law or generic Islamic knowledge to practice as Halal Executives within food industries. Expressed by Informant C:

“...when JAKIM offers this program for companies to provide training (Halal). Only companies registered with JAKIM can hold courses, usually universities. Many universities offer courses, and this opportunity is open to everyone, hoping it will give job opportunities no matter who—for example, a chemical student. Chemical engineering goes to take a Halal Executive course. In my opinion, it is not relevant. At least in Malaysia, I do not know about other countries. However, as far as I know, there are fewer non-food Halal products/services in Malaysia. I only know one Halal plastic company in Malaysia. However, I do not know if there are any more than that. So, if the university gives this free course to all students or anyone who wants it, they have this expectation: you already have a Halal exec (certification), and you can ask for a Halal exec in the industry. With irrelevant context and knowledge, who will be responsible for these talents/ executives? Of course, it is us (the industry)...”

Working within the food industry, especially as Halal Executives, not only requires these personnel to embody the knowledge of *Halalan Toyyiban* (Ahmad & Shariff, 2016), but they also need to have sufficient knowledge related to food safety, food technology, auditing and food regulatory and management systems. Hence, simply recruiting any graduate with ten days of Halal Executive training to execute crucial tasks in the industry is irrelevant and would tarnish the image and status of these executives. Figure 14 illustrates the government’s responsibility to strengthen Halal, which was shared by the informants and generated by *Atlas.ti*.

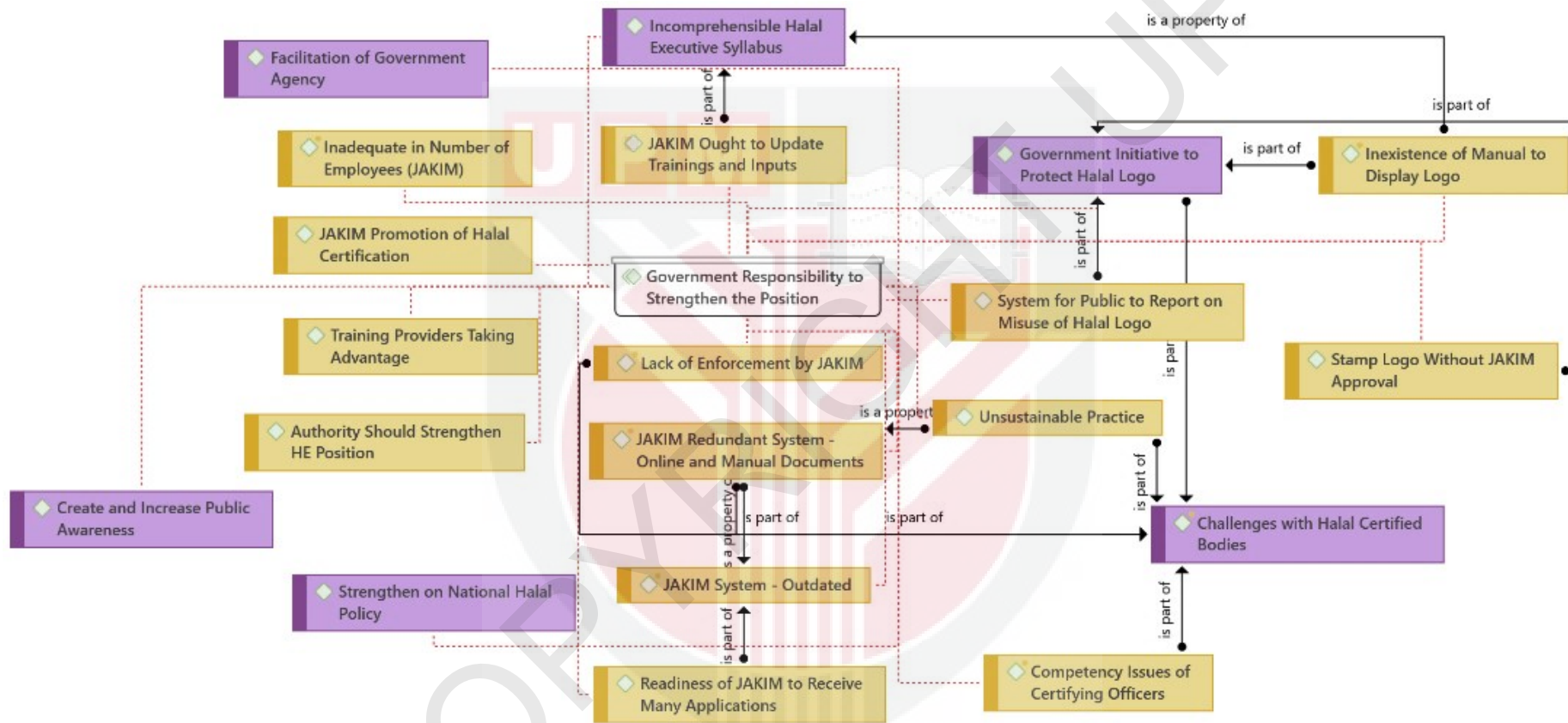


Figure 14 : Atlas.ti Visual Representation of Governments' Responsibility to Strengthen Halal

4.3.8 Criteria to Appoint Halal Certification Body

Australian government recognised 24 Halal certifiers across its territory. Hence, Halal food manufacturers customarily will establish their criteria to appoint a Halal certifier suitable for their needs and specifications. The first criterion Halal program coordinators share is appointing a **certifier recognised by the targeted market**. According to Informant L, the food industry should identify which certifier is recognised by the country where they intend to export their products. Informant L shared;

“...so, if you are looking at entering several new markets, you are probably looking to find a certifying body whose certification is accepted. Therefore, you do not have to go through a third party...”

For instance, as discussed in Chapter 2, Malaysia, through JAKIM, only recognised several Halal-certified bodies in Australia. Hence, to simplify the whole Halal certification and global recognition process, the food industry should appoint one certifier recognised by multiple countries based on their exporting target. This connotation is supported by Informant K;

“...em. There, they also have their own standards. So, their certification is recognised in various export markets. So, in Indonesia and Malaysia. Recently, it was accepted in Singapore and a few others as well. Em. Which is good. So, they have a global standard where they, I guess, co-related some international standards into their own, which is good. And then they also for markets where their certification is not recognised, they also have the standards for those countries too. So, say if we were exporting to them, to the Gulf or UAE. Obviously, they are quite strict over there and have a slightly different set of standards. Then, what is captured by ABC (a certifier organisation), so they have all that reference there as well. Which is good...”

Another step the informants took into account was performing a validation is by checking with other companies' experience, particularly if the industry did not have any experience producing Halal products and getting certification for export purposes.

Informant L discussed that communication with an experienced Halal food exporter within the same industry would help select the best certifier according to their needs.

Informant L said;

“...I would say if you were starting out, you would probably re-check other companies or supplies that you know of to see what their experience is with their certifier...”

Communication with experienced Halal manufacturers is essential to newcomers, as there are cases where a certifier's global recognition is revoked due to misconduct or not fulfilling JAKIM/government's requirement (Halim et al., 2019). Hence, the Halal food industry in Australia should regularly monitor the performance of the certifiers and **avoid certifiers with trustworthy issues**. Informant N shared their experience whereby an international market revoked a Halal certifier due to an untrustworthy report during the certification process. According to Informant N;

"...another thing I would look at is if there are any issues that the certifier had previously. For example, SDF (a certifier organisation) had its certification revoked for a period of time because I cannot remember which market it was; it may be that Indonesia or Malaysia found that they were not being entirely truthful; maybe some of their suppliers had pork on. I think it was Pocco Meat Processing (company) or something like that on-site..."

Halal food industries should constantly monitor the recognition received by the certifiers by comparing with the Australian government recognition list and targetted market recognition list to ensure that their products are permitted to be exported to the respective countries.

Another takeaway shared by the informants on the criteria for appointing a Halal certifier is selecting an organisation that **balances the target market and the cost**. According to Informant M, the food industry should compare the values that the

certifier offers as many options are available within the country. Values should not only focus on the recognition received by the certifier but also on the services and fees charged by the certifier. Informant M said;

"...so, you will want to find a balance between a certifier that has the most value for money and probably where their certificates are accepted as well..."

For instance, if an Australian food industry intends to market its goods to Malaysia, JAKIM recognised seven Australian certifiers. Among these seven certifiers, the food industry should assess the values offered, and the cost-effectiveness must be assessed against services provided, alongside the time and expertise they possess.

Some food companies built a **good rapport with their certifiers** based on previous services and business deals. Hence, based on trust and a good track record, informants believed that continuing services provided by the certifiers would obviate unnecessary hassles during the certification process. Informant I said;

"...okay. For us to be certified, we have certification for over 15 years. So, I cannot tell you how that was established..."

Informant I disclosed that the professional relationship between their industry and its certifier had been established for more than 15 years, which is longer than their working tenure with the food industry. Thus, both the industry and the certifier understand the values possessed by each of them and the certification application process, verification, auditing and awarding of the certificate are conducted with ease.

Informants also expressed that the certified body should also be **flexible and ready to accommodate the needs** of the applicants. Informant M mentioned that flexibility is

another important criterion for appointing a certified body, as being rigid will create an unpleasant certification process. Informant M shared;

"...so, I will be wanting to know what their experience is. Whether it has been a good one or not, and how willing the certifying body is to work with you to ensure you get up to the standards because some may not be as flexible as others to ensure you can achieve what you need to..."

However, flexibility must only be limited to administrative and documentation processes without menacing fundamental elements of Halal food production and manufacturing. It affects the believers' dietary restrictions and may expose the tendency of certification to be revoked by the target market (Halim et al., 2019). Informant I shared their experience with their certifier on its willingness to make sure they comply with the dietary requirement by being reasonable to their system and requirement. Informant I said;

"...but my personal experience has been great. Em. At least with a certifying body and the people who worked there. Em. Very open. They are willing to work with you to ensure you are compliant. Em. ABC (a certifier organisation) for us is also very reasonable..."

Figure 15 illustrates the criteria for appointing a Halal-certified body disclosed by the Australian Halal program coordinators, generated by *Atlas.ti*.

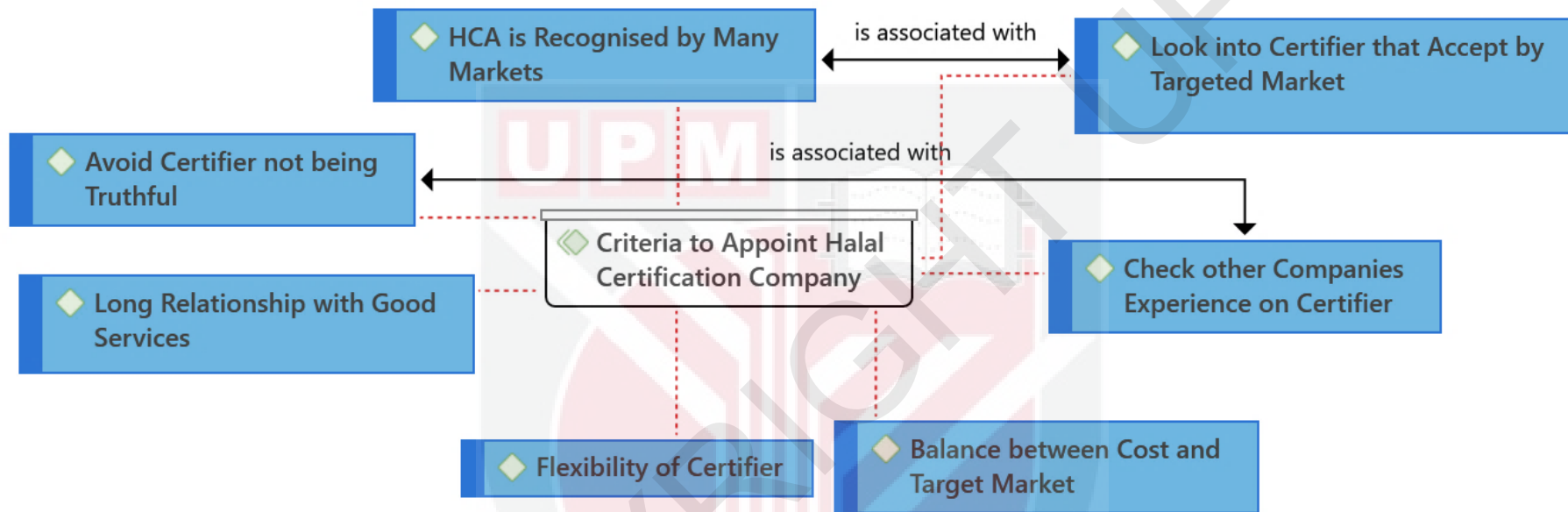


Figure 15 : Atlas.ti Visual Representation of Criteria to Appoint Halal Certification Body

4.4 Research Question 2: Personal Experience of Halal Executives in Malaysia's and Australia's Food Industry

The second aim of this study is to understand the personal experience of Halal Executives leading and managing Halal programs in the food industry in Malaysia and Australia. Halal Executives require adequate authority on Halal-related issues to make substantial decisions to develop and market Halal products (Ahmad et al., 2017). Through this, the informants disclosed challenges they encountered as Halal Executives while serving in their respective companies. They also discussed solving issues and their decision-making ability related to Halal issues.

4.4.1 Arising Issues Encountered by Halal Executives

Customarily, Halal Executives are the only in-house Halal experts within their company, depending on the organisation's size. They have to deal with **the perceptions of the organisation towards Halal and their positions**, especially the establishment of this position and hiring of these talents are solely due to the government's requirement, not based on the organisational necessity and willingness. Informant A discussed how, typically, some organisations will only employ Halal Executives as a tool for acquiring Halal certificates. Hence, to ensure that the products produced by the companies are 100% Halal, Halal Executives must stand firm to their knowledge and beliefs so that the management treats Halal matters seriously and the consumers truly consume Halal products. According to Informant A;

"...for me, his challenge is indeed a challenge with the employer. We have to fight for Halal. If you are not firm, the employer will only use you as a tool to get a Halal (certificate). We do not want the Halal Executive to follow the employer's lead mindlessly. We want employers to follow our lead, especially related to Halal affairs. We remind them and warn them constantly of the consequences (of non-compliance). Dare to say things are wrong if it is wrong. It is right to say the right thing..."

Standing firm to Halal decisions is tricky for Halal Executives as they do not possess a significantly high position in dictating decisions, even though related to Halal matters. Thus, Halal Executives must utilise negotiation and communication techniques to ensure the top management properly hears the message and agrees to the ideas related to Halal. This situation reflects that Halal Executives require a higher level of authority for their career growth. If not, they would remain in the same position for years. There is a need to retool themselves to become a credible position within the industry. Another example of negative connotation related to Halal is discussed by Informant G. According to them, hiccups related to Halal matters would be considered troublesome, especially when addressing the NC report provided by JAKIM, which may delay certain production. Informant G shared;

“...when JAKIM notices an NC and asks us to solve (resolve NC cases) within a certain time, initially, the management will make a fuss out of it. They said it is not possible (to make changes). For them, Halal is something troublesome...”

Halal Executives must avoid any unwanted hiccups during the certification application as it reflects greatly on Halal and their positions, especially during crucial times when production is in demand within a limited timeframe. NC report can be avoided if the production process complies with the requirements. However, Halal compliance is everyone's responsibility, not only Halal Executives. Another example shared by Informant B was where their top management underplays Halal matters when utilising unregistered raw materials. Informant B explained;

“...the first issue is the management commitment. It is not easy. Not everyone wants to follow what we must do (for Halal). However, we have to do as much as we can. For example, some people buy the right Halal raw mat, but some add on the non-certified one, such as the homemade version. I still remember I bought kiwi puree, which is imported from Italy (Halal certified); there was a shortage of supply, so my boss bought the homemade ones from local (non-certified) and mixed everything. We had a big argument because people (top management) do not understand that we want to control (from getting revoked)...”

Using homemade and unregistered ingredients for food production is against the Halal certification requirement, as the ingredients' safety is highly questionable. Hence, Halal Executives must be able to stand firm whenever they are dealing with this kind of scenario, as the safety of the consumers should be the top priority for production, on top of their dietary requirements as labelled and advertised by the company.

Apart from that, Halal Executives expressed that, at times, they have to deal with **contamination issues** due to the insensitivity of the personnel within the organisation. This has been known to be a major problem in the food industry (Abd Razak & Ramli, 2022). Informant A shared limited and basic knowledge of Halal industry management; personnel tend to overlook contamination issues related to Halal. Halal is not limited to the ingredients used to produce the products, as it is also related to decontamination with non-Halal ingredients/ products, which not only surrounds the production sites. It also includes storage and logistics. Informant A shared their experience;

“...usually, there is no problem (no contamination issues) in the production area, but the logistic driver brings their alcoholic drinks in the Halal product delivery truck...”

A similar connotation is disclosed by Informant F, where untrained personnel contaminate non-Halal cooking equipment in the Halal preparatory kitchen in their previous workplace:

“...so, there is one biggest issue with JAIM (Johor State of Islamic Department). We just finished an event, and this one placement student at that time. He is from Indonesia. So, it may have been overlooked during the event, or no one was monitoring it. The event will be from night to morning. There is a jug for alcohol included in the washing part for Halal. The jug has been washed in the non-Halal section. However, he placed it on the Halal shelf. So, I did not notice that morning. I went to the meeting, and then there was an audit from the Department of Islamic Religion in Melaka after the meeting...”

As discussed above, Halal training and reminders must be continuously disseminated among employees to avoid unnecessary contamination. Informant C disclosed another scenario whereby visitors with limited knowledge of Halal tend to overlook this contamination, especially during gift delivery during festive seasons. Informant C said;

“...sometimes there are non-Muslim clients who come to meet our top management and bring inappropriate gifts, such as alcoholic drinks and non-Halal food, to the manufacturing sites...”

Thus, Halal Executives must be creative in dealing with Halal risks, especially on contamination issues (Alias & Zabidi, 2021) related to visitors, such as communication with every personnel and top management on non-Halal food and drinks on manufacturing sites. They also have to communicate with the infrastructure security personnel to ensure the inspection is executed on all visitors to prevent any unnecessary substance from entering the production site or the entire supply chain (Ab Rashid & Bojei, 2020). Contamination also includes storing registered ingredients with personal use/non-registered products within the same place, as this will cause an issue during JAKIM’s external audit. NC report may be issued due to using non-registered ingredients for production, especially if the ingredients are not Halal-certified. Hence, regular and blind internal audit sessions must occur occasionally to avoid unnecessary contamination issues.

Informant E shared their experience:

“...and the raw material is stored in our storage, which is used for daily production. Things for personal use should not be the same as what I mean by storing raw materials that we always use for restaurant use (contamination of registered and non-registered ingredients)...”

Another main challenge expressed by the informant is the **regulatory challenges**.

Regulatory challenges mainly affect companies that export products to various international markets (Anderson, 2022). For instance, Informant I expressed that food regulations will constantly be updated to cater to the consumers' needs, along with the development of modern and innovative food products and industry. Informant I said;

“...so, many regulatory activities that apply to Australia and New Zealand are coming through. Em. So, that is probably the biggest thing in regard to regulatory challenges, and it will also be similar to Halal. So if any regulatory changes are making sure we are up to speed...”

These challenges mentioned by the informant apply to standard national and international food regulatory systems and reflect greatly on dietary requirements as lifestyle and adaptability are everchanging and derived from innovation and technology. Halal requirements will also simultaneously change alongside the standard food regulatory systems, especially since no international Halal regulatory system is implied on a global scale (Koe, 2018). The adaptability of the developed food products should be able to cater to different Halal markets and requirements. Thus, Halal Executives play a vital role in ensuring that the common ground of these international Halal regulations is met.

The informants also discussed challenges with the suppliers while working in the food industry. Most companies do not have any direct relationship with the ingredients manufacturers; hence, they have to continuously monitor the ingredient supplies provided to ensure they always fit their specifications for food production. Informant M mentioned that they constantly surveilled the ingredient suppliers for their raw materials to avoid undesirable hiccups. Informant M said;

“...em. We do not have a relationship with that supplier, and it often comes from a different country of origin. Em. All of that. So that is another issue that will also continue to affect our products for the foreseeable future...”

