

The Challenges of Implementing Halal Assurance Practices in an Organic Halal-Certified Slaughterhouse at Negeri Sembilan

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ABSTRACT

The primary purpose of Halal Assurance practices is to support an industry that upholds Islamic morality and ethical standards, guaranteeing that consumers are receiving not only permissible but also safe and healthy food. This study explores the difficulties faced by a Halal-Certified slaughterhouse for organic chicken located at Nilai, Negeri Sembilan to face the world explosive growth of halal market. The study names financial limitation, challenges in recruiting expert personnel in managing halal slaughtering process and product traceability concerns as the main roadblocks. Through qualitative interviews with the Internal halal committee members, this study identifies key obstacles to upholding halal standards, including insufficient funding for training and equipment and labour-intensive manual traceability systems. The study also found the strategic solutions by Delima Emas, such as streamlining operations, improving training programs and upgrading traceability systems with digital recordkeeping and advanced analytics.

INTRODUCTION

Generally, the halal supply chain's goal is to ensure the halal integrity of halal products for final consumers, as well as halal process performance through advanced technology, minimizing the procedure for certification and supply chain lead time as well as quality. Malaysian Halal Management System 2020 (MHMS) emphasize Halal Assurance System for multinational company and Internal Halal Control System (IHCS) for companies categorised as small and medium industry. Aside from the halal term, which means lawful, legal, licit, and legitimate, there is a *toyyib* term that is frequently used in conjunction with halal and can indicate excellent, pleasing, or acceptable. Halal must be regarded through the lens of the topic, such as the raw materials of the product, whereas *toyyib* must be examined through the lens of the technique in product manufacture (Zainal Ariffin et al., 2021).

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Recently, the decreasing supply of local halal meat and chicken has been exacerbated by the closure of local Halal slaughterhouses, which were unable to manage various challenges. In 2022-2023, several slaughterhouses, including those in Kumbar Bay, Bayan Lepas and Batu Caves, had their halal certificates revoked or were ordered to close for violating standards, further reducing the local meat supply (Zuhainy Zulkifli, 2023).

Due to global demand for halal assurance products, Halal slaughterhouses are increasingly being established in Nilai. However, ensuring these facilities adhere to halal standards is challenging, given Nilai's unique circumstances, necessitating a deeper examination of these issues. The challenges in implementing Halal Assurance System (HAS) at Delima Emas Sdn. Bhd. and the solutions adopted, were recorded through in-depth interviews.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The halal assurance system in poultry industry is vital for ensuring compliance with Islamic principles and food safety. It involves halal slaughtering, storage, logistics, packaging and all crucial for maintaining the purity of halal meat products. Key focus areas include halal animal feed, proper slaughtering, and segregation, emphasizing the importance of applying Shariah principles in the supply chain (Emi Normalina et al., 2012).

Halal Supply Chain of Poultry Industry

The halal supply chain's goal is to ensure the halal integrity of products for final consumers, as well as halal process performance through advanced technology, minimizing the procedure for certification and supply chain lead time as well as quality. The goal of the halal supply chain is to ensure the halal integrity of products and improve process performance through advanced technology, reducing certification procedures and lead times. In the poultry industry, this is crucial for maintaining meat quality, consumer confidence, and regulatory compliance (Omar et al., 2013).

The halal assurance system in slaughterhouse emphasizes the importance of halal production integrity through practical guidelines for slaughterhouses and poultry processing plants. It ensures quality and safety across the entire supply chain, from farm to fork, covering halal slaughtering, stunning, dressing, storage, and transportation. The standards also emphasize good livestock husbandry, animal welfare, and proper management practices to ensure meat quality (Mirghani et al., 2023).

Among the requirements include slaughterers and supervisors must be trained Muslims and using sharp instruments like knives or any sharp cutting tool for halal slaughtering. The Halal Assurance standard also emphasizes hygiene, safety, and nutritional benefits, aligning with the concept of *toyyiban*. Consistent with Islamic perspective, the World Organization for Animal Health standards ensure humane practices, including pre-slaughter rest and animal health, which are crucial for maintaining meat wholesomeness, halal integrity, and consumer trust (Mohd Izhar Ariff Mohd Kashim et al., 2022).

Halal Critical Control Point (HCCP) Based on *Toyyiban* Aspect

The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (2018) stated that animal welfare was officially introduced in 2014 by the World Organisation for Animal Health (WOAH) which includes freedom from hunger, thirst, discomfort, injury, disease, fear, suffering, and death.

According to Thaha (2023), the *tayyiban* aspect of poultry slaughtering includes 7 Halal Critical Control Points (HCCP): temporary cage, bleeding, scalding, de-feathering, evisceration, washing, and storage. The first CCP is ensuring poultry in temporary holding cages are fed and watered within 24 hours to prevent starvation, dehydration, and reduced meat quality. The subsequent HCCPs include bleeding,

which can pose biological hazards, scalding, de-feathering, and washing to prevent contamination. The final HCCP is the storage of carcasses, where cross-contamination and temperature control are crucial to prevent biological hazards. Proper storage temperature ranges from -25°C to 18°C to minimize bacterial growth and spoilage during extended storage (Thaha et al., 2020).

A study entitles "Risk Assessment on Bird Slaughterhouses in Negeri Sembilan" examines risk management practices in chicken slaughtering at four slaughterhouses in Negeri Sembilan, Malaysia. The research addresses Muslim consumers' concerns about halal chicken meat, emphasizing the importance of halal assurance systems, guided by Malaysia's Halal Certification procedures (MPPHM) by JAKIM. The study underscores Malaysia's role as a global halal hub and the need for a standardized halal assurance system to maintain quality and compliance (Rafidah Mohd Azli et al., 2021).