A similar connotation expressed by Informant H as the Halal performance of raw material may change, depending on their Halal certification audit findings;

“...it is like the cattle slaughter centres in Australia, the abattoir; JAKIM will go there once a year to check. They will see if the abattoir is still actively complying with Halal regulations. Because sometimes, suddenly, the slaughterhouse is closed because there is a little issue. So, anyone who buys cattle from the slaughterhouse has to buy somewhere else. So you have to always be up to date...”

Consequently, Halal Executives must constantly find alternative supplies for their raw materials and communicate with respective departments (such as the acquisition or purchasing department) to ensure the raw material supplies have several contingency plans.

Another challenge deliberately explained by the informants was the issue of **decentralisation of the systems**. Although JAKIM has established manuals for Halal certification applications, which consist of process flows for each process. However, ultimately, it depends on the officers managing the process and the State Islamic Religious Departments' jurisdiction and administration. Informant D mentioned the decentralisation of application and administration for Halal certification. According to Informant D;

“...JAKIM's process is not the same as JAIS and other states. But we still use the same logo...”

Informant G added to the same connotation whereby the documentation preparation and submission requirements depend highly on the processing officers. They

mentioned how the application instructions were vacillated several times, particularly regarding document submission. Informant G said;

“...initially, this company applies Halal cert separately according to zone or branch. So, this year, we combined one e-Halal application to unify within the system. That is what we call a chain premise, which, according to JAKIM, is wrong. Now, we reapply again. We made the application by zoning. We cannot send 30 outlets in one application anymore...”

Informant G continued:

“...I sent 4, 5 different files even though the menu is all the same. Even though the officer who received the document said, ‘Hey, ma’am, why do you do this? Why don’t you do it? It is a waste. Do you see?’ Where is your (JAKIM) standard? So, my management, of course, wants to pay 200 copies instead of paying 1000?...”

The previous discussion also highlighted the softcopy and hardcopy document submission system as it depends on the involved officers. These vacillating decisions could be more time and money-efficient if there is a standard procedure for application and the standard is in place by the involved officers.

Financial constraint is another hurdle Halal Executives encounter during their service in the food industry. This drawback indeed depends on the funding invested by the companies in their productions and training. For instance, Informant G discussed that funding related to Halal audit and training is fairly limited, which leads to online audit and training sessions. Informant G sighed;

“...like my company, they did not allow us to do physical training and audit. Because they do not want to cover the cost of us travelling to their branches. The HQ is in KL. I must travel to Johor or other states (for audit and training). So, the franchisees do not want to cover the cost...”

Training may be conducted online as it is about spreading information and awareness. However, audit initiatives must be executed physically instead of online as they

involve document and on-site inspections related to the daily manufacturing process to prevent misconduct and certification revocation. Other than that, another example of financial constraint is related to food handling and production safety. Informant E expressed that safety and sanitary clothing is not replenished daily due to cost savings;

“...because it involves cost, it is impossible to provide hairnet daily. Sometimes, even the face mask and face shield are not properly worn. Always have to be reminded...”

This scenario is happening most likely due to the size of the company. Small and medium-sized companies may face some financial struggles at times; hence, they might take these measures to cut costs. Conversely, MNCs will most likely invest more in safety equipment as it will have a greater impact on their business image and compliance.

The informants also discussed the **time constraints** issues while handling Halal programs in their organisations. Companies tend to provide short notice to introduce new menus or products in the market. Sighed by Informant G, the management of their company provided less than a month's notice to promote new menus for them to apply for Halal certification. This is impossible as the previous study shows that Halal certification will technically take longer to be endorsed, depending on the ingredients, process and documentation. According to Informant G

“...my company likes to launch the last-minute menu. For example, the company told us they wanted to launch a new menu in October and only told us in September. How can we apply and get approval (Halal certificate) within a month? Ha, so we will say no! You have to wait for me to apply first. To them, Halal is like a barrier to implementing ad hoc projects...”

Developing a new product or menu takes time to ensure the formulation produces the right flavour and texture as anticipated and is in compliance with food safety

consumption regulations and dietary restrictions. During the process, the R&D or the on-site team should acknowledge Halal Executives to prepare the documentation for Halal application. However, it is understandable that the formulation may keep changing to find the right fit recipe. Hence, the management team and Halal Executives should at least prepare a specific timeline for new menus and products between preparation, Halal application, and launch to consumers to avoid unnecessary hiccups. A similar situation was expressed by Informant H;

“...let us say the UMNO (a political party in Malaysia) assembly next week. They want to do it here (in one of their venues). So that thing is too ad hoc. We have to prepare ingredients (Halal certified) on short notice. The chef wants to be quick because he wants to cook and prepare things quickly. The purchaser also has to be quick. If he is late to buy the ingredients, the ingredients will run out...”

Acquiring ingredients within a limited time frame greatly pressures Halal Executives, especially if they are involved in purchasing and preparing the ingredients. Customarily, purchasing and acquisition are not part of Halal Executives' job scope as they handle food regulatory affairs. This scenario only happens when Halal Executives have to handle multiple portfolios.

Dissimilar to the previous example, Informant D realised that the Halal certification application time frame stated in JAKIM's Halal manual is only available and applicable to the applicants, not the officers and JAKIM. Informant D mentioned;

“...so, there is one challenge during the application process: the certification application period. If you have ever looked at the Halal certification manual, towards the end of the manual, you know there is a process flow. I noticed that the process flow has a timeline written on it. However, the timeline is only for the industry. For example, you have to send documents within five days. After that, you have to answer NCR within five days. But there is no timeline for JAKIM/Halal certifier...”

Informant D added that the system is not acknowledging the receiving documents of the processing officers;

“...recently, we sent the application and all documents, but the maximum period for the process was never consistent. It could be a week; it could be two weeks; it could be a month. We used to get more than a month. The “received” notification still does not appear in the system. Normally, the status will change once the application and document are received and reviewed. The status has not changed even after two months. So when that happens, the application period will be very long...”

Comparatively, the study found out that in MPPHM (Domestic) 2020, labelled as *Lampiran D- Carta Alir Persijilan Halal Malaysia* page 107, there are only three timeframes mentioned: 24 hours within a working day for MyeHalal system user account acknowledgement, five working days for supporting documents submission and 14 working days for the Halal certification payment fees. All these time frames are for applicants to refer to and follow through during their application submissions. Evidently, there is no standard of practice during the processing stage, as no specific timeline is established for the officers to process the applications. This is rather inconvenient for applicants as they cannot monitor their application process if the process time frame is unavailable.

Another major challenge Halal Executives encountered was **related to certified bodies**. Informants disclosed the challenges reflecting the current system, specifically on the system’s capability and standardization. Informant A expressed that, based on their experience, they questioned the capability of the certifier to cope with local and international demands of certification. Informant A said;

“...so, I do not think they (Halal certifiers) are ready to entertain many certificate holders (current holders and new application)...”

Another concern expressed by Informant D, extending the connotation of Informant A;

“...recently, we sent the application and all documents, but the maximum period for the process was never consistent. It could be a week; it could be two weeks; it could be a month. We used to get more than a month. The “received” notification still does not appear in the system. Normally, the status will change once the application and document are received and reviewed. The status has not changed even after two months. So when that happens, the application period will be very long...”

This concern is proven by the processed timeline shared by Informant D, as the received document acknowledgement took longer than usual. This is most likely reflected in the limited workforce dealing with Halal certification and enforcement or the less efficient online system.

Informants C and G also expressed that the standardization of the auditing system during the application is another challenge related to the certified body. Informant C shared their experience:

“...because when we renew our certificate, we cannot change any previous application information. So, when we send the name of a product that has passed through the first application during the renewal process, it will pass because that name has passed in the first application. Logically, there should be no problem with the next application. However, during the renewal process, sometimes there will be other problems because different officers do the reviewing and assessing...”

Informant G also shared a similar connotation:

“...so, each document will be assessed by different officials. So, each of these officials does not have a timeline to check. Some officials are fast; the process is fast. Some officials are slow; we are slow to wait even if we push fast, no matter what. So, to give an answer that people say is clear how long that period is, I cannot give a fixed answer. Some are fast, a month. Some pass without people saying there are no issues. Continue to pass conditionally. Some want to be audited. So even though I said I have five applications for the same product, some applications proceed (succeed) because of the five different zones. Some have to be audited, and some have endless document checking. So there is no specific timeline; we cannot give a fixed answer...”

Undoubtedly, different individuals may interpret the information available within the manuals differently. However, standardization of practices should be implemented to reflect the guidelines established. In this case, there are no specific guidelines available for the public and applicants to refer to, especially related to the process flow of the auditing/processing officers. Hence, as discussed by the informants, there is no specific standard regarding the timeline and requirement of renewal certification and application by zones.

Another concern raised by the informants is related to the manual submission of certification applications. Previously, the study discussed the application's sustainable practices. Extended to the same experience, the informants argued the relevancy of provided online and offline applications/ supporting documents for the application.

Informant C explained:

"...from the point of view of us submitting online. Online is not a problem; the only problem is that there is no place where we can upload the document online. We can only key in the information details in the MyeHalal system. We have to print the document and make two copies—one for JAIS or JAKIM and one for us (for auditing purposes by JAKIM). So, I feel like, why do we want to print another hard copy if the online part has uploaded documents? It will not be a big hassle..."

Informant G shared the same connotation related to this matter:

"...but, during the COVID-19 pandemic, they (the certifier) said you must send the documents by softcopy version. So, how do you send the soft copy documents with no medium to upload them? I have thousands of ingredients. So, what do I do? In Google Drive, we can share the folder with multiple users. So, you can imagine that I have more than 1,000 in one application. Each ingredient has a numbering reference. So, I created a Google Drive folder and added all the Halal certificates. However, I must do the numbering to match the MyeHalal system. So, if I have Google Drive, the item number is sesame oil. For example, item 300 near Google Drive is salt. So, in the MyeHalal system, it should be salt, too. So, you imagine I have to sort all the certificates. Sorting is one thing. It takes a long time. There are many applications. I want to sort the ingredients one by one. Send the softcopy. The problem is that when you send the softcopy, you should be able to check it, right? Do you know what happened? The officer called. 'Can you send a hard copy as

soon as possible? Because it is difficult to check with a soft copy. I prefer hardcopy.' I cannot prepare the hard copy version of 1000 ingredients within one day. Why do we need the hard copy when the soft copy version is complete? However, now they are back to normal practice; sending a soft copy is unnecessary... ”.

Sticking to one application system is sufficient for processing proposes. As the government has invested financially in developing an online system in which the certifiers should fully utilise its capacity to ease the process for them and the applicants. Another issue regarding the sustainability of the application system is that it is deliberately unnecessary This circumstance can be easily rectified by adding another function in the online system where applicants can upload supporting/ proof documents. Furthermore, to verify the documents during the auditing sessions, the certifiers can easily re-verify the documents during the visitation to the premises. Submitting hard copies of the documents to the certifiers' offices is unnecessary and redundant, and highly unsustainable.

Internal communication is also another challenge discussed by the informants.

Informant D explained their issues related to internal communication;

“...so, our challenge as a Halal Executive is to make management understand the certification process. They will ask you to check with JAKIM (because of its slow process of JAKIM). Okay. We have followed up. However, it is not up to us to speed up the process. Even though we have kept following up...”

During the application process, a timeline of application and timeline of the process varies, depending on many factors, such as the types of menu/products to register and the processing and auditing officers, which are clearly beyond the capacity of Halal Executives. Explaining these circumstances to the management team may be a hurdle for Halal Executives. The companies' management may not fully understand the

whole scenario, especially since JAKIM does not provide a specific processing timeframe to complete an application.

Informant G also shared that receiving corporations from other franchisees was quite a struggle;

“...yes. Some franchise companies have excellent management systems. An example is KJH (a franchise company). KJH has many franchisees. Let us say you want to open an outlet. You have to follow whatever the franchisor gives, the ingredients and everything. However, unlike our company’s case, the franchisor does not have autocratic power. It means the franchisee has overpowered until the franchisor cannot control it. For example, the franchisee says, I do not want to use this product. This product is expensive, so they can change the ingredients using different products...”

Informant G added to this:

“...it is just that one of the other challenges I mentioned is related to the entity. The current MPPHM requirement, if I am not mistaken, is that audits are conducted once a year or every six months. However, for our company, we have decided to conduct audits every quarter. At first, when we suggested monthly, we shifted to a quarterly basis because we have a smaller team now. Even doing an audit every quarter, we found all kinds of issues. Imagine if we rarely do it again when we recommend it to other entities. It means that other zones do more frequently, and they resist. They said, ‘Oh no. I do not have time to do frequent audits’...”

Communication among departments and franchisees is crucial for Halal Executives as they must deal with the respective department to ensure every unit complies with the regulations (Fitriani et al., 2023). Other departments may not embody the Halal system and regulation compared to Halal Executives; thus, it reflects the communication struggles related to the job. It is another challenge for Halal Executives to keep disseminating Halal awareness among employees within their organisations, especially among the non-believers as they might not understand the logic and reasoning behind certain rulings and regulations.

Another challenge expressed by the Halal Executives is related to **traceability and labelling**. Informant I expressed;

“...so, for example, we are exporting a product to Indonesia, and we are having trouble with them understanding how we reference everything. So, it seems that the list of the people we are dealing with, a very particular everything, must be the same. So, if your product name on the certificate slightly varies from what is on the product, they feel it has lost traceability, even though you provided the linking numbers and other traceability information. So, I am struggling with that at the moment...”

Marketing products internationally require comprehension of different systems and regulations. Hence, Halal Executives must be as flexible in understanding these requirements and regulations as it may slow down the whole process of marketing and product placement in the respective market. This is also one of the major reasons why many Halal scholars have proposed the unification of global Halal certification.

Informants also expressed their concern about **transportation/ logistics issues**. According to Informant M;

“...in the standard that they have, it says that finished products must be segregated, must be segregated for transport. For example, if we were supplying one pallet of a product to Woolworth that is Halal Certified versus the rest of the four or five piles that are not (Halal), We are not going to get one truck to transport one pallet...”

Major Halal-certified food manufacturers in Australia customarily do not produce Halal-certified products only. Some may produce other dietary restrictions containing ingredients that are against Islamic values. Hence, contamination issues are not limited to the production process but extend to packaging, storage, and logistics.

Modification and innovation of food are also other major concerns of Halal Executives, as expressed by Informants H and F, respectively;

“...there are different kinds of food these days. Many modified foods use preservatives and do not know their origin. In the past, most of the items were raw materials. For example, candy is just sugar and other raw materials. Now there are many colours. Some have a shelf life of 3 years, some maybe ten years—so many preservatives. Many added chemicals. Getting these Halal-certified ingredients is hard because we do not know the source. Many of those items have been chemically modified. So, we do not even know where the chemicals come from. The challenge is getting a Halal certificate for these ingredients and preservatives...”

“... the challenge is that there will be more production. The higher the number of product productions, the more issues will arise. Like for example, coffee. There will be the fake version of coffee...”

Modern technology also impacts the food industry. Thanks to modern technology, food-related issues such as fake products, harmful food preservatives, and colouring are easily developed and available online and offline in markets. This is one of the major Halal challenges (Majid et al., 2015) that Halal Executives encounter while working in the food industry.

Other than that, the informants also expressed the challenges related to **raw materials**.

Informant G, M and H shared their experiences, respectively:

“...so, another challenge as a Halal Executive in my company is you have thousands of ingredients. For example, we have 50 food menus whenever you want to apply Halal. The ingredients will be more than 400. It is a lot. So, this zone/franchise uses chilli sauce from this brand, and other franchises use a different brand. Other franchises use different brands of soy sauce. Let us say this brand is expired; I still have a backup of another brand. You have to register many brands for one ingredient. Halal Executive needs to be alert to the ingredients system. So, if anything happens, such as the Halal certificate for an ingredient suddenly being revoked, you need to have backup ingredients...”

“...and the other probably big challenge is the supply, source, and supply of raw materials. So obviously, with the impacts of Covid and issues with the supply chain at the moment, many companies, including us, are having to spot buy (unplanned purchase) materials. So not always from an approved supplier...”

“...because it is not easy to find Halal ingredients. Like sugar and milk, they are easy. However, for example, cheese. Cheese is mostly from Australia. So, we have to contact the supplier for the cheese from Australia. That is why we must ask him whether we can provide a Halal Cert. So, if people say there is a Halal Cert, then

we will purchase it. We will not purchase directly but purchase from a Malaysian distributor...”.

As the regulatory affairs officers in the organisation, Halal Executives face challenges to ensure that every raw material and finished product is Halal-certified and safe to consume by the Muslim community and the general public. Generally, Halal is associated with food derived from animal and non-alcoholic ingredients; hence, it is quite a challenge for Halal Executives to procure Halal certification for certain products, especially that food is customarily Halal, such as sugar, chillies and others. The producers of these ingredients customarily will not apply for Halal certification, especially if they are in the SME category. Communication with suppliers is another concern, as the food industry customarily communicates through suppliers instead of producers. Hence, requesting Halal certification for certain ingredients will be a hassle.

Finally, the most prominent challenge Halal Executives encounter is related to **employees**. For example, Informant D disclosed issues related to the high turnover of on-site Muslim personnel, which could jeopardise the Halal certification application:

“...okay, the second one is when it comes to the requirement of Muslim staff for outlets (on-site), it is the same everywhere; the challenge is high turnover. So when the turnover is high, when JAKIM does an audit, they see no on-site Muslim personnel, it will cause us an NCR...”.

Informant E also discussed the compliance issues related to on-site personnel;

“...it is more about etiquette as food handling practices. Sometimes, employees neglect to use hair nets and gloves. Even though everything is provided...”.

In a major organisation, utilising a franchise business model is another challenge Halal Executives face as the on-site Halal Executive (also known as Halal Supervisor in certain companies) may not be the subject-matter expert. Informant G discussed a scenario within their organisation;

“...my company use a franchise business model. So, my company’s headquarters covers Klang Valley, Nilai, and the Seremban area. However, other states, such as Kelantan, Terengganu, Pahang, and others, are managed by different entities owned by other franchisees. So, every franchisee has its own Halal Executive, but the executive is the operation person (on-site personnel). That means an operation person is sent to take the Halal Executive course. That is why they cannot afford to handle Halal only...”

Informant G added the same connotation:

“...some outlets request audits carried out by in-house Halal Executives. The problem is that the Halal Executives they have are operational people (on-site Muslim personnel) who do not know much about Halal. They attended Halal Executive training only to get a Halal certificate. So, we have to do a virtual audit of the outlets with the help of Halal Executives, who are also operational people. So, we provide double training to other franchisees. So when JAKIM audits their sites, JAKIM issues NCR because their operation system does not comply...”

Awareness among employees is also a concern by Halal Executives, as discussed by

Informant J, N and H, respectively:

“...it is more, I think, just a misunderstanding. Obviously, quite a few years ago, there were a few articles written about how funds from certification were being used to fund activities that many people do not agree with. So, I think that had many impacts. Moreover, I think the general population can be quite ignorant about what Halal means. Also, I think they can associate that with more extremist activities, which is not the case...”

“...I guess my opinion is that the general population do not understand what Halal means, what Halal certification is involved or what that means, which also reflects some employees...”

“...awareness is important because, at one of our Chinese Food Cuisine outlets, I have a chef there who is all Chinese. They often say, ‘Is it necessary? Why do you have to buy Halal?’. People argue. ‘Why do you have to go through the trouble looking for Halal corn? It is hard’. He will say that. So, we have to understand the people...”

Based on these employee-related challenges, the researcher could interpret that misinformation and undertrained employees are consequential problems for Halal Executives performing their tasks. Figure 16 illustrates the challenges encountered by Halal Executives in Malaysia and Australia, generated by *Atlas.ti*.



4.4.2 Solving Issues

Based on the challenges experienced by Halal Executives within the food industry, they discussed the mechanism of solving the problem within their control based on their position. The first proposition they made was **regular inspection and constant reminders**. Informant G stated that typically, employees are forgetful about the Halal requirements and compliance. Hence, it is the responsibility of Halal Executives to remind them constantly. According to Informant G;

“...so, we will always hold an internal Halal committee meeting and discuss and show how you want to apply when you want to do all these things. It is just that even if they meet many times, they still will not remember. Things (errors) keep repeating. We have to keep reminding everyone. We must keep reminding them that this is the right process, etc....”.

Informant E also mentioned regular inspections;

“...but no matter what, in terms of control and visual inspection, it must be done regularly...”.

Informant C also shared their experience of communicating with their management using consequential arguments related to the Halal certification application;

“...I will tell them this: If you cannot fulfil these requirements, I cannot continue with the Halal application either. You choose between these two. Do you want a Halal certificate, or do you want to choose your dog? If you choose your dog, I will hold the application. Also, you have a product that cannot be exported. So, if you still want to continue, let us put this dog in one (another) place. We built a house a little far away. However, he can still monitor the factory. He had to follow what I said. As I said, I do not dare to be responsible if this dog goes into the manufacturing site or even at night. I do not see it. What I say is nice to him. At first, my boss was unsatisfied. So, I said I could not do anything either. This is the requirement. This is the Islamic law we must obey to get this application. This is not a man-made law. This is what we have in Islam. We have Islamic law, I said. This is true. If you do not meet the above criteria, you cannot continue (with the application). He was taking his time to think about it. After a week of discussion, he agreed. As I said, we want to export to many countries. So, we need a Halal cert to export goods. No Halal cert, you cannot export. Even if you want to enter the market, you cannot. So, that is my experience...”.

Informant G also expressed the same connotation regarding consequential argument as a reminder medium, which is also supported by Informant D;

“...for example, I did an internal Halal audit of another entity (franchisee), and people were unhappy with my NC. Moreover, they think that things are troublesome. So, I will challenge him. I am not the keep-quiet type. Okay, that is okay. No! I cannot be like that. So, I will say, when JAKIM officers come, you answer it yourself. I will not help. I will say that. You want me to help; you follow (my lead). You do not want me to help; you do it yourself. So, that thing will make people patient. Be patient with Halal (committee/ executive). They need to follow. Because they want the Halal certificate; if you want Halal, you have to follow. It is just that some franchisees are stubborn...”

Informant D continued:

“...the promotional menu will involve a whole large organization, so what I do is that I will present all the risks. If you want to launch tomorrow, only come to me today to apply for Halal. We do not have enough time to apply for Halal within one day. What is his risk? JAKIM will notify us of NCR; whether the risk is small or big, we must explain it all. So, after that, we tell him all the risks if the management says people still want to go with them. That is why the organization has to answer for the risk of impact. Because people already know the risk, people are aware, and people still want to do it, go on...”

Reminders are also performed through different means, such as training. Informant D and I expressed that official in-house training was carried out to ensure that on-site and other department employees were constantly reminded of Halal-related matters.

Informant D said;

“...we will conduct a mini project. It means that after finishing one department, we go to another department. Be specific and detailed according to the departments. Once everything is set up, okay, everyone will know and have this mentality, ‘Oh, there is a Halal issue if we do this,’ for example. So, when there is a mentality, everything else moves smoothly...”

According to Informant I;

“...versus having a specific qualification, so we are currently not required for our certified body. We have internal training, which goes over what Halal is. Where does non-Halal come from? What we can and cannot have on-site? Segregation. Cleaning. Em. What else is there? Our policy. Em. Moreover, just kind of going to

register into, I guess, around Halal requirements, which is based on the standards we provided from our certifying body...”.

Some Halal Executives established Frequent Ask Questions (FAQs) to avoid employee misconceptions as part of countermeasure reminders. Informant J disclosed:

“...so, we have addressed this with some frequently asked questions around sensitive topics like that but also making them understand that because our materials are not Halal Certified, it does not mean that they are manufactured in or always manufactured in a specific way. So, not everything is Halal Certified. For example, the fruit you eat. Perfectly suitable, would-be Halal-suitable essentially. Does it affect you? No. Does that change the way you eat it?...”.

Constant reminders and regular inspections are needed for the food industry due to constant updates and changes to the regulations and policy and the introduction of new menus and products (Ahmed et al., 2018). New formulations may imply different ingredients that produce different kinds of food, which may not be Halal-friendly. Hence, Halal Executives must constantly be involved and remind everyone about Halal-related matters.

The informants also perceived that **networking and negotiation** are other ways to solve Halal issues. Informant D disclosed how networking with other Halal Executives within the same food industry assists them in finding solutions to certain issues that the guidelines and the certifiers could not resolve. Informant D said;

“...luckily, another connection for the Halal Industry is big. Because maybe everyone understands each other, right? So, we, fellow Halal Executives, always share our expertise. There is a situation like this; how do you handle it?...”.

Informant G expressed a similar idea during the Halal certification application involving multiple companies or franchisees, which they consulted with other industry players;

“...so, when this issue happens, we (Halal Executive) have a group (social media group). So, we will ask, do your company do this? Do you have to be like this? So, everyone will say they did all lump sum in one application...”

Informants E and C discussed how negotiating with their superior helped them resolve internal issues related to Halal food production. Informant E mentioned that due to strong communication with their superior, requests related to Halal typically are granted by their superior as they genuinely believed that it would help ease the process.

Informant E disclosed;

“...there is no problem because even when I came in from the beginning, the boss gave full power 100% for this (related to Halal compliance). So, if we ask him for anything, he will proceed. He will agree to what we want. We have an excellent director in terms of money to upgrade the Halal system, and he has no problem with that. He will compromise...”

Informant C discussed that Halal Executives might face difficult situations related to superiors and subordinates if they do not possess any negotiating skills in dealing with three-way communication between superiors and subordinates. Informant C said;

“...most importantly, negotiate. Negotiate. It means the way we negotiate or the way we communicate with our superiors. Another way we communicate is that we have a team because you are in between (top employees and subordinates). Okay. When you want to set up for Halal. Want to be a Halal-listed company? Then you can communicate with your boss and other staff to encourage their cooperation. Suppose you do not have this. It is hard. It is a challenge for me. Because sometimes, I have met a boss who does not understand why this is impossible. Why do we have to change our layout? Why? Why? He did not want to because he did not understand. Then, he did not want to cooperate but still wanted a Halal cert. That is a big deal...”

Some solutions may not be available within the Halal policy constructed in the company or may not even be available within the manual established by the government and Halal certifiers. Hence, networking and negotiation have helped these executives deal with special or rare cases.

Segregation between Halal and non-Halal items, as well as storage and processing machinery, is another mechanism Halal Executives use to deal with contamination issues. Informant M disclosed:

“...especially around the segregation and making sure we have dedicated equipment and so forth versus something like a vegan or vegetarian claim where it is a little bit more lenient...”

This scenario may be observed in Australia, where one company or premise may produce Halal and non-Halal products (Zulfakar et al., 2018) and adopt physical segregational measures to avoid cross-contamination. Certification is typically granted to products, not the factory and premises. Hence, the Halal Executive may have to ensure segregation is strictly performed by any means and cleansing is performed in accordance with Sharia law.

Issues are also tackled by **rejecting and avoiding non-compliance and non-registered ingredients/ products**. Halal Executives may have to be strict regarding non-registered ingredient usage to avoid the NCR being issued. According to Informant H:

“...so, if you buy things at TESCO, you can. At least it is the same brand. For example, the Bega brand, right? Feel free to buy it yourself. However, don't we know that Bega is Halal? So, it is okay. However, suddenly, he bought the ABC brand; we do not know ABC; what brand is this? We do not know if it is Halal or not. So, that is a challenge for me. We want to educate these people to be more responsible...”

JAKIM or certifiers will issue an NCR as and when the food industry utilises non-registered ingredients, which is the worst-case scenario, non-compliant ingredients. Hence, it is understandable that Halal Executives may make a strong decision regarding this matter.

Halal Executives also **filtrated items at the entrance of the premises** to avoid NCR, specifically contamination with non-compliant ingredients. Informant F discussed the filtration system applied in their company:

“...if they (clients/visitors) bring a gift, usually during festival time, we will block him at the entrance. Over there, we will inform them that we have a Halal policy for staff and customers. So, if there are items that you cannot bring in, such as alcohol, we will place them outside of the premises; they cannot enter. They can only enter once everything is clear (free from non-Halal items)...”.

NCR is a crucial report provided by JAKIM. If the NCR issued is a minor case, then the company can rectify it, provide a solution and explanation for the report, and return it to JAKIM. However, if the NCR issued a major case, it would get the certification revoked. Hence, Halal Executives must be thorough to avoid non-compliance issues, even from the premises' entrance to the products' logistic aspects.

Another excellent strategy for solving issues Halal Executives implement is registering alternative-compliance ingredients when formulating new products or menus. Informants E and H discussed registering alternative ingredients on the MyeHalal certification application system for their product development. Informant E disclosed:

“...but if we do not control, for example, sugar. I set the purchase of sugar to only these three brands: MSM, CSR and another local brand. Apart from that brand, I do not want it. Why? Because we will have a problem with the documentation control of raw materials. So, when we have a problem during the registration of raw materials, if we do not comply with what we register and when the audit is carried out, suddenly it is not the same as what we register in the system. Confirm we will get NC...”.

Informant H also said;

“...I give an example of sweetened condensed milk. We have F&N with Gold Coin. Okay, I will check ‘Okay, make sure to use only these two milks. Gold Coin with

F&N. Other than those brands are not allowed. If you want to, you have to go through us... ”.

Registering multiple alternative ingredients is crucial to avoid ingredient shortages for production, which sometimes may happen due to unforeseen circumstances. Production delay due to a shortage of supply may affect the whole supply chain ecosystem, and it also has a major reflection on business image.

Some of the necessary ingredients for product development may not possess Halal certification. However, they are suitable and safe for Muslims to consume (Ahmed, 2021), especially since they are important ingredients for getting the desired flavour, texture or colour for the products. Hence, customarily, Halal Executives will **request official statements from the suppliers**. Informant N disclosed their experience in requesting a suitability consumption statement from the supplier:

“...we will get a suitability statement from the supplier to say that they do not run any material that is not Halal and where they are sourcing from, there is also no risk of crossed contamination of non-Halal material. Moreover, we will supply that suitability statement to JKH (Halal certifier in Australia) for review. Also, if they are happy, then we can use that material. For example, apple dice are not certified. It is just a fresh dice apple. So, we will have the suitability statement from the supplier to say that this is the ending product that we run, and there is no risk of cross-contamination of other materials...”.

Some international certifiers, such as JAKIM, may not accept the suitability statement provided by suppliers as a replacement for Halal certification due to no medium of verification on the Halal status of the ingredients. However, this works within the Australian certification process, particularly in the Halal industry in Australia, which is less prominent as compared to Malaysia. Hence, consumers may find Halal-suitable products with no Halal certification. However, these products may not be suitable for

export to Muslim-majority countries, as they may face rejection due to the lack of Halal certification and limited consumer demand.

Halal Executives also provided **reasoning and risk assessment reports** as a countermeasure to Halal-related issues. According to Informant K;

...instead, we provide reasoning and risk assessment as to why we have different pallets on the truck. Say, for example, we made it clear that the finished product, in the case of three layers of packaging, we do not have a mixed pallet, though they may seem not to have two products in one pallet, for example, that you could have three different products on the same truck essentially. Thus, even though we are not compliant with that particular line in the standard, we provided reasoning to say that we assess this. It does low risk. There is no risk of crossed contamination or spills, and they are fine to accept that...”

Minimising the risks of contamination is one of the motivational drives behind implementing Halal food certification (Fernando et al., 2014). As this informant is working within a food company that produces products with multiple dietary restrictions, they encountered unavoidable circumstances that are somehow related to contamination. Hence, providing reasoning and risk assessment reports to the certifier helped justify why certain measures were taken and were not against the contamination obligation.

Astonishingly, Halal Executives in Australia utilised a distinctive approach that caters to the negative stigma of Halal in their organisation. Informant I shared their approach to dealing with stigma by rebranding Halal as an allergen rather than a lifestyle associated with Muslims. Informant I said;

“...but we have done much work to ensure that severity is viewed more as an allergen than a lifestyle. So, we claimed. Which is good because it is working...”

Although conceptually and fundamentally inaccurate, rebranding it as an allergen helps to temporarily deem down the bad connotation towards Halal and Muslims in general, especially within the Australian context. Previously, there was a campaign held in promoting boycott towards Halal products (Hirschman & Touzani, 2016). Although this negative connotation is not as common, Halal product developers may still take precautionary steps to avoid any inconvenience related to this issue. Figure 17 illustrates the mechanisms for solving issues performed by Halal Executives in Malaysia and Australia, generated by *Atlas.ti*.



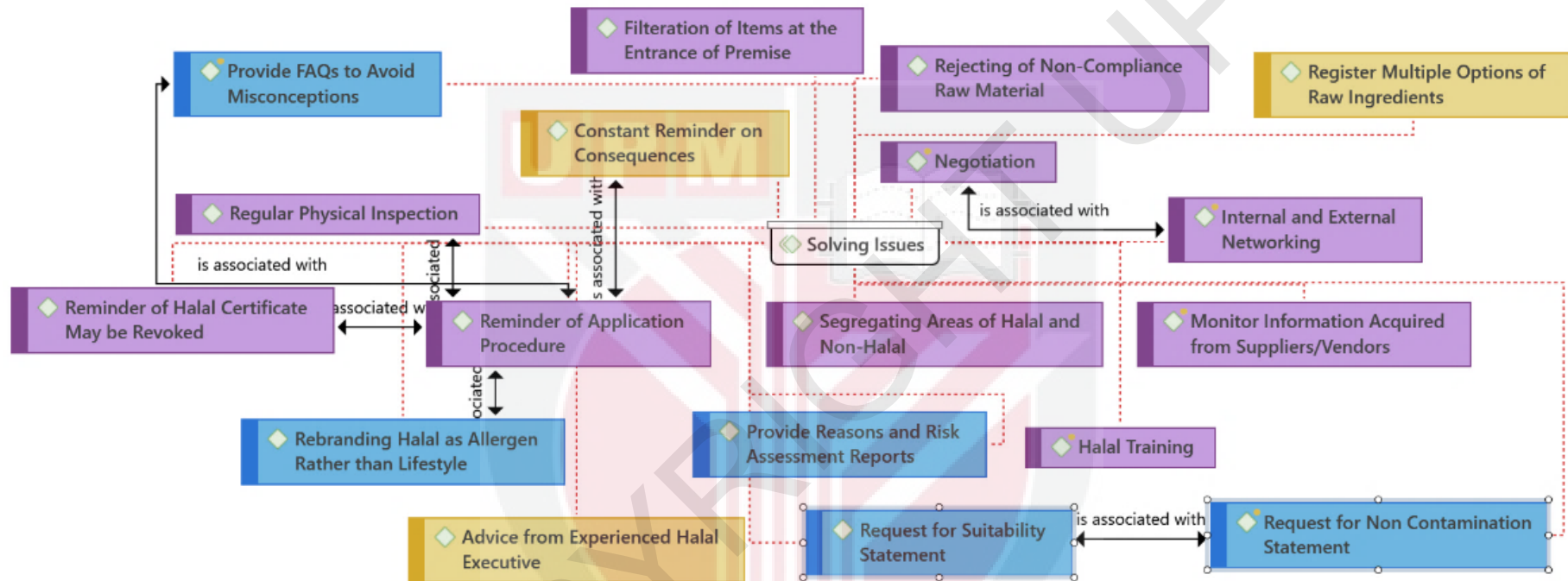


Figure 17 : Atlas.ti Visual Representation of Mechanisms of Solving Issues Performed by Halal Executives in Malaysia and Australia

4.4.3 Decision-Making Ability

The informants also discussed making substantial decisions related to Halal initiatives. During the submission of certification applications, these tasks are mainly executed by Halal Executives alone, without needing approval from top management or any other personnel. Informants A and C, respectively, stated on **self-approval for Halal certification applications** by Halal Executives in the food industry;

“...if it is for raw material, I apply and verify it myself. Whether the raw material can be brought in or not, I monitor myself. If it is for the application, I will do it myself...”

“...if it is a Halal application, I am usually the only one involved...”

Scrutinization on Halal certification official documents established (MHMS 2020, MPPHM [Domestic] 2020, and AAG AIO 2022) by the governments did not specify any approval requirement for Halal certification applications by the food industries. Hence, the approval system is subject to each organisation's bureaucratic systems; in this case, all informants disclosed that approval is unnecessary.

However, the decision-making ability of Halal Executives is limited to submission applications, which do not cover the whole spectrum and ecosystem of Halal-related matters. The informants disclosed that **top management or board directors mainly made major decisions** related to Halal. Informant C, for instance, expressed their concern about Halal Executives' capacity to make decisions related to Halal;

“...Halal Exec, the person who can make decisions. Not people who can only follow. That is my hope Because, from what I see in other companies, the only one who makes decisions is the director. Halal exec cannot make decisions based on his assessment...”

Informant F shared about acquiring defective materials, which can only be verified and acknowledged by the director or higher position executives;

“...so far, the autonomy of the director. Even if we reject damaged items, I still ask for approval from the director. I have taken all the photos; the director will tell me the results. Unless he does not reply, I will continue to decide on an urgent case. If this is the case, we will return the item. Because the item looks dirty, I usually return it to the supplier if the director is nowhere to be found...”

A similar connotation discussed by Informant B on the substantial decision related to food safety and storage management which can only be concluded by the higher level executives or the director of the company;

“...the brand of sugar we use is sugar in sacks. Our policy is not to use hooks. Because when they use the hook, it will penetrate the sack. It will leave a big hole and leak. Moreover, normally, we will keep it for a certain time; We will use it maybe in another week or another 2,3 days. So, there are holes. So, pests can easily go into the sacks. We do not know what kind of pests can get into the sacks. However, the management said it was okay because we were desperate, and the sugar had run out. So, what do we want to do with that thing? I covered the hole with a plate. I do not want to let the pests go into the sacks. No choice. I have to give in...”

Informant G expressed that decisions can only be made by convincing and negotiating with the top management to ensure the desired outcome reflecting Halal matters as they have limited autonomous ability to make such a decision. Informant G said;

“...we will have trouble making decisions. Others will influence him. That is why having the experience to counter problems is important. Do we have a reference for his kind of solution? Skills. We need to know the right attitude to convince people (top management) to make the desired decisions. It is hard if we are the type to do good work but not speak/argue well...”

Echoing the similar connotation, the informants believed that food industries tend to **reject improvement measures** if they are limited to Halal-related matters, which will not affect a tangible outcome. According to Informant A;

“...people are satisfied with the existing procedure because there is no non-compliance. For them, if there is no issue, there is no need to make changes...”

These scenarios imply that Halal Executives have limited decision-making ability, especially if it involves cost-effectiveness and other profitable factors, although it compromises the *Halalan Toyayiban* concept and food safety. Ahmad et al. (2018) discussed that the Halal food industry should improve by providing adequate authority to Halal Executives in making Halal-related decisions. Substantial decisions, especially compromising Halal and food safety, should be under Halal Executives' autonomy as they are the in-house experts employed grounded by the knowledge, expertise and experience they procured to operate a holistic Halal and food-safety product development ecosystem.

This study aims to highlight this critical issue, as it significantly impacts the Halal ecosystem. Limited authoritative capacity in making vital decisions, particularly on Halal matters, may jeopardize the *Halalan* (permissibility) and *Tayyiban* (nutritious and safe for consumption) status of products. If this negative scenario continuously occurs and is discovered by consumers, it will not only reflect poorly on the brands and products but also on Halal Executives, certification bodies, and the government. Hence, this study asserts that the issue must be addressed effectively and immediately. Figure 18 illustrates the decision-making ability possessed by Halal Executives, generated by *Atlas.ti*.

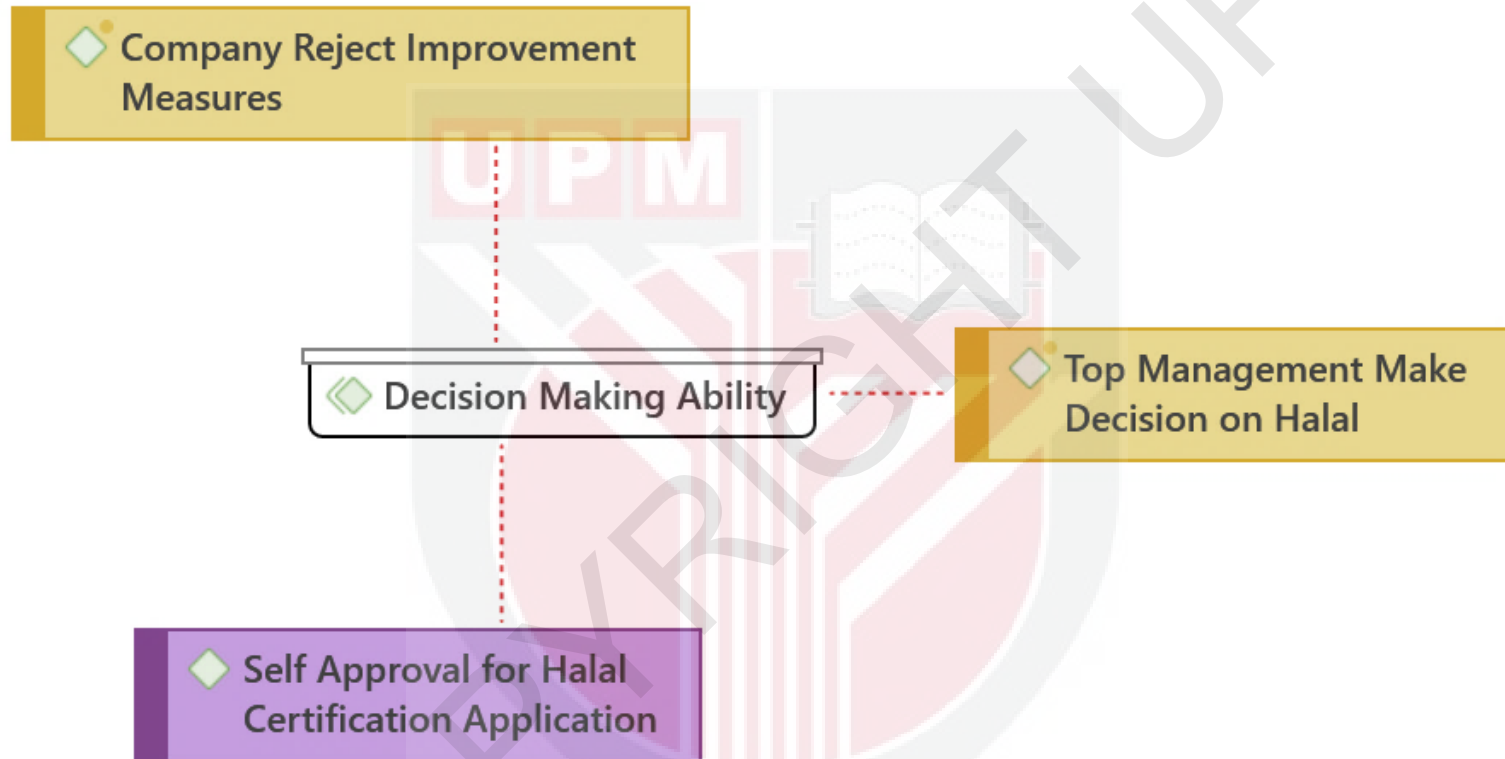


Figure 18 : Atlas.ti Visual Representation of Decision-Making Ability of Halal Executives in the Food Industry

4.4.4 Halal Opportunity in Food Industry

As a prominent Halal industry player within the food industry, Halal Executives discussed various Halal opportunities within the global and local markets. Informants F and D respectively stated that as the Halal market continues to grow, Halal Executives may **venture into the different schemes of Halal sectors**;

“...at the same time, we have to take care of Halal schemes because there are several Halal schemes now, such as food premises and food products. Then, JAKIM has a logistics scheme and a consumables scheme. So, I have to handle various schemes. So, now I am included in the logistics scheme...”

“...it means that I must get all the knowledge and skills. From certified training, I already know what kind of certified training and what kind of transportation audit. Then next, I will focus on things like overseeing people (getting promoted)...”

JAKIM enlisted nine different Halal schemes covering various sectors such as food and beverages scheme, cosmetics, pharmaceuticals, food premises, consumables, logistics, abattoirs, medical devices and OEM product developments (MPPHM, 2020). Halal Executives have the opportunity to expand their portfolio to different ventures to diversify their skills and profile. Diversifying portfolio will also create the possibility of promotion as a Halal Executive, becoming knowledgeable in various Halal ecosystems.

Other than that, Informant A mentioned expanding their Halal certification to international locations of their organisation. According to Informant A;

“...within five years, my target is to have a manufacturing plant in Australia that is Halal certified. There is no Halal-certified plant in Australia...”

Working in a multinational company allows the Halal scheme to expand to different locations of factories, which brings a better understanding of Halal certification

system development across countries and regions, especially the Halal certification recognised by the countries that possess systems different from those of the country of origin. Informant K also discussed the opportunity to **expand international traceability systems**. Informant K disclosed;

“...with that, I know that at one stage, for example, Indonesia was talking about potentially having a QR code on the label that brings up the certificate for that product when you scan. However, I do not think that went forward. So, just keep best of any regulatory changes...”

Decentralisation of Halal certification provides different requirements and traceability systems for Halal products. Hence, exporting Halal products to various locations globally may provide a fresh experience for Halal Executives to comprehend different Halal certification systems recognised by the importing countries.

Halal Executives also shared that the Halal market will continue to grow due to the **increasing Muslim global population**, increasing the global demand for this dietary law. Informant H explained;

“...because of the Muslim population. We (Muslim people) are number 2 in terms of most religions in the world. So, it is really wide. Nevertheless, there is a challenge. So, when there is a challenge, it is the challenge that makes it difficult to get opportunities...”

Muslim populations currently cover at least 25% of the world population, and this number will increase to one out of three of the whole population (Kettani, 2020). Hence, with this exponential growth, any demands related to the Muslim lifestyle will simultaneously increase, especially in the Halal food market. The increasing population and development of modern technology will also impact the food industry with the **creation of new and innovative food products and menus**. Informants G and D said, respectively;

“...I can say this year, and maybe because the movement restriction is lifted, there are more food businesses. All kinds of restaurants have come out. Many brands are trending in. Korea has a food trend, such as Korean fried chicken paste. People want to eat, but people still want to ask about Halal. So, at the end of the day, management will give in to get Halal (certificate). Most of them are like that...”.

“...all kinds of menus to be introduced so that things are trending. So, among the trending menus are menus from foreign countries. So, when involving foreign countries, the Halal Executive’s role is important to ensure the company follows the rules...”.

Emergent innovative food products and menus derived from different sources, such as insects and microbes (Fasoline et al., 2019) and undergoing different processing steps may have different implications for the human body. There is also a possibility that some innovative products are not safe to consume for people with certain types of dietary restrictions and allergens. Hence, the Halal Executive is responsible for ensuring that new innovative food products and menus are safe to consume and comply with Halal dietary law. Based on the data gathered, Figure 19 illustrates the Halal Opportunity for Halal Executives.

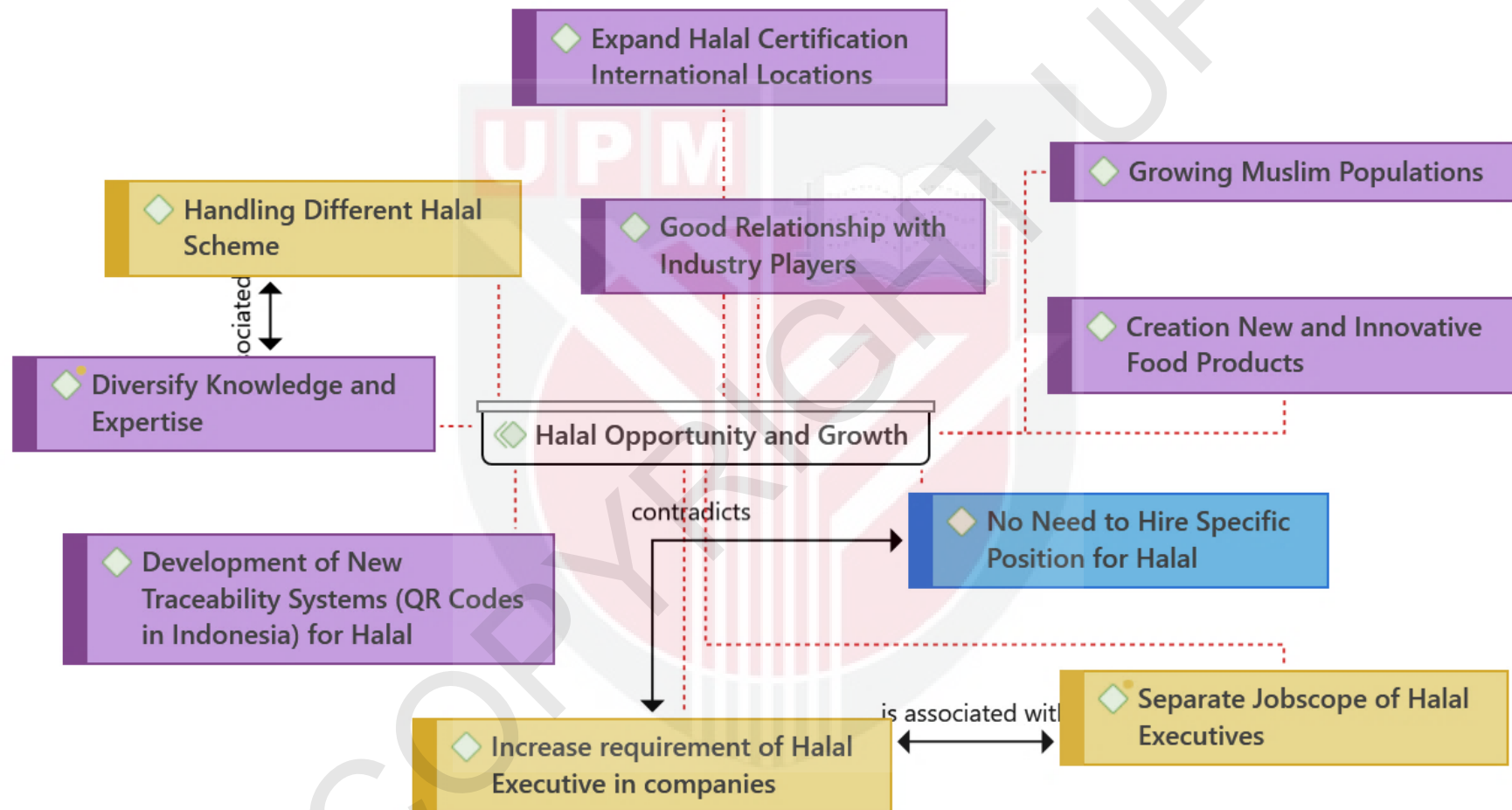


Figure 19 : Atlas.ti Visual Representation of Halal Opportunities for Halal Executives

4.5 Research Question 3: Career Growth Expectations for Halal Executives in Malaysia and Australia's Food Industry

The final research question explored the expectations and perceptions of Halal Executives regarding their position within the food industry. They expressed their thought based on their personal experience and also based on their observation of the experience of their colleagues working within the same industry.

4.5.1 Job Security

A recent study identified that job security has a moderate relationship with career growth (Bhatti & Alvi, 2022). However, according to the informants expressed that job security is a substantial element of career growth. They discussed how the **appointment of Halal Executives in the food industry mainly to obtain Halal certification**. Informant A mentioned that companies observed Halal programs as a complement element to the other certifications. Informant A said,

“...most food companies consider Halal a complement to the existing certificate...”

Traditionally, some important documents for operating food manufacturing companies include GMP and HACCP. Hence, Halal certification is acquired to complement the local needs of exporting demands, as it is not necessary for food businesses to own Halal certification to start operating a food business in any country, including Malaysia and Australia.

Informants also understand that their position is secured due to the requirement established by the government to obtain Halal certification. For example, as shared by Informant B,

“...this position exists because of the order of the authority...”.

As discussed previously, the Malaysian government enforced the existence of Halal Executives in the food industry to obtain and retain Halal certification. Within different circumstances, such as in Australia or other non-Muslim countries, the position of Halal Executives may not be prominent and secure. To Halal Executives, the security of their position is an important expectation, although they also expressed other concerns about it.

The study uncovered Halal Executives' career growth expectations through their perception of this position. Most Halal Executives believe this position is stagnant and does not have a promising career progression plan. Informant H expressed their concern about the position;

“...but if it is only a Halal Executive in a company, I do not think they have career growth in those companies. Unless there is a Halal Department, which sadly not many companies have in Malaysia...”.

Informant A added the same connotation,

“...Halal Executive is a static position in some organisations, you know. Their career is static. It means whether they want to accept it or not, they have to find something else than they have expected...”.

Halal Executives in SMEs typically deal with Halal initiatives on their own, without any other teams directly involved with the Halal certification process and maintaining the programs, in addition to other portfolios (Mokhtar, 2021). Hence, to progress, it is facile to jump to a different organisation to progress salary-wise rather than dealing with career progress internally. Extending to the idea, Informants D and E believed

that as the position stagnated, Halal Executives would be offered slightly lower than average other executives in the workforce. According to Informant D,

“...I see it as stagnant. Because when I look at the advertisements for new applications, Halal cum Admin. The salary offered is basic (minimal). Very basic, right? Basic salary of an admin clerk. I do not think that should be for Halal Executive...”

Informant E expressed the same thoughts:

“...so, it means that until a certain point, our salary level will only be stuck at the same level. We cannot go up anymore. So, like us, we will have a family, right, and then the cost of living will be high again...”

Informant F also discussed that getting a promotion is a far stretch for them, and they could only hope for adding a new portfolio instead;

“...if it is for the promotion, I think it is difficult. Like myself, I take care of Halal and the logistics part. So, there is an additional portfolio. So, I do not think it is available for the promotion, but it is possible to add to the portfolio...”

This position is fairly new in the workforce, and the guidelines prepared by Halal Executives and scholars for this position are fairly limited for Halal certification application and maintenance. Hence, these Halal Executives believe this position is stagnant, and their organisations consider it has little to offer. **Companies' impression**

of Halal and Halal Executives also contributed to the stagnation of this position. D

discussed the company's perception of Halal Executives' position:

“...this Halal Executive's position is considered easy because many companies will only consider hiring a Halal Executive for a Halal certificate. That is their opinion. So, when you apply for a Halal certificate, that is it. It is over. So, to them, the Halal Executive has no other job. I remember this one occasion I chatted with a Senior General Manager, 'After this (applying for Halal certificate), you do not have any other work, do you?...”

Some companies perceived that Halal Executives only performed tasks specifically on Halal certification applications, which is not the case. Hence, to ensure the job is secure, revamping expectations and the working environment for Halal Executives is needed to ensure the job security of this position is achievable.

In addition, Informant C discussed companies' perceptions that training existing personnel to acquire a Halal Executive certificate is financially burdening. Informant C said,

"...for example, the company sent a clerk to the Halal Executive course, which is expensive, RM3000-RM4000. So that is where they say it is not worth it. If the company has the ability (financially), they do not mind..."

Informant G also shared their experience of how the Halal NC report gave negative connotations of the companies toward Halal;

"...when JAKIM notices an NC and asks us to solve (resolve NC cases) within a certain time, initially, the management will make a fuss out of it. They said it is not possible (to make changes). For them, Halal is something troublesome..."

Informant E expressed that promotions typically occur within **bigger corporations as they value Halal** more than others, and they also have their own Halal department to focus on and climb the hierarchical ladder. Informant E expressed;

"...if he (Halal Executive) is lucky, he can be promoted if he works in a company that values employees. For example, Lion, Nestle, and big companies like Gardenia. Ok. People in those companies valued Halal dearly, and it is important to them. The possibility to go higher in the scope of Halal is indeed brighter. Usually, the highest Halal hierarchy is the Halal Chairman. If this Halal Executive performs well, he will be promoted to Halal Chairman..."

Informant H also shared the same perceptions on promotions of Halal Executives within bigger corporations;

“...what I see is the development only in leading companies. For example, like me, if I want to fight for my salary, I have to go to Nestle (for example). Nestle is an overseas company. Alternatively, I go to a company more or less like Cadbury—a company with a name, a big company, an overseas company. They appreciate our positions (Halal Executives). The salary there is also higher. Even though the job scope is the same...”

Informant H expressed that salaries paid by international companies are relatively higher than those by local companies;

“...For example, I once went to an interview with a Japanese bird nest company. The salary offered is very high. However, I was not appointed. The point is that people (overseas companies) appreciate us (Halal Executives) more. They know the importance of Halal, right? Because they need to get and maintain certification. So, they take care of people (Halal Executives). That is why the salary offered is higher...”

Generally, most companies perceived Halal as the supplementary element of business elements rather than a substantial food regulation and system. Hence, treatment towards Halal is reflected in the professional treatment received by Halal Executives within the organisation.

However, some informants believed that treatment towards Halal Executives varies, depending on the organisation. Informant A discussed that the treatment they received varies between the current and previous organisations;

“...but there are some of my friends who are promoted. Before this, I was at the old company for four years. 2016 to 2021. Even that did not get promoted. However, maybe the company culture makes it hard to promote people, but there is an increment...”

Informant A added:

“...but in terms of increment, it is all right; the increment is high. However, it depends on the company’s system itself. How do they evaluate (performance for increment)? Because some companies have career growth, some companies do not...”

Two different MNC companies hired informant A, and their treatment of Halal initiatives and Halal Executive positions differed. Hence, the treatment of the companies toward Halal is not derived by their type or size. It is highly dependent on the companies' values and culture.

Halal Executives also argued about the **overlapping of job scope** by Halal Executives and other executives within the food industry. Informants A and D expressed that Halal Executives typically have to carry out other work not related to Halal or regulatory affairs. According to Informant A,

"...typically, it will be Halal cum something else. So, for me, it is because we are Halal (executives) like safety officers who take care of people's lives. It is like us because we care for the quality of someone's food. However, whether I am appreciated or not, I am responsible for caring for my fellow Muslims. So, I put that (appreciation and compensation) aside. But from a professional point of view, from a career point of view, maybe not..."

Informant D added to the same connotation:

"...so, I hope this position can stand independently without having to alias (cum/attached) with other things. However, we must show the company and management how important the Halal Executive is..."

Overlapping of work is not only limited to different job scopes of Halal Executives but also overlaps with other inexperienced and unknowledgeable personnel within the organisation, as discussed by Informant G;

"...franchisees normally said, 'We want to ask our Halal Executive (on-site) to do the audit himself'. The problem is that those Halal Executives are the people in charge of operations who do not know about Halal. They only went to training to get a certificate. So, we had to do a virtual outlet audit to help. So, we provide double training for franchisees. So, when there is an audit (from certifier), NC reports were related to their operation method..."

As discussed previously, overlapping job scope is common among Halal Executives, especially within SMEs (Mokhtar, 2021). Different portfolios of this position are highly dependent on the availability of each organisation's resources and the organisation's values. Both governments have established no specific guidelines to guide organisations in managing this position. Hence, it is subject to every organisation's interpretation of what and how this position should perform its tasks. This also reflects that this position is vulnerable to being treated differently, which sometimes they have to elucubrate than the others.

Besides, the Halal Executives also expressed concern that this position is **underappreciated and compensated poorly in the food industry**. Informants E, G and H expressed their frustrations about compensation received by Halal Executives in the food industry. According to Informant E,

"...ok. When it comes to the value of a Halal Executive in the industry, it is labelled as an executive; hence, we are getting a big salary. Executive, right? Getting paid such as three, four thousand, or ten thousand. It is not. We are executives, but our salaries are still low, and we have to go in and out of the production site; we are not given very special treatment. The value of the salary payment for a Halal Executive in our country is very low compared to if we are abroad, we are paid high..."

Informant G added to the same perceptions;

"...the challenge is most of the advertisements that offered small salaries. I mean lower than my current salary. So, I have been thinking, is this the highest I can earn? Maybe I cannot go far..."

Informant H discussed that some organisations are paying Halal Executives below the demanding average of an executive position;

“...even if there is a Halal Executive position, the salary is still low. Because I have friends working as Halal Executive in other factories, the salary is still below demand...”.

Informant H continued;

“...because I do not see any other job where the salary is higher than now. So, it means that the salary is the same. Or even lower. For example, my salary here is 2,400, so I must look for an opportunity with a salary of 3,000-3,500 elsewhere, right? , or at least a 300 ringgit increase in salary from now. It is hard to find. It is true that most companies only offer a salary of 2,000 or 2,200...”.

Informant A concluded that compensation received by Halal Executives is relatively lower because Halal Executives are perceived as non-specialists especially compared to other substantial fields such as safety officers;

“...regarding salary and appreciation, there is nothing special about this position. They do not treat us like a specialist; they do not treat us like a safety officer, right?...”.

Informant G expressed that appreciation of the company towards their expertise only occurred after they received other offers from different organisations;

“...when I get another offer, my company suddenly wants to counter with the higher offer. However, I said I did not want to. I asked about it (promotion and increment) at the beginning of the year (and they declined) because I know my value and deserve it. However, the company does not appreciate it. So, we have to teach the company a lesson...”.

Mokhtar (2021) also discussed how Halal Executives in Malaysia are relatively underpaid and underappreciated. This proved that this scenario is not an alienated circumstance and remains a huge challenge in Malaysia's food industry. However, in Australia, Halal program coordinators experience different treatments. For instance, Informant J discussed how they are compensated fairly as Halal initiatives enriches their portfolios in the organisations. According to Informant J,

“...after that, we got questions because my role is not solely managing Halal. So, there are other things that I do take into account. Em. However, I think so. It does. For the type of role, it does compensate me adequately...”

Informant: I also discussed their expertise in Halal-related matters; on top of other regulatory systems, they are offered promotions within the same organisations;

“...so, I will be changing position next year. It is already the end of the year. So next year. Moreover, I will be stepping into my manager’s role...”

In Malaysia, Halal Executives are customarily compensated poorly compared to Australia’s food industry. Although one could conclude that it reflects the two countries’ economic prosperity, this is untrue. Halal Executives are generally compensated less than other executives within the country, especially in the SMEs.

The informants added that to counter the low compensation they receive, Halal Executives typically perform job hopping or are **rehired by other employers to acquire fairer compensation**. Informants E and H discussed this matter. Informant E said,

“...the Halal Executive must jump to another place if he wants to be looked up to or appreciated. Move to another factory to get a high salary and to be appreciated...”

Informant H added to the same connotation:

“...but most of my friends who work in the Halal Industry are more willing to move to another company. After three or four years in the same company, people will go to another company to earn more and to experience a new challenge...”

Compensation, which includes basic salary, will typically increase by moving to different organisations as they compensate employees based on their experience of previous tenures. Halal Executives typically look for different measures, especially

moving to other organisations if their current organisations do not meet their current needs and demands. This circumstance reflects the finding of Bhatti and Alvi (2022) on how job security affects job hopping and career growth. With no security in a position, Halal Executives may explore other opportunities elsewhere.

Halal Executives also believe that to progress career-wise, they have to **continuously upskill themselves**, not only focusing on the same Halal knowledge and skills.

Informants D and B respectively discussed that upskilling will help Halal Executives get promoted and oversee other tasks on top of Halal-related tasks;

“...so that is where you can polish your leadership skills. So, after we acquire additional skills (such as safety and quality) if you want to go to a bigger one, we will take care of the bigger one. It is hard to see the ones that only have a Halal department. Usually, we will take other sections. So later, we will not just manage Halal; we will manage other things. Only then can you go up...”

“...if it is only Halal, getting promoted will not be easy. People need to have additional portfolios, for example, another cum. Halal cum QA or something else. People might become managers, but People have to oversee other things such as QA, Halal, and others...”

Informant G also mentioned the value of upskilling to increase compensation;

“...in my opinion, to increase your salary, you have to have added value to yourself. That is what I have done throughout my four years of experience...”

Informant F mentioned that upskilling is not limited to other tasks beyond Halal initiatives but is also related to different schemes within Halal programs;

“...at the same time, we have to take care of Halal schemes because there are several Halal schemes now, such as food premises and food products. Then, JAKIM has a logistics scheme and a consumable scheme. So, I have to handle various schemes. So, now I am included in the logistics scheme...”

Upskilling is important for Halal Executives to increase their value in the workforce. Although being an expert in Halal programs is a remarkable talent, overseeing people from different backgrounds and tasks requires additional and specific skills and knowledge. Hence, Halal Executives must upskill to make themselves more competitive and relevant for promotions and other compensation (Sawant et al., 2022).

Halal Executives believe the under-compensation for this position is not only limited to the company's value and economic prosperity but also due to the **oversupply of Halal Executives in the workforce**. Informant C briefly shared their opinion about the oversupplying of this position in Malaysia:

"...in this country, it is very dense..."

Informants D and E, respectively, expressed their concern about this matter, which concerns many training providers and universities offering Halal management courses and programs for the public to enrol in. At the same time, occupancy is limited in every Halal food industry.

"...I am worried about career opportunities. As I said, one company only has one or two positions (of Halal Executives). So, after that, when I look at it, I see that we have so many Halal Management courses offered out there. I am worried about that. I fear oversupply of Halal Executives in Malaysia..."

"...it is like the example we have right now: how many graduates come out of the university every year? So, the unemployment is high. It will also happen to Halal Executive. That thing will happen in the future..."

As discussed previously, JAKIM authorised many training providers and universities to offer Halal management courses and programs at different education levels, including diplomas, bachelor's degrees, and certifications. Although the Halal food industry in Malaysia is relatively big, with a value of \$314.5bn (Zainuddin et al.,

2019), Halal Executives' placement is not as prominent within one organisation. Depending on the size of the food company, only one Halal Executive is typically hired by an organisation. Hence, limited workplace occupancy with higher Halal graduates is produced yearly; naturally, Halal Executives discern a threat to their positions.

Expanding from this connotation, the informant believes it has produced mediocre Halal Executive candidates due to the oversupply of Halal Executives in the workforce. Informant C expressed their strong opinion on this matter;

"...because when I interview new executive candidates, the certified candidates are mostly fresh graduates from the training or courses. Some are still in the process of learning. So, we tested them to see what they got in the course. So, we mostly tested; they did not know the answer. I took mine eight years ago and still remember all of it. How can they not know they just finished a two-week course? That is why I told JAKIM and HDC that you have to filter the syllabus and the training providers. If not, I think this Halal Exec has no value..."

Informant C added:

"...the challenge for this country, especially for the Halal industry, is finding a good candidate because I am 43 now. Maybe five more years, ten more years, I will retire. The problem is that I have not found a replacement. I do not have high standards. However, I think any company will agree with me. Current student/current candidates are not of very high quality..."

Due to the oversupply of Halal Executives certified holders from different educational backgrounds and studies, the quality of these candidates varies, especially JAKIM, as the gatekeeper of the training programs, does not possess any ability to continuously monitor the syllabus and its suitability to accommodate the needs of the industry. A previous study discovered that reassurance among food companies on Halal certification is also a contributor to the limited Halal-related positions (Hashim et al., 2020). However, in this case, it is not limited to only that, as the data shows other

contributing factors to the lack of career options and availability for Halal Executives, which has been discussed previously.

Halal Executives typically opt into international ventures to remain relevant and competitive in the Halal food industry. Informants explained that there are many **opportunities to work in the international markets**. Informant F described how Halal food personnel were needed during the Olympic Games in Japan:

“...if you look at Japan during the Olympic Games, they hired many staff from Muslim countries, Malaysians too, especially for the food service department, they require much knowledge and expertise from Malaysia. They hired Malaysian staff to improve their Halal industry quality for the future...”

Informant C also discussed how language proficiency is a big hurdle for Halal Executives to start an international venture;

“...opportunities are not limited only in Malaysia. In fact, they are bigger abroad. The only problem is language communication. So, if you can speak English or any other language, many opportunities open up in countries like Korea and Japan...”

Informant H also mentioned the possibilities of Halal Executives getting hired in different locations such as Australia, Japan and the UK;

“...so, I have seen friends offered the opportunity to work abroad, for example, in Australia or Japan. What I usually hear is Japan, Australia, the UK in London. There, people look for us, the Halal Executive. The confirmed salary abroad is high, isn't it...”

Informant A also disclosed about applying for internal hiring for international locations of their company;

“...because, like our company, is a multinational company, we do not want to downgrade. We want to continue to expand for Halal. So, we want to go further. So, my target is for DGJS (the name of the company they are working for now); if there is an opportunity to go abroad (international locations) if they can hire us, I will try...”

Informant F added that Southeast Asian countries look for Halal Executives to cater to Halal demands, locally and internationally;

“...what I know now is Indonesia, Brunei, and Thailand. Thailand also has a lot of Halal Executives opportunities...”

Other than the opportunity to work as Halal Executives in international industries, the informants also discussed the opportunity to work in slaughterhouses and perform consultancy. Informant A said,

“...going abroad, mostly become Halal slaughterer. More of a Halal butcher. Not Halal (Exec). There are Halal ones, but doing consultant works...”

Many scholars have discussed that **the demand for Halal food** products is increasing globally. Hence, the need for in-house Halal experts will continue to flourish to accommodate the demand, as handling such a program requires a certain extent of attention and expertise. The informants also noticed these scenarios and discussed the increasing demand for Malaysia and Australian markets. Informant A mentioned:

“...so, when there is demand, the factory’s total capacity cannot accommodate the demand. They should certify their other plants/ factories rather than source it out or lose the opportunity to fulfil the demand...”

Informants also realise the increasing demand patterns in Australia on the Halal market not only to accommodate the global demand through export business but also to fill in the local demands, as discussed by Informant I:

“...and as the export markets grow and em.. as our consumer base grows, most consumer base grows within Australia and more and more companies, I think, will look to use Halal certification, particularly smaller companies. I think it is pretty standard for larger companies. Yes. It is a great thing to happen, a great thing to know about...”

Demand for Halal food and Halal activities globally will continue to increase, even within non-Muslim regions such as Europe, as the number of Muslim residents increases and global Halal tourism becomes more popular (Gündüz, 2023).

The informants also discussed the **separation portfolio of Halal Executives in the food industry**. Ahmad et al. (2017) discussed that Halal Executives may not be able to juggle two roles/functions in the food industry. In this case, the Halal Executives are regulatory affairs personnel rather than on-site employees who carry different responsibilities than quality assurance and control officers. Informant M explained the differences:

“...we have a specific quality team for that. So, scientific and regulatory sit outside of that. Em. So, the quality team is site-based, and we are more global than site-ties...”

Informant B mentioned that Halal Executives' placement in a company should be more than one executive position as another executive can act as the check and balance of the process, especially since some Halal Executives tend to be on the companies' side on Halal-related matters. Informant B expressed;

“...perhaps after this, the policy may have to be changed. The government should require two Halal Executives in a company, minimum. One person may prepare, and another verify. In the HAS policy, for example, one person is enough. That is the current situation. We should add more. When it is two people, it is hard to make the deviation. Because it is a combination of 2 identities, each has an idea. If one sides with the employer, this one must be free. We can argue and be more transparent. That is the best...”

Employing more than one Halal Executive within a company may be unnecessary, especially if the company is an SME with a limited market supply that requires only one certification system assessment. Rather, food companies and the government should strengthen their position by bestowing a more autonomous ability to ensure

Halal's regulations and requirements are not jeopardised easily, especially for monetary reasons. Figure 20 illustrates the perceptions and expectations of Halal Executives regarding their career growth.



Based on the analysis of the data gathered from interviews with the informants and comparing them with official Halal documents established by the Malaysian and Australian governments, the study found key information regarding the current standard of practices regarding Halal Executives' employment in Malaysia and Australia's food industry. It can be observed and concluded that although both Halal industries supply equivalent products (Halal-certified products) to the market, the employment of Halal Executives varies significantly. These differences depend on the context of certification, market demands, cultural values, and regulatory frameworks in each respective country.

In terms of educational qualifications for the Halal Executive position, the Australian food industry demonstrates a stronger foundation as it primarily employs food science graduates who possess a comprehensive understanding of food production, particularly with food industry technoscience. However, despite their technical expertise, Australian Halal Executives often lack a deep understanding of Halal principles due to the limited availability of structured Halal training provided by subject matter experts. Conversely, in terms of religious requirements, Malaysia has a more robust system, as only Muslims are appointed as Halal Executives. This is particularly significant, as Halal is an act of worship (*ibadah*), and Muslim professionals inherently believe in and practise Halal principles in their daily lives, making them more attuned to the religious and ethical aspects of Halal compliance.

Concerning job titles, the designation of Halal Executives in Malaysia more accurately reflects their core responsibilities within the food industry. Nevertheless, despite the differences in job titles between the two industries, Halal Executives in both Malaysia

and Australia undertake multiple roles beyond Halal-related duties, in line with concerns raised by Ahmad et al. (2018). In terms of certification systems, the Australian food industry is characterised by multiple Halal certification bodies, which has led to confusion among stakeholders and negative perceptions within the market, reflecting the findings of previous scholars such as Fischer (2005), Lever and Miele (2012), Khan and Haleem (2016) and Regenstein et al. (2003). Therefore, a centralised certification authority, such as Malaysia's Department of Islamic Development (JAKIM), offers a more structured and reliable framework for Halal governance, contributing to a more effective Halal ecosystem.

The table below illustrates the current employment practices in both countries. It consists of basic educational requirements, pre-employment training requirements, religion requirements, position titles, in-service training, certification system and on-site production activities.

Table 6 : The Current Employment Practices of Halal Executives in Malaysia and Australia

Category	Malaysia	Australia
Educational requirement	Minimum diploma (as required by the government)	Minimum bachelor's degree in food science (or anything equivalent to food studies- depending on the company policy)
Pre-employment training requirement	Halal Executive Training provided by authorised HPB providers	None
Religion requirement	Muslim Only.	None
Position title	Typically named Halal Executive. It may be labelled differently, depending on the additional job scope.	Typically named Regulatory Affairs Technologist, Regulatory Compliance Specialist, Scientific & Regulatory Affairs Officer, Food Technologist, Scientific & Regulatory Compliance Officer or anything equivalent to regulatory affairs
In-service training	On-the-job training and other Halal-related training as required by the government.	On-the-job training. Only on-site Muslim personnel are required to attend related training.
Certification	Application through a centralised Halal system (MyeHalal)	Vary. Depending on the appointed Approved Islamic Organisation (AIO) systems.
On-site production	Produce Halal products only.	May produce Halal and non-Halal products (no cross-contamination)

The thorough analysis of the data has also contributed to a framework of guidelines for these executives' career growth in the food industry. This framework encompasses the entire career growth spectrum of Halal Executives, starting from the pre-employment phase and continuing through the tenure phase. It addresses job certification requirements, job scopes, potential issues, and the expectations of Halal Executives. It is followed by external opportunities should the position encounter the glass ceiling stage and the career advancement stage, where these talents can brush up their skills and experience throughout their career practice.

The first phase of the framework explains the substantial requirements to be hired as an eligible Halal Executives in the food industry. This phase encompasses educational prerequisites and fundamental training requirements, particularly prevalent in Malaysia. The second phase of the framework focuses on Halal Executives' tenure in the food industry. It outlines the expected encounters of Halal executives during their service, including the job scope, Halal certification requirements, position requirements, challenges, expectations, and opportunities. Within this stage, we can observe the complexity of this position, as it is accountable for various affairs in the food industry. The third phase focuses on external opportunities for Halal executives. This phase brought to light additional opportunities for Halal executives to explore sectors that align with their expertise and experience.

The final phase, the career advancement phase, highlights the supplementary skillsets needed for them to remain relevant in their industry while getting greater opportunities within the industry itself or elsewhere. It is necessary to acknowledge that this phase offers insights into both; internal and external opportunities for these talents to develop, engage and advance to more critical roles such as management positions. Ideally, the framework functions as a process flow, commencing with the pre-career phase, progressing to the tenure phase, and concluding with the third phase (external opportunities). However, as the framework progresses, the fourth phase, known as career advancement, plays an ongoing role throughout the career of these Halal Executives, starting from the pre-employment stage and continuously enhancing their skills and experience. This proposal of this framework is applicable across both nations, as it was derived from data collected from both countries, thereby enhancing

the career growth of executives in both countries. Figure 21 illustrates the framework for improving comprehension.



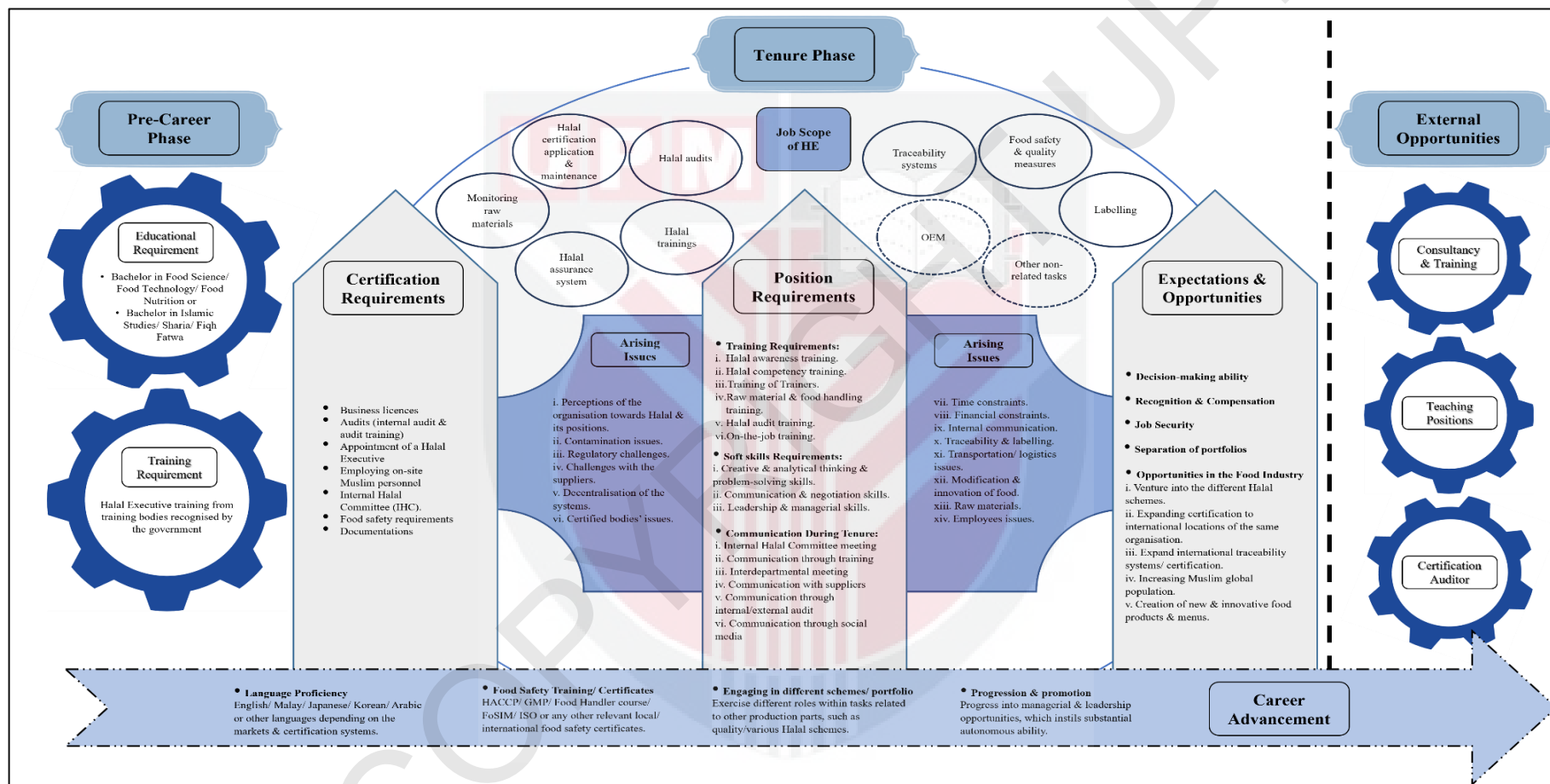


Figure 21 : Halal Executive Career Growth Guiding Framework

4.6 Summary of the Chapter

This chapter explains the analysis of data gathered from the informants via interview sessions and official Halal documents established by the Malaysian and Australian governments. The data reporting and analysis were established by following the order of the research questions established at the beginning of the study. Research question one (Halal certification system and process related to Halal Executive position) was answered by eight different themes, which covered certification processes, communication, the requirement of Halal Executive appointments and criteria to appoint Halal certification body. This was followed by research question two, which covered the personal experience of Halal Executives and discussed the challenges and opportunities of Halal Executives in the food industry. Also, the chapter explained research question three, which discusses the expectations and perceptions of Halal executives regarding their career growth. Each research question and theme was analysed via *Atlas.ti*, and the results are discussed in this chapter. The chapter ended with the current employment practices in both countries and the guiding framework of Halal Executives' career growth in the food industry, which was crafted and established based on the gathered and analysed data.

CHAPTER 5

FINDINGS, IMPLICATIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

5.1 Introduction

The final chapter of the study provides conclusions based on the results found and discussed in the previous chapter. The chapter begins by summarising the study's key findings according to the research questions and research aim. The chapter also explicitly discusses the main contributions of the study and its implication on policies and bodies of knowledge. The chapter ends with a discussion of the study's limitations and recommendations for future research.

5.2 Findings and Their Linkage to the Study Aim

The primary aim of this study is to comprehensively explore the role of Halal Executives in the Halal certification process within Malaysia's and Australia's food industry, as well as their understanding of careers, issues and opportunities in the Halal food industry. The data were gathered based on meticulously crafted research questions, and the study has uncovered four major findings that significantly contribute to Halal Executives' career growth. These findings span the pre-career phase, tenure phase, career advancement, and external opportunities, providing a comprehensive understanding of the career trajectory of Halal Executives.

5.2.1 Research Question 1: Understanding Halal Executives' Position and Certification Process

This research question is conceptually derived from the Halal Food Model, proposed by Riaz and Chaudry (2018), which fulfils the literature gaps on human resource

exploration on Halal food personnel. The interview questions for this RQ focused on the job scope of the position, the significance of this position in the food industry, prerequisite requirements for employment and questions related to certification applications and requirements. The responses from informants contributed to seven major themes, which reflect the problems highlighted in the study. The themes are Halal certification requirement, Halal Executive requirement, job scope of Halal Executives, training requirements, soft skills requirements, communication for certification and government responsibility to strengthen Halal.

5.2.2 Research Question 2: Challenges and Opportunities of Halal Executives in the Food Industry

Examination of this research question is motivated by a lack of career advancement theory on Halal talents within the Halal industry management. Conceptually, questions and analysis of this research question are gleaned from Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory (1993). Issues such as challenges faced in the industry, company policy and standard of practices, internal opportunities, and compensation were some of the questions asked during the interview sessions with the informants. The feedback from informants, along with analysis of the official Halal documents, contributed to four major themes. These themes include challenges encountered by these executives, mechanisms for solving issues, internal Halal Opportunities, and decision-making abilities.

5.2.3 Research Question 3: Expectations of Career Growth in Malaysia and Australia's Halal Food Industry

This research question is extended from the RQ2 as it explores the career growth anticipation of these executives in the food industry. Derived from Herzberg's Two-

Factor Theory, this research question addresses issues of unavailability of career growth opportunities highlighted in the research problems. During the interview sessions, the study inquired about external opportunities and career development expectations from the informants. From the interview inquiries, the study produced two additional major themes: job security and Halal's career growth perceptions.

Table 7 below presents the linkage between research aims and research findings. This table also defines the connections between the problems, theories, research questions, and study findings. It is followed by the explanation and function of each phase of the framework, which consists of the major themes found in the study.

Table 7 : Linkage between Research Problems, Aims and Findings

Research Problems	Research Question (Aim)	Underpinning Theory	Interview Question	Findings (Themes)	Phases in Framework
- No information on human resource exploration based on the Halal food model (theoretical gap). - Current studies focus on Halal training, negotiation, logistics, and supply chain (knowledge gap). - Shortcomings of transparency and understanding of current practices and regulations in the religious-based food industry (practical gap).	RQ 1 Understanding of Halal Executives on the certification process	Riaz & Chaudry's Halal Food Model (2018)	1. Responsibilities of Halal Executive 2. Importance of the position 3. Pre-requisite & ongoing training 4. Procedure for applying for job certification 5. Interactions during certification 6. Improving measures for certification	Theme 1: Halal Certification Requirement	Tenure Phase & Career Advancement
				Theme 2: Halal Executive Requirement	Pre-Career Phase & Career Advancement
				Theme 3: Job Scope of Halal Executives	Pre-Career Phase, Tenure Phase, Career Advancement
				Theme 4: Training Requirement	Pre-Career Phase, Tenure Phase, Career Advancement
				Theme 5: Soft Skills Requirement	Pre-Career Phase, Tenure Phase, Career Advancement & External Opportunities
				Theme 6: Communication for certification	Tenure Phase & Career Advancement
				Theme 7: Government Responsibility to Strengthen Halal	Pre-Career Phase, Tenure Phase, Career Advancement & External Opportunities

Table 7 : Continued

- No information on job satisfaction and career advancement theory in Halal industry management (theoretical gap). - Overutilised of the theory of planned behaviour in Halal Studies (theoretical gap). - Limited authoritarian ability to make substantial Halal-related decisions (empirical gap). - Unavailability of career growth for Halal-related positions in the industry, the lack of training, and the poor wage structure (empirical gap)	RQ 2 Experience of Halal Executives (Challenges & Opportunities)	7. Challenges faced by Halal Executives 8. Company policy on the position 9. Internal opportunities 10. Compensation 11. Short-term and long-term hopes for the position 12. Future challenges 13. External opportunities & growth 14. Career development of the position	Theme 8: Arising Issues Encountered by Executives	Tenure Phase, Career Advancement & External Opportunities
			Theme 9: Solving Issues Mechanisms	Tenure Phase & Career Advancement
			Theme 10: Halal Opportunity in the Industry	Tenure Phase & Career Advancement
			Theme 11: Decision-Making Ability	Tenure Phase, Career Advancement & External Opportunities
			Theme 12: Job Security	Tenure Phase, Career Advancement & External Opportunities
			Theme 13: Career Growth Perceptions on Halal	Career Advancement & External Opportunities
	RQ 3 Expectations on Career Growth	Herzberg's Two-Factor (1993)		

5.3 Conclusion

Based on the linkage between the aims and findings above, the study has developed a career growth framework for these food industry executives, illustrated in Chapter 4. It consists of four distinctive phases: the Pre-career Phase, the Tenure Phase, Career Advancement, and External Opportunities. These phases not only represent the key findings of the study but also a comprehensive representation of Halal Executives' career phases and the potential growth that they possess while serving in the food industry.

5.3.1 Pre-Career Phase

Appointment of Halal Executives in Malaysia and Australia typically requires a similar educational background. Although based on the MHMS 2020 clause, it is sufficient for a Halal Executive to have a diploma in any Halal-related education, the status quo of the Halal industry requires at least a Bachelor's degree in specific fields for a person to be employed as a Halal Executive. A bachelor's degree in food science, food technology, food nutrition, or any other food-related field is highly recommended for this position as it involves food regulations and the food development process. In certain countries, especially Malaysia, a person with a Bachelor's degree in Islamic studies, such as Sharia/ Fiqh Fatwa, may also be hired because the graduates possess better knowledge and understanding of Islamic dietary law.

Besides, in Malaysia, a Halal Executive is required to possess a Halal Executive training certificate and be trained by organisations recognised by the government. This requirement should extend to other countries as the modules covered in training are not only limited to Halal and its fundamental concepts but also include information

necessary for food processing systems and maintenance related to Halal food production. The credibility of Halal Executives will be elevated by having this certification, for Malaysia (as the global top Halal certification system) recognises it.

5.3.2 Tenure Phase

The Tenure Phase has provided five key elements that are highly significant to Halal Executives' positions in understanding their career and potential growth. The first key to their position is the certification requirements. As their position was established due to the specific requirement of Halal certification, Halal Executives must be directly involved in the certification processes, especially since they are the mediators between their companies and the certifier in obtaining the Halal certificate. Apart from positioning Halal Executives in the food industry, some other mandatory requirements include but are not limited to business licences, audit systems and training, on-site Muslim personnel, the establishment of an Internal Halal Committee, food safety measures and systems, and documentation of proofs, as extensively discussed in Chapter 4.

Another key element that is highly significant in understanding the career of Halal Executives is their job scope in the food industry. Generally, the job scope of Halal Executives varies, depending on the location of the companies, local requirements, business size and nature. However, the study concludes that there are some similarities in tasks exercised by the executives. Some of these tasks are not only discussed by the executives but also as stated in the official documents established by the governments. Important tasks conducted by the Halal Executives include Halal certification application and maintenance, regular Halal audits and training, developing Halal

assurance systems and monitoring raw materials acquisition and storage management. Apart from that, Halal Executives are also expected to develop and maintain a Halal traceability system, overseeing labelling if the Halal logo is available in the packaging and being involved in food safety and quality measures. In certain cases, Halal Executives may be involved in OEM product development and other non-related tasks such as recruiting and marketing (depending on the company size and structure).

During the job scope exercise, Halal Executives may encounter issues that arise attributable to internal or external factors. Perturbing as it seems, Halal Executives ought to expect these issues to arise during their tenure as they involve many stakeholders in applying for and maintaining Halal certificates. Some of the challenges discovered were related to company culture, mentality and structure (for instance, companies' perceptions toward Halal, issues of human resources, time and financial constraints), external connection and communication (such as issues with suppliers and certifiers, and complaints from customers), emerging of new technology and trends (such as new equipment, innovative food ingredients and products) and also their position ability itself (decision making ability related to Halal).

To assist Halal Executives with the arising issues mentioned above, another key element that is highly significant during the working tenure in the food industry is the position requirements. The government and the company do not necessarily establish these requirements, the Halal Executives themselves recommend these requirements due to the vitality of their positions. According to them, one must equip oneself with these elements to assist in manoeuvring one's tenure in the food industry. The suggestive requirements are divided into three sections: training requirements, soft

skill requirements and communication requirements. The data demonstrates that training requirements include but are not limited to Halal awareness training, competency training, training of trainers, raw material and food handling training, and audit training. Halal Executives also believe that soft skills such as creative and analytical thinking, communication and negotiation skills are highly required for their position, besides managing and leadership skills. In addition, communication on certification is strongly highlighted as it involves various stakeholders: internal (interdepartmental communications, upward and downward communications) and external stakeholders (suppliers, certifiers, merchandisers and others).

The final key element emerging during Halal Executives' tenure is their expectations and opportunities perceived within the food industry. As discussed in Chapter 4, Halal Executives generally believe that decision-making abilities related to Halal remain beyond their jurisdiction as the sole in-house Halal experts in the food industry. Hence, they envisage substantial Halal positions will materialise; henceforth, Halal-related decisions will be under their jurisdiction and top priority rather than second after other factors, specifically financial factors. Adequate recognition and compensation are other expectations of Halal Executives in the food industry. Generally, they perceive the position as under-recognised and under-compensated. Job security was another expectation and concern of Halal Executives, as their position solely catered to Halal certification matters. Hence, they believe their roles cannot guarantee job security over time, especially if companies employ these executives through foreign employment (Pradikta, 2019). However, as the Halal market grows exponentially globally, Halal Executives have better opportunities to grow in the industry. Some of the potential foreseen in the industry include venturing into different Halal schemes, expanding

certification to the international location of the same manufacturing companies, expanding international traceability systems and certifications, and emerging new and innovative food products and menus.

5.3.3 External Opportunities

The third major finding of the study is the External Opportunities, especially if their position encounters the glass ceiling or one intends to pursue atypical opportunities. Consultancy and training opportunities are in demand, especially within the global market; thus, Halal Executives may emerge with this opportunity to train and consult new Halal product developers or certificate applicants. Training and consultancy may be provided to on-site Muslim personnel, future Halal Executives in the food companies or even to the manufacturers at an organisational level.

Furthermore, trained and experienced Halal Executives may also pursue the certification business as a certifier or Halal auditor for international and local certification systems. With the hands-on knowledge and experience they possess working in the food industry, the certification bodies value their skills and knowledge, especially within markets that practice decentralising the Halal certification system. Demand for certifiers and Halal auditors will continue to grow as the demand for Halal food products grows, which clearly will influence the import and export businesses. Henceforth, auditors must assess and verify production locations for the certification process and audit various locations and documents, such as logistics ports and import terminals, to control and verify Halal goods quality.

Teaching positions are another great opportunity for Halal Executives to consider as a career venture. Universities and vocational institutes should introduce programs related to food regulatory systems, which Halal may be one of the modules. Even better, educational institutions may introduce Halal programs to students, which are in demand in countries like Malaysia and Indonesia. Surely, with their firsthand knowledge and experience in the food industry, along with additional qualifications such as Master's Degree and Doctoral Degree (PhD), Halal Executives have case-based teaching knowledge to share with students to fully equip them with how the current food industry operates.

5.3.4 Career Advancement

The final major finding is the career advancement of these talents. It is tricky regarding Halal Executive positions for their placement in the industry is highly dependent on government certification requirements, especially if the company perceives the position as a botheration to production. Hence, Halal Executives ought to be more competitive to advance in this career. The data suggests several key elements aiding their opportunity to advance in their career. The first element is to enhance language proficiency in multiple languages rather than focus on one language. Diversifying language proficiency in foreign languages such as English, Malay, Korean, Japanese, Arabic or any relevant language depending on the markets and certification systems will foster the potential of Halal Executives to progress locally and globally, especially in markets where Halal products are highly in demand.

For Halal Executives, continuous learning and engagement with various schemes and portfolios, particularly those related to food production, is crucial. This proactive

approach can significantly boost their professional portfolio. To make the most of these opportunities, Halal Executives should strive to enhance their knowledge of food safety, including HACCP, GMP, food handling courses, Australia New Zealand Food Safety Code, FoSIM, ISO, or any other relevant standards. This not only prepares them for the demands of local and international markets but also positions them for career progression into roles with managerial and leadership responsibilities, where their enhanced skills and comprehension can be put to use.

5.4 Study Implications

As the study denotes the experience of Halal Executives within the Halal certification process, its implications are categorised into two major segments: theoretical and practical implications.

5.4.1 Theoretical Implication

This study primarily fills the theoretical gap in three distinctive fields, specifically Halal studies, food industry studies, and human resource management studies. In human resource management studies, previous studies tend to focus on upper-echelon executives rather than low and middle-level executives, especially on the career experience of these executives. In this case, Halal Executive positions are categorised as the entry-level of executives in the food industry. Previous Halal studies also primarily focussed on the acceptance of Halal in various contexts and Halal schemes/segmentations (such as food, pharmaceutical and cosmetics). Also, previous studies on the food industry have paid attention to Halal's performance and its potential to grow within a locality and on a global scale. Studies on Halal Executives' career experience are in minimum volume, especially regarding their career growth within a

food industry context. Besides, most studies on Halal Executives focus on specific contextual segmentation rather than including another wide spectrum of fields. Hence, this study contributes to the lack of knowledge within these three fields.

Theoretically, evidence from existing literature also proves that exploration of these executives' career advancement is still lacking. This can be observed through the underutilisation of career analysis theories in the Halal food industry. As discussed in the problem statement in Chapter 1, previous scholars focused on subjects related to Halal Executive positions other than career progression or advancement. Hence, the adaptation of Herzberg's Two Factor Theory and the Halal Food Model by Riaz and Chaundry helps to gain initial insights into these subjects due to limited knowledge regarding them in this context.

Although initially, these two theories underpinned the theoretical foundation of the study, the study found that to understand the career growth of Halal Executives should be exercised during the pre-employment stage to ensure that the relevant candidates are eligible not only to be employed but also to progress in the food industry. As the career progression of Halal Executives is technically vague in the food industry, Halal Executives must equip themselves with various intangible skills and knowledge to remain competitive and progressive. Rather than discussing the motivational factors of the position, which are only significantly applicable during the tenure of the employment, this study identified the whole experience and requirements related to the certification process in the food industry. Hence, the framework established by this study aids in understanding the Halal Executive's career and its potential to grow and expand to different career ventures should they encounter a glass ceiling in the food

industry. This study also identified that job security and authoritative ability/position are some of the crucial indicators for the sustainability of Halal Executive positions in the food industry. The sustainability of this position can be promoted by demonstrating clear career growth, as suggested by this study.

5.4.2 Practical Implications

The status quo of Halal certification policies and procedures in Malaysia and Australia is primarily limited to the certification application process and compliance. The major findings of this study directly contribute to the current policies as they are specifically related to the executors of the process. Hence, the present study offers several recommendations for revisiting Halal policies in Malaysia and Australia.

Within the context of Malaysia, in MHMS 2020 and MPPHM 2020, the viable option to strengthen the Halal Executive position is to restructure the requirement of Halal Executives in the workplace. Instead of setting a minimum educational requirement at the diploma level, the government could propose a minimum requirement of a bachelor's degree, as graduates possess advanced theoretical knowledge and practical training in the subject matter, including industry attachments during their studies. Since Halal Executives occupy entry-level executive roles, it is customary for them to hold at least a bachelor's degree in the relevant field. This not only equips them with theoretical and practical knowledge in their field but also enables them to make significant and crucial decisions that could influence not only production but also the financial standing of the manufacturing companies. Besides, the current government and industrial policies may compulsories the establishment of career management/progress for Halal Executives in the food industry to devise job security for Halal

Executives. The government and industry players should also take into consideration the emergence of new food product modifications and processes in their policies and standards to ensure that the Halal requirements remain compliant during this course of innovation emergence.

For Australia's AAG-AIO 2022, the current policy is limited to meat export procedures and guidelines. The study believes that the guidelines should be extended to every part of the Halal sector, especially within the food industry sector, considering the Halal market is growing, and Australia is committing greater efforts to contribute more to this segmented market. The placement of Halal Executives in the food industry should also be implemented, especially for Halal food manufacturers, as it elevates Muslim consumers' confidence in this Islamic regulatory process. Apart from that, the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry of Australia should also reconsider centralising Halal certifying bodies across Australia or at least standardising the system applicable to all certifying bodies. The decentralisation of certifying bodies confuses consumers and certification applicants. Centralisation of the Halal system can be implemented by appointing a dedicated government agency under the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry of Australia to facilitate and monitor the Halal standards of all certification providers in the countries. Centralising the system will demonstrate a more harmonious Halal ecosystem within the country, with better management for every system, including traceability and logistic aspects of the production. It will also demonstrate the Australian government's enthusiasm and solemnity in pursuing this global market.

Governments should also reconsider educational reform concerning Halal and food regulatory education. In Malaysia, JAKIM and HDC should revisit the current syllabus of Halal Executives training and university courses and modules related to Halal and Halal Executives to ensure that these modules and courses are not only providing sufficient theoretical understanding and knowledge concerning Halal matters. It should also be in agreement with the needs and demands of the current global food production, especially with the advancement of technology and innovations related to food. Courses and modules related to Halal should be exhaustive, beyond the conceptuality of Halal. Industrial placement during the training or study period of Halal graduates should also be reconsidered. They should be provided with a sufficient time frame to ensure the comprehension tallies with the practicality and needs of the industry. This scenario is feasibly applicable to Australian educational institutions, as Halal Executives training should be introduced to train more knowledgeable Halal Executives in the country. Given the advanced nature of this certification training, it is most recommended that it be introduced in higher educational institutions such as universities and vocational institutions like the Technical and Further Education (TAFE). Additionally, any food-related majors in the university, such as Food Technology or Food Chemistry, should also introduce the Halal Standard or Halal Food Management as an elective or compulsory module to equip future food practitioners with future food regulations and demands.

The study's practical implications are highly related to the current and future practitioners of the Halal food industry. Future Halal Executives, for instance, may refer to the framework to anticipate their future work in the food industry. They may prepare themselves with relevant skills and knowledge before engaging in the business

and preparing for their career growth. In-service Halal Executives may realign their career plan by denoting the framework to exercise methods in dealing with issues that arise, planning for career progression, or even adopting career shift measures with the same acquired expertise throughout different fields. Halal food manufacturers could also revisit their approach to dealing with and managing Halal Executives by creating tangible career growth for Halal Executives in the workplace, with substantial decision-making ability specifically concerning Halal matters.

To ensure the visibility of the study's findings and contributions among stakeholders and government authorities, relevant manuscripts have been prepared and published in indexed journals, addressing key concerns and insights derived from the research. Additionally, the study aims to compile its findings into a comprehensive handbook to serve as a reference for Halal stakeholders, strengthening Halal-related programmes and industry practices. Furthermore, direct engagement with government bodies is planned to communicate the study's insights, enabling policymakers to better understand industry challenges and implement necessary reforms to align Halal policies and regulations with the rapidly evolving global food industry.

Ultimately, the present study envisions the development of this entry-level executive with the expectation that it will pave the way for their advancement into more substantial and crucial roles like mid-level Halal manager, senior Halal manager, and director of Halal Management. Should the company expand globally, the present study anticipates the need for regional Halal directors, given the growing potential of the Halal industry and the escalating challenges and jurisdiction associated with it.

5.5 Limitations and Recommendations

This study unravels a new stance of the Halal food industry as it explores the career growth of its focal player, the Halal Executives. Despite its efforts to understand the position, ultimately, this study is no exception to limitations, which hope that future studies could continue to explore.

As this study is one of the first official attempts to understand the career growth of Halal Executives, it focuses on the segmentations of career development of Halal Executives, initiating from the requirement of the pre-employment phase and other requirements to pursue better career path internal and external of Halal food industry. Taking that into consideration, the motivational factors of Halal Executives, specifically pre-employment, are outside the study's scope. Hence, future studies are encouraged to elucidate their motivational factors to embark on this career path and also their motivational factors to remain in this career.

The sampling of this study is limited to Halal Executives themselves and the official documents of both governments concerning the Halal certification system as its main agenda to explore their career growth while dealing with the Halal certification process. However, the involvement of policymakers and Halal certification bodies, such as government departments and agencies and Halal certifiers, are excluded from this study. As the policymakers initiated the effort of placing Halal Executives in the industry, future studies ought to discover reasons behind the insufficient guidelines in the official documents, especially concerning Halal Executives' position and their career growth. Thus, future research should focus on Halal Executive placement in the food industry from the perspective of policymakers and plans of action involving

Halal Executives in the food industry. The perspectives and feedback from the policymakers and certifiers on the Halal Executive positions may provide new perspectives on the position and its potential to grow.

This study emphasises the qualitative aspects of the career growth of Halal Executives. Customarily, the findings of this study may not be generalised to represent wider populations. Hence, based on the findings of this study, future research may instil quantitative approaches to objectify the career growth of Halal Executives while representing certain populations within specific contexts. Contextually, this study is limited to two countries, Malaysia and Australia. Thus, the findings of the study may be dissimilar in different contexts. Adopting similar approaches to other contexts may generate different findings, contributing to various frameworks.

Furthermore, this study analyses one specific dietary law certification system (Halal) and the career growth of its main players, Halal certification and Halal Executives. Naturally, the findings of this study may only affect this specific dietary law system and the relevant stakeholders within the food industry in general. Future studies may adopt a similar approach to other dietary law certification systems and analyse the career growth of its main player to materialise their sustainability and viability in the food industry.

The study also recognises the increasing demand for Halal products in both Australian and international markets. It acknowledges that Halal labelling generally offers significant advantages, enhancing consumer trust and marketability due to the cleanliness and safety assurances associated with Halal-certified products, particularly

in global trade. However, the study emphasises that the implementation of Halal labelling in Australia should be approached with caution and supported by extensive market research. This is due to reported cases of opposition to Halal products, driven by factors such as Islamophobia, concerns over animal welfare, and a lack of understanding of Halal principles. Such opposition may negatively impact the marketability and long-term sustainability of both the products and their manufacturers, particularly in the domestic market. As a common practice, Australian manufacturers obtain Halal certification for their products but typically reserve the display of Halal labels for international markets. For domestic consumers, Halal certification status is disclosed upon request through various communication channels, including phone calls, social media, email, or official websites. Consequently, future research should investigate contemporary trends in Halal labelling practices within Australia, particularly in light of escalating consumer demand and broader societal acceptance. Such inquiry is critical to ascertain whether the application of Halal certification on products adversely impacts their market viability or undermines brand equity, ensuring alignment between regulatory compliance and commercial competitiveness.

Despite its limitations, this study contributes greatly to understanding Halal Executives' position in dealing with the Halal certification process in the food industry. However, being one of the pioneers in exploring Halal Executives' career growth in the industry, specifically in Malaysia and Australia, undoubtedly justifies the limitations mentioned earlier. The findings of this study may create better pathways for future studies to explore in providing a better ecosystem in the food industry's regulatory systems, specifically the Halal food industry.

5.6 Summary

Overall, the study found that the Halal Executive positions in the industry have a promising future based on the career growth explorative measures conducted in this study. Despite several internal and external hurdles Halal Executives encounter in manoeuvring Halal certification systems, the global augmentation surge of the Halal market ensures the sustainability of any Halal-related position in the industry. However, one must not rely solely on the industry's promising future alone to sustain this position. Positioning a Halal Executive in the industry will be insufficient and undemanding if it is incapable of projecting any promising career growth and significantly impacting the industry. With the analysis carried out by the study, it is safe to conclude that this position is playing an imperative role in accommodating Halal certification requirements despite not having an apparent career growth, which amplifies the lack of decision-making ability (as it has remained as low executive level), especially related to Halal. Thus, to ensure this position is sustainable and remains competitive, this study recommends that all relevant stakeholders, especially the executives, ponder on the arising issues, findings, and suggestive measures highlighted in this study and recompose the necessary changes to the systems, personal portfolios, and policies.

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APPENDICES



Appendix A

Interview Protocol INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

TITLE: Exploring the Role of Halal Executives in The Halal Certification Process Towards Their Career Growth in Malaysia's and Australia's Food Industries

Objectives	Interview Questions
OB1: To identify the understanding of Halal Executives on the Halal certification system and process related to their position in the context of Malaysia and the Australian food industry.	RQ1: What is the <i>understanding of Halal Executives on the Halal certification system and process related to their position</i> in the context of Malaysia and Australia's food industry?
	What are your responsibilities as a Halal Talent in the food industry? To whom do you report? Which department?
	How important is this position to the Halal industry? What qualifications are required to be appointed as Halal Talent in the industry?
	Do you have to undergo special training to be appointed to this position? (Before, during or after the appointment) How often? Was the training helpful to your job?
	What are the procedures for applying for Halal certification in your workplace? (e.g., Steps, time consumed, auditing, approval, involvement)
	How is the interaction about Halal certification/matters in your organisation conducted (internal and external)? Who makes the final say when it comes to Halal-related matters?
	What can be improved regarding Halal procedures and logos in your country? Is it fully equipped to fulfil local and international needs and demands?
OB2: To understand the personal experience of Halal	RQ2: What <i>personal experience have Halal Executives gone through</i> in their current position in Malaysia's and Australia's food industry? (<i>Challenges and Opportunities</i>)
	What challenges do you face working as a Halal talent in your workplace?

Executives in Malaysia's and Australia's food industries.	How does the company policy benefit or disbenefit your position and work?
	What opportunities are beholding upon you as a Halal talent in your workplace?
	Are Halal talents adequately compensated for their role in the food industry? (Regarding salary, recognition, supervision, promotion, and autonomous ability). Why do you think so?
OB3: To investigate their expectations for career growth as Halal Executives in Malaysia's and Australia's food industry.	RQ 3: What are their <i>expectations for career growth</i> as Halal Executives in Malaysia's and Australia's food industry?
	What are your hopes for this position in this industry? Over 3-5 years?
	What future challenges do you see in this position?
	What does the opportunity overseas for career development and growth look like?
	In which possible ways can this position be further developed in the industry?

Appendix B

Consent Form (UPM)

**JAWATANKUASA ETIKA UNIVERSITI UNTUK
PENYELIDIKAN MELIBATKAN MANUSIA (JKEUPM)
UNIVERSITI PUTRA MALAYSIA, 43400 UPM SERDANG,
SELANGOR, MALAYSIA**



FORM 2.4: RESPONDENT'S INFORMATION SHEET AND INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Please read the following information carefully and do not hesitate to discuss any questions with the researcher.

1. STUDY TITLE:

Exploring The Role of Halal Executives in Halal Certification Process Towards Their Career Growth in Malaysia and Australia Food Industries

2. INTRODUCTION:

I am Amarul Arief Mohd Shuhaimi, a PhD student in Food Management Faculty of Food Science and Technology, University Putra Malaysia. I am conducting research titled 'Exploring the Role of Halal Executives in Halal Certification Process Towards Their Career Growth in Malaysia and Australia Food Industries. For that purpose, I am conducting interview sessions with Halal Executives in Malaysia and Australia to explore this further. Hence, I request your permission to conduct an interview session with you as you fit the study's criteria.

Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary. If you are willing to participate in the study, Amarul Arief Mohd Shuhaimi, the researcher, will personally interview you. You will be asked questions about the Halal certification system in your respective country and your experience working as/with Halal Executive. The interview session will be conducted at your convenience.

The session will take approximately 60-120 minutes per session. You can disregard any questions if you are uncomfortable disclosing them or if it is confidential and private to share with the researcher. The interview session will be audibly and visually recorded for future reference, transcription, and analysis. You can request a copy of the transcription of your interview conversation. We anticipate at least two interview sessions; the first is for data collection purposes, and the second will be conducted for verification purposes.

3. WHAT WILL YOU HAVE TO DO?

The researcher will interview you, Amarul Arief Mohd Shuhaimi. You will be asked questions about the Halal certification system in your respective country and your experience working as/with Halal Executive. The interview session will be conducted at your convenience.

The session will take approximately 60-120 minutes per session. You can disregard any questions you are uncomfortable discussing, or it is too confidential and private to be shared with the researcher. The interview session will be audibly and visually recorded for future reference, transcription, and analysis. You can request a copy of the transcription of your interview conversation. We anticipate at least two interview sessions; the first is for data collection purposes, and the second will be conducted for verification purposes.

4. WHO SHOULD NOT PARTICIPATE IN THE STUDY?

Non-Halal Executives personnel in the food industry.

5. WHAT WILL BE THE BENEFITS OF THE STUDY:

(a) TO YOU AS THE SUBJECT?

You may not be gaining any benefits by participating in this study. However, your insights and questions about this study will contribute to understanding the Halal certification system in your country and will aid in developing better future career growth for Halal Executives in Malaysia's and Australia's food industry.

Fellow participants will receive an RM100 token of appreciation.

(b) TO THE INVESTIGATOR?

This study hopes to generate sufficient information on the experience of Halal Executives with the Halal certification system in Malaysia and Australia. This study is also intended to understand better the working experience of Halal Executives in both countries from your shared inputs. With this input, it is hoped that the study will be able to develop better future career growth for Halal Executives in Malaysia's and Australia's food industry.

6. WHAT ARE THE POSSIBLE RISKS?

This study does not have any risk expectations.

7. WILL THE INFORMATION THAT YOU PROVIDE AND YOUR IDENTITY REMAIN CONFIDENTIAL?

Shared information, including personal information, will be confidential and not disclosed. It will only be accessible to the researcher. Pseudonyms will be utilised during the reporting stage. Recording material, including videos and audio, will also be accessible by the researcher only.

8. WHO SHOULD YOU CONTACT IF YOU HAVE ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS DURING THE RESEARCH?

Should you require any further clarification, you can communicate directly with the researcher, Amarul Arief Mohd Shuhaimi, at +60133104157 or via email at amarul_arief@yahoo.com or Amarul.MohdShuhaimi@uon.edu.my.

You can also communicate directly with the principal supervisor of this research, Prof. Dr Muhammad Shahrin Abd Karim, at +603-97698409 or via email at shahrin@upm.edu.my or Dr Taiwo Akanbi at (02) 43484117 or via email at taiwo.akanbi@newcastle.edu.au

This study has been approved by the Ethics Committee of the University on Human Involving Research (JKEUPM). Any questions or complaints can be submitted to JKEUPM at +603 9769 1244.

Please initial here if you have read and understood the contents of this page _____

9. CONSENT

I Identity Card No.
address.....
..... hereby voluntarily agree to take part in the research stated
above *(clinical /drug trial/video recording/ focus group/interview-based/
questionnaire-based).

I have been informed about the nature of the research, the methodology, and possible adverse effects and complications (as written in the Respondent's Information Sheet). I understand that I have the right to withdraw from this research at any time without giving any reason whatsoever. I also understand that this study is confidential, and all information provided about my identity will remain private and confidential.

I* wish/do not wish to know the results related to my participation in the research.

I agree/do not agree that the images/photos/video recordings/voice recordings related to me be used in any form of publication or presentation (if applicable)

* Delete where necessary

Signature Signature
(Respondent) (Witness)

Date:..... .. Name:.....

I/C No. :.....

I confirm that I have explained to the respondent the nature and purpose of the research as mentioned above.

Date

Signature

(Researcher)



Appendix C

Consent Form (UON)



Human Research Ethics

Research Participant Consent Form

Research Project Information

EXPLORING THE ROLE OF HALAL EXECUTIVES IN THE HALAL CERTIFICATION PROCESS TOWARDS THEIR CAREER GROWTH IN MALAYSIA'S AND AUSTRALIA'S FOOD INDUSTRIES

Document version **1**, dated **31 October 2022**

Dr Taiwo Akanbi

School of Environmental and Life Sciences

University of Newcastle

10 Chittaway Road, Ourimbah

NSW 2258

Australia

Phone number: (02) 43484117.

Email: taiwo.akanbi@newcastle.edu.au

Participant Consent

- ☐ I agree to participate in the above research project and consent freely.
- ☐ I understand that the project will be conducted as described in the Participant Information Statement, a copy I have read and retained.
- ☐ I understand that I can withdraw from the project as explained in the Participant Information Statement, and I do not have to give any reason for my decision to withdraw.
- ☐ I consent to answer some questions via interview session and survey.
- ☐ I understand that my personal information will remain confidential to the researchers, except as required by law.
- ☐ I have had the opportunity to have questions answered to my satisfaction.
- ☐ I am aware and agree that the interview session will be recorded.

Participant Details

Name (please print)	
Signature	
Mailing Address	
Email address	
Phone number	
Date	

Receiving Research Results

I want the research team to send me a summary of the results once they are available.

☐ Yes

☐ No

If yes, I would like a copy sent to me via:

☐ The mailing address is noted in the Participant Details section of this form.

☐ The email address is noted on this form.

☐ Another address (please specify):



Appendix D

Research Ethic Approval (UON)

HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE



Notification of Expedited Approval

To Chief Investigator or Project Supervisor:	Doctor Taiwo Akanbi
Cc Co-investigators / Research Students:	Doctor Elise Lee Mr Amarul Mohd Shuhaimi
Re Protocol:	EXPLORING THE ROLE OF HALAL EXECUTIVES IN HALAL CERTIFICATION PROCESS TOWARDS THEIR CAREER GROWTH IN MALAYSIA AND AUSTRALIA FOOD INDUSTRIES
Date:	20-Oct-2022
Reference No:	H-2022-0284

Thank you for your **Initial Application** submission to the Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) seeking approval in relation to the above protocol.

Your submission was considered under **Low Risk Research Expedited** review by the Ethics Administrator.

We are pleased to advise that the decision on your submission is **Approved** effective **20-Oct-2022**.

In approving this protocol, the Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) is of the opinion that the project complies with the provisions contained in the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research, 2007, and the requirements within this University relating to human research.

Approval will remain valid subject to the submission, and satisfactory assessment, of annual progress reports. *If the approval of an External HREC has been "noted" the approval period is as determined by that HREC.*

The full Committee will be asked to ratify this decision at its next scheduled meeting. A formal *Certificate of Approval* will be available upon request. Your approval number is **H-2022-0284**.

If the research requires the use of an Information Statement, ensure this number is inserted at the relevant point in the Complaints paragraph prior to distribution to potential participants You may then proceed with the research.

Conditions of Approval

This approval has been granted subject to you complying with the requirements for *Monitoring of Progress, Reporting of Adverse Events, and Variations to the Approved Protocol* as detailed below.

PLEASE NOTE:

In the case where the HREC has "noted" the approval of an External HREC, progress reports and reports of adverse events are to be submitted to the External HREC only. In the case of Variations to the approved protocol, or a Renewal of approval, you will apply to the External HREC for approval in the first instance and then Register that approval with the University's HREC.

- **Monitoring of Progress**

Other than above, the University is obliged to monitor the progress of research projects involving human participants to ensure that they are conducted according to the protocol as approved by the HREC. A progress report is required on an annual basis. Continuation of your HREC approval for this project is conditional upon receipt, and satisfactory assessment, of annual progress reports. You will be advised when a report is due.

- **Reporting of Adverse Events**

1. It is the responsibility of the person **first named on this Approval Advice** to report adverse events.
2. Adverse events, however minor, must be recorded by the investigator as observed by the investigator or as volunteered by a participant in the research. Full details are to be documented, whether or not the investigator, or his/her deputies, consider the event to be related to the research substance or procedure.
3. Serious or unforeseen adverse events that occur during the research or within six (6) months of completion of the research, must be reported by the person first named on the Approval Advice to the (HREC) by way of the Adverse Event Report form (via RIMS at <https://rims.newcastle.edu.au/login.asp>) within 72 hours of the occurrence of the event or the investigator receiving advice of the event.
4. Serious adverse events are defined as:
 - o Causing death, life threatening or serious disability.
 - o Causing or prolonging hospitalisation.
 - o Overdoses, cancers, congenital abnormalities, tissue damage, whether or not they are judged to be caused by the investigational agent or procedure.
 - o Causing psycho-social and/or financial harm. This covers everything from perceived invasion of privacy, breach of confidentiality, or the diminution of social reputation, to the creation of psychological fears and trauma.
 - o Any other event which might affect the continued ethical acceptability of the project.
5. Reports of adverse events must include:
 - o Participant's study identification number;
 - o date of birth;
 - o date of entry into the study;
 - o treatment arm (if applicable);
 - o date of event;
 - o details of event;
 - o the investigator's opinion as to whether the event is related to the research procedures; and
 - o action taken in response to the event.
6. Adverse events which do not fall within the definition of serious or unexpected, including those reported from other sites involved in the research, are to be reported in detail at the time of the annual progress report to the HREC.

• **Variations to approved protocol**

If you wish to change, or deviate from, the approved protocol, you will need to submit an *Application for Variation to Approved Human Research* (via RIMS at <https://rims.newcastle.edu.au/login.asp>). Variations may include, but are not limited to, changes or additions to investigators, study design, study population, number of participants, methods of recruitment, or participant information/consent documentation. **Variations must be approved by the (HREC) before they are implemented** except when Registering an approval of a variation from an external HREC which has been designated the lead HREC, in which case you may proceed as soon as you receive an acknowledgement of your Registration.

Linkage of ethics approval to a new Grant

HREC approvals cannot be assigned to a new grant or award (ie those that were not identified on the application for ethics approval) without confirmation of the approval from the Human Research Ethics Officer on behalf of the HREC.

Best wishes for a successful project.

Human Research Ethics Committee

For communications and enquiries:

Human Research Ethics Administration

Research & Innovation Services
Research Integrity Unit
The University of Newcastle
Callaghan NSW 2308
T +61 2 492 17894
Human-Ethics@newcastle.edu.au

RIMS website - <https://RIMS.newcastle.edu.au/login.asp>

Linked University of Newcastle administered funding:

Funding body	Funding project title	First named investigator	Grant Ref
		.	

Appendix E



PEJABAT TIMBALAN NAIB CANSOLOR (PENYELIDIKAN DAN INOVASI)

OFFICE OF THE DEPUTY VICE CHANCELLOR (RESEARCH AND INNOVATION)

Rujukan kami : UPM/TNCPI/RMC/1.4.18.2 (JKEUPM)

Tarikh : 23 June 2022

Prof. Dr. Muhammad Shahrir Ab Karim
Department of Food Service and Management
Faculty of Food Science and Technology
Universiti Putra Malaysia
Serdang, Selangor

Dear Madam/Sir,

RESEARCH PROJECT: HALAL FOOD CERTIFICATION AND FUTURE CAREER PROSPECTS OF HALAL EXECUTIVES IN MALAYSIA'S AND AUSTRALIA'S FOOD INDUSTRIES.

REFERENCE NO : JKEUPM-2022-245

RESEARCHER : AMARUL ARIEF MOHD SHUHAIMI

SUPERVISOR : PROF. DR. MUHAMMAD SHAHRIR AB KARIM

The Ethics Committee for Research involving Human Subjects of University Putra Malaysia (JKEUPM) has studied the proposal for the above project and found that there were no objectionable ethical issues involved in the proposed study.

Please find the list of documents received and reviewed with reference to the study and committee members who reviewed the documents (as attached).

Notwithstanding above, we will not be responsible for any misconduct on the part of researcher in the course of carrying out the research.

Ethical approval is required in the case of amendments/ changes to the study documents/ study sites/ study team.

Thank you.

"WITH KNOWLEDGE WE SERVE"

Sincerely yours,

PROF. DR. ZAMBERI SEKAWI

Chair

Ethics Committee for Research involving Human Subjects
Universiti Putra Malaysia

Pejabat Timbalan Naib Canselor (Penyelidikan dan Inovasi), Universiti Putra Malaysia, 43400 UPM Serdang, Selangor Darul Ehsan, Malaysia
Pejabat Timbalan Naib Canselor (P&I) 603-89471002 : 603-8945 1646, Pejabat Pentadbiran TNCPI 603-89471608 603-8945 1673,
Pejabat Pengarah, Pusat Pengurusan Penyelidikan (RMC) 603-8947 1601603-8945 1596, Pejabat Pengarah, Putra Science Park (PSP)
603-8947 1291 603-8946 4121 <http://www.tncpi.upm.edu.my>

Research Ethic Approval (UPM)

ETHICS COMMITTEE FOR RESEARCH INVOLVING HUMAN SUBJECTS
(JKEUPM)
UNIVERSITI PUTRA MALAYSIA

Research Title	: Halal Food Certification and Future Career Prospects of Halal Executives in Malaysia's and Australia's Food Industries.
Study Site	: Kuala Lumpur & Selangor in Malaysia and NSW in Australia.
JKEUPM Ref No.	: JKEUPM-2022-245
Researcher	: Amarul Arief Mohd Shuhaimi
Supervisor	: Prof. Dr. Muhammad Shahrin Ab Karim

Documents received and reviewed with reference to the above study:

1. Ethics Application Form, Version 1 dated 04/04/2022
2. Respondent's Information Sheet / Consent (English), Version 1 dated 04/04/2022
3. Proposal (English), Version 1 dated 04/04/2022
4. Questionnaire / Interviews (English), Version 1 dated 04/04/2022
5. Curriculum Vitae of:
 - a. Prof. Dr. Muhammad Shahrin Ab Karim
 - b. Dr. Siti Fatimah Mohamad
 - c. Dr. Ungku Fatimah Ungku Zainal Abidin
 - d. Assoc. Prof. Dr. Mohd. Mursyid Bin Arshad
 - e. Dr. Taiwo Akanbi
 - f. Dr. Elise Lee
 - g. Amarul Arief Mohd Shuhaimi

The University Research Ethics Committee, Universiti Putra Malaysia (JKEUPM) operates in accordance to the ICH-GCP Guidelines.

Decision by JKEUPM:

- ☒ Approved
- ☒ **Permission MUST BE OBTAINED from the respective hospitals/ institutions before conducting the research**
- ☐ Disapproved

Please note that the approval is **VALID UNTIL 23 JUNE 2023**

Researchers should comply with the following:

- I. Complete a Study Final Report upon study completion (Form 3.2).
- II. Ethical approval is required in the case of amendments/ changes to the study documents/ study sites/ study team.
- III. Applicable for Clinical Trial Studies and Clinical Interventional Studies only: Progress Report has to be submitted to JKEUPM at every 6 months from the date of approval (Form 3.1). Report

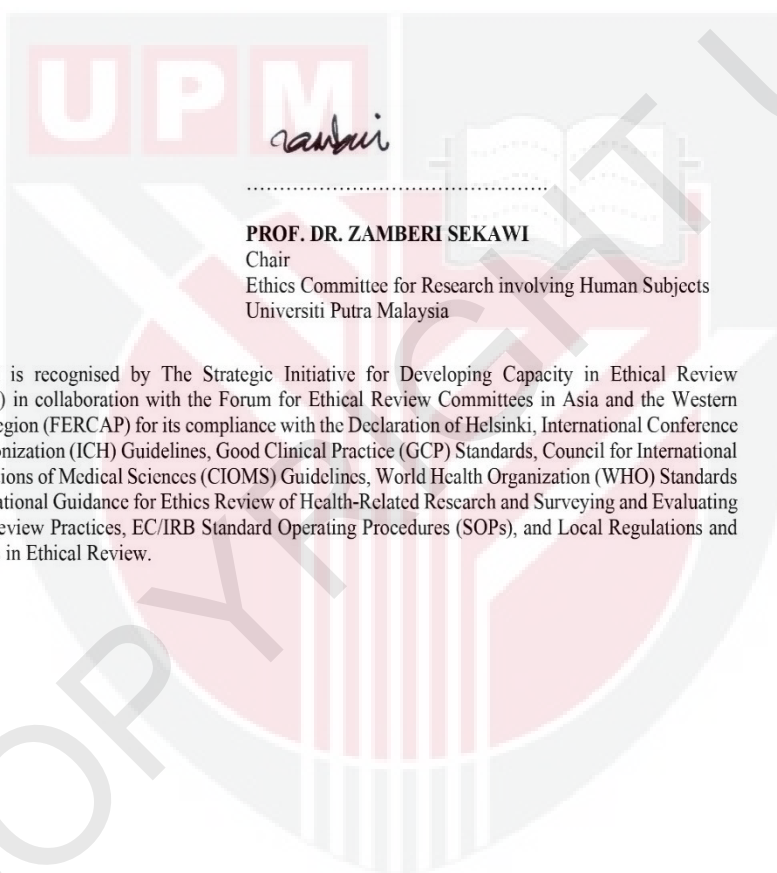
occurrences of all Serious Adverse Events (SAEs), Suspected Unexpected Serious Adverse Reaction (SUSARs) and Protocol Deviation/ Violation at all JKEUPM approved sites to JKEUPM. SAEs are to be reported within 15 calendar days from awareness of event by investigator. Initial report of SUSARs are to be reported as soon as possible but not later than 7 calendar days from awareness of event by investigator, followed by a complete report within 8 additional calendar days.

The required forms can be obtained from the Ethics Committee for Research Involving Human Subjects (JKEUPM) website (<http://www.tncpi.upm.edu.my/faildokumen>).

Date of Approval: 23 June 2022

Members of the JKEUPM who reviewed the documents:

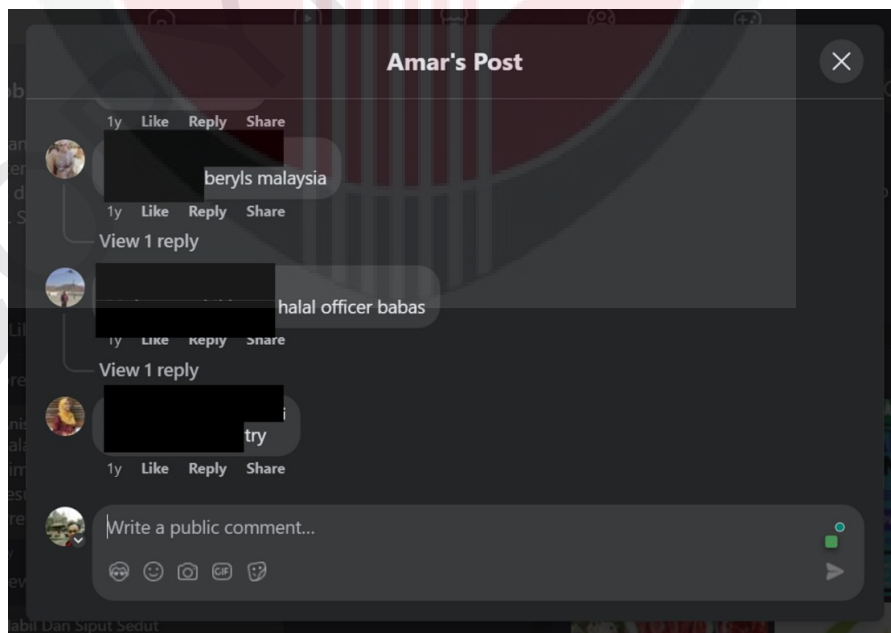
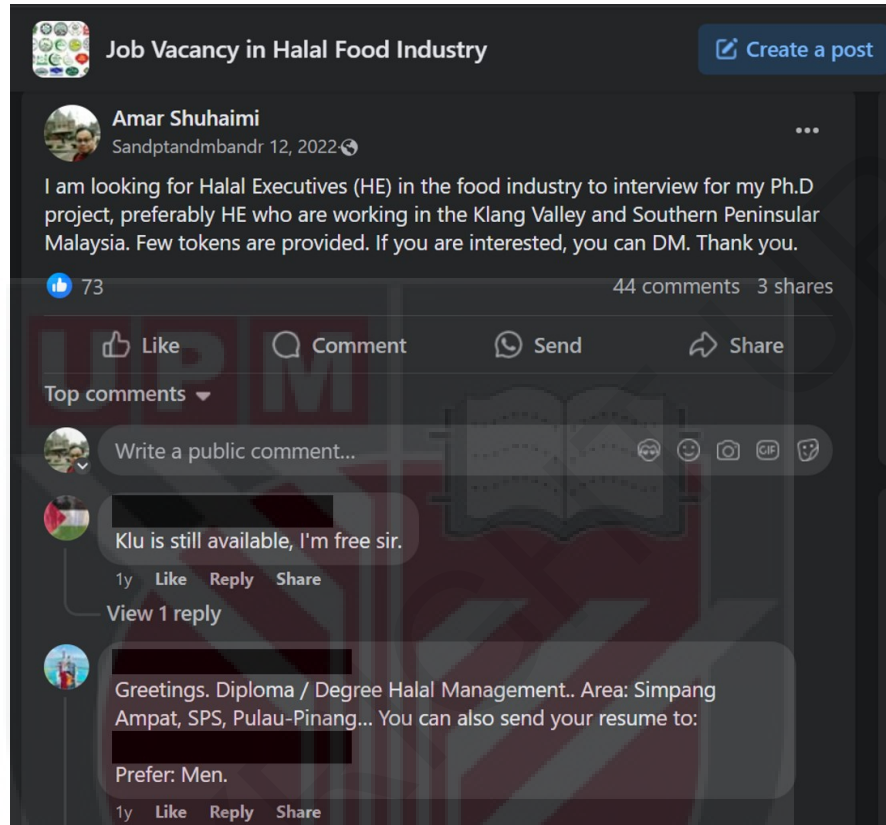
- i. Primary Reviewer: Dr. Chua Bee Lia
- ii. Informed Consent Reviewer: Assoc. Prof. Dr. Ang Lay Hoon



JKEUPM is recognised by The Strategic Initiative for Developing Capacity in Ethical Review (SIDCER) in collaboration with the Forum for Ethical Review Committees in Asia and the Western Pacific Region (FERCAP) for its compliance with the Declaration of Helsinki, International Conference on Harmonization (ICH) Guidelines, Good Clinical Practice (GCP) Standards, Council for International Organizations of Medical Sciences (CIOMS) Guidelines, World Health Organization (WHO) Standards and Operational Guidance for Ethics Review of Health-Related Research and Surveying and Evaluating Ethical Review Practices, EC/IRB Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs), and Local Regulations and Standards in Ethical Review.

Appendix F

Recruitment of Informants through *Job Vacancy in Halal Food Industry* Facebook Group Page



* Please note that these figures are only for evidence of informant recruitment. The individuals/ companies portrayed in the figures are not study informants. Hence, they have no direct or indirect involvement with this study.

BIODATA OF STUDENT

Amarul Arief Mohd Shuhaimi is a promising scholar and professional with an impressive track record in both academic and industry settings. Amarul was born in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, and presently lives in Semenyih, Selangor. Amarul finished his primary schooling at Sekolah Kebangsaan Sungai Tua Baharu, Gombak. Subsequently, he enrolled at Sekolah Menengah Islam Al-Amin to further his secondary education, where he successfully obtained the Penilaian Menengah Rendah (PMR) qualification. Thereafter, he enrolled in Sekolah Menengah Kebangsaan Agama Maahad Hamidiah, Kajang, where he successfully obtained his Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia (SPM) qualification. He is currently pursuing a doctoral program in food science and food management at the University of Newcastle, Australia, as well as at Universiti Putra Malaysia, which is scheduled to be completed by 2025. His doctoral dissertation's primary focus is the examination of Halal executives' role in the certification process and their professional advancement within Malaysia and Australia's food industries. This research highlights his competence in managing the Halal industry and analysing qualitative data. Amarul commenced his academic path by obtaining a Bachelor of Islamic Management with Honours from the Islamic Science University of Malaysia (USIM) in 2015. During his undergraduate studies, he acquired extensive training in human resource management, organisational behaviour, and project management.

Aside from his academic endeavours, Amarul possesses substantial professional experience. He has held the position of Employee Engagement Executive at Boustead Holdings Berhad, where he devised creative strategies to improve employee satisfaction. At MBSB Bank Berhad, he demonstrated exceptional performance as a

Mortgage Loan Executive, making significant contributions to a project involving converting conventional mortgage loans into Islamic facilities. During the initial phase of his career, he had roles at Rizq Educare Sdn. Bhd., USIM, and the Ministry of Defence in Malaysia, where he showcased his leadership skills and research aptitude. Amarul's extensive participation in several extracurricular activities enhances his professional accomplishments. He has held prominent positions at USIM, including Project Director for the Global Islamic Student Outreach in Adelaide, Australia, and President of the Faculty of Leadership and Management Student Association. Several accolades have acknowledged his accomplishments, including the Royal Education Award at the USIM Convocation 2015 and the YADIM Special Award 2015. Amarul's qualifications in Good Manufacturing Practices, Hazard Analysis, and Critical Control Points reflect his commitment to enhancing his professional skills. His fluency in various languages and his affiliation with prestigious groups such as the Qualitative Research Association of Malaysia and the Malaysian Institute of Food Technology emphasize his dedication to ongoing education and professional distinction.

In summary, Amarul Arief Mohd Shuhaimi possesses a diverse range of academic expertise, professional background, and leadership abilities, making him a valuable asset in food science, management, and Halal industry research.

LIST OF PUBLICATIONS

Journal Publications

- Mohd Shuhaimi, A. A., Ab Karim, S., Lee, E. K., Mohamad, S. F., Ungku Zainal Abidin, U. F. & Arshad, M. M. (2025). Sustainable Career Growth for the Halal Professionals in Malaysia and Australian Food Industry. *Journal of Islamic Marketing*, 1–26. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JIMA-03-2024-0125>.
- Mohd Shuhaimi, A. A., Akanbi, T. O., Ab Karim, S., Lee, E. K., Mohamad, S. F., Ungku Zainal Abidin, U. F., & Arshad, M. M. (2024). Accessibility of Halal Certification Bodies in Australia: A Website Content Analysis. *Journal of Culinary Science & Technology*, 1–26. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15428052.2024.2361700>.
- Mohd Shuhaimi, A. A., Ab Karim, M. S., Fatimah, S., Mohamad, U. F. U. Z. A., & Arshad, M. M. (2022). A Review on Halal and Kosher Regulations, Certifications, and Industrial Practices. *Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences*, 12(2), 182-192.
- Mohd Shuhaimi, A. A., & Ab Karim, M. S. (2021). Visiting Halal Restaurants: The Perceptions of Non-Muslim Postgraduate Students in Malaysia's Public University. *Malaysian Journal of Qualitative Research*, 7(2).

Conference and Intellectual Discourse Participations and Presentations

- A Glympse of Halal Positions in Australia's Food Industry: A Prospective Opportunity for Malaysian Talents. *International Halal Symposium 2024*, Sabah, Malaysia. August 20th-22nd, 2023 (presenter and participant).
- 17th Dubai International Food Safety Conference. Dubai, UAE. December 11th-13th, 2023 (participant).
- Intellectual Discourse with the Assistant Director of The Halal Science Center (Dr. Anat Denyinghot and Dr. Najwa Yanya Santivorakul). Chulalongkorn University. Bangkok, Thailand. October 30th, 2023. (sole delegate).

Newspaper Publications

- Mohd Shuhaimi, A. A (2025) Redesign Malaysia's food tourism with focus on authenticity. *New Straits Times*. <https://www.nst.com.my/opinion/letters/2025/03/1182984/redesign-malaysias-food-tourism-focus-authenticity>
- Mohd Shuhaimi, A. A (2025) Serving up the real Malaysia. *The Star*. <https://www.thestar.com.my/opinion/letters/2025/03/03/serving-up-the-real-malaysia>

Mohd Shuhaimi, A. A (2025) From crossroads to culinary renaissance: How Malaysia can lead with authenticity. *Malay Mail*. <https://www.malaymail.com/news/what-you-think/2025/03/01/from-crossroads-to-culinary-renaissance-how-malaysia-can-lead-with-authenticity-amarul-arief-mohd-shuhaimi/168381>

Mohd Shuhaimi, A. A. (2024) Even outsiders understand Halal and Haram (Orang luar pun faham Halal, Haram). *Utusan Malaysia*. <https://www.utusan.com.my/rencana/forum/2024/05/orang-luar-pun-faham-tentang-Halal-haram/>

Mohd Shuhaimi, A. A. (2022) Halal doesn't always have a logo (Halal Tak Semesti Perlu Ada Logo). *Utusan Malaysia*. <https://www.utusan.com.my/rencana/2022/08/Halal-tak-semestinya-perlu-ada-logo/>

Mohd Shuhaimi, A. A. (2022) Take this chance to improve our Halal certificate (Ambil Peluang Tambah Baik Sijil Halal Kita). *Utusan Malaysia*. <https://www.utusan.com.my/premium/2022/10/ambil-peluang-tambah-baik-sijil-Halal-kita/>

Award(s)

Best Presenter Award. *International Halal Symposium 2024*. Sabah, Malaysia.