The study applies the halal *tayyiban* risk assessment scale to evaluate critical points like lairage, shackling, stunning, slaughtering, and storage. As shown in Tabel 1, researcher found non-compliance issues, especially in non-halal certified slaughterhouses, emphasizing the need for continuous monitoring and improvements. Key concerns include inadequate ventilation, improper shackling, and lack of Muslim checkers during stunning, all of which affect halal compliance and meat quality. The study recommends strict adherence to Shariah-compliant processes, rigorous risk assessments, and the involvement of Halal Executives and Muslim Supervisors to ensure standards are met (Rafidah Mohd Azli et al., 2021).

Table 1. Risk Assessment on Bird Slaughterhouses in Negeri Sembilan

PROCESS NAME	ISSUE	RATIONALE
Ventilation during Lairage	Poor ventilation in lairage, leading to earlier death of chickens during logistics.	Animal welfare and adherence to halal standards.
Shackling Duration	Short duration of shackling after slaughtering may cause an incomplete bleeding/death process.	Risk of accidental death in boiling water tank.
Stunning Process	Volts and duration of stunning are not compliant with MS1500.	Risk of accidental death due to higher volts and longer stunning
Slaughtering Process	Uncertified slaughterers, unsharpened knives, and incomplete bleeding.	Animal welfare, meat slaughtered by non-Muslim, and incomplete bleeding process.
Storage Process	Cross-contamination with non-halal products during storage.	Freshness of meat and adherence to halal standards.

Source: Rafidah binti Mohd Azli et al. (2021).

METHODOLOGY

A qualitative research methodology was employed to achieve this study's objective. This is aligned with Babu et al.'s (2013) assertion that qualitative research seeks to understand a research question from a humanistic or idealistic perspective. This approach generates non-numerical data, offering new insights into the research. A well-designed research plan is crucial for a successful project. This study adopted a single case study design focusing on Delima Emas Sdn. Bhd., an organic Halal-certified slaughterhouse in Negeri Sembilan. A case study was chosen because it allows for an in-depth exploration of context-specific

challenges within a real-life organizational setting, which aligns with Yin's (2018) assertion that case studies are particularly suitable for investigating contemporary phenomena within bounded systems.

Next, the sample size of this research includes 3 representatives as shown in Table 2. The informants are from the Internal Halal Committee in the halal-certified slaughterhouse based in Negeri Sembilan. The internal Halal Committee members were purposively selected as informants, as they are directly involved in decision-making, compliance, and operational monitoring of Halal assurance practices. Although the sample size was three informants, this is consistent with the qualitative case study approach where depth, context, and meaning take precedence over breadth (Creswell, 2018). To ensure credibility, data triangulation was employed by cross-checking interview findings with organizational documents, halal certification guidelines, and relevant literature. This strengthens both the validity and trustworthiness of the study.

Table 2. List of Informants

Number of Informant	Position of IHC Member
Informant 1	Halal Executive
Informant 2	Quality Assurance
Informant 3	Senior Production Executive

As the researcher used only a qualitative method, the qualitative data can be defined as information conveyed through words and evaluated through interpretations and categorizations. The following data collection has been done to acquire and measure information on variables of interest in a systematic and defined manner to answer specific research questions and assess results. The interview session has been conducted using a set of semi-structured questions that have been verified by experts as in Table 3.

Table 3. List of Questions

Theme	Sample Questions
Background	Tell me about yourself and your role in this company.
Understanding of Halal Assurance	As a worker at a Halal-certified slaughterhouse, what do you understand about the Halal Assurance System?
Challenges in Implementation	What are the key challenges you have encountered in implementing Halal Assurance practices in this slaughterhouse?
Balancing Compliance	How do you address the challenge of balancing Islamic ethical guidelines with industrial regulations and client preferences in your operations?
Comparative Perspective	What specific challenges does your slaughterhouse face in implementing Halal Assurance practices compared to larger facilities?
Compliance & Documentation	What strategies do you employ to ensure compliance with local regulatory requirements and Halal Assurance standards, especially regarding documentation and record-keeping?

Best Practices	Can you share any success stories or best practices that have helped improve Halal Assurance practices and standards?
Equipment & Standards	What measures do you take to ensure equipment is suitable for Halal Assurance practices and maintained to meet standards?
Training & Workforce	How do you train and educate your workforce on the importance of Halal Assurance practices and ensure adherence in daily tasks?
Facility & Layout	How do you ensure the facility design and layout comply with Halal Assurance requirements, especially cleanliness, hygiene, and waste management?

Source: Prepared by authors

This approach ensured that the interviews remained flexible while still focusing on core issues central to the study objectives. Thematic analysis was later conducted to interpret responses across the identified themes.

RESULT & DISCUSSION

The findings of this qualitative research are based on interviews with three representatives from the internal Halal committee at the halal-certified organic slaughterhouse, who voluntarily participated. The interviews, conducted directly at the company, consisted of ten questions. The first five questions identified the main challenges faced by a halal-certified slaughterhouse from the perspectives of the three committee members, while the remaining questions focused on the methods used to address these challenges. This approach was effective and minimally disruptive, with the interviews transcribed shortly after verifying the findings.

Main Challenges Faced by the Halal-certified Slaughterhouse at Negeri Sembilan

Based on the information obtained from in-depth interviews with Halal Executive, Quality Assurance and Senior Production Executive using the qualitative approach, the objective of the study has been successfully achieved. There are several issues that can be detected related to Halal implementation at the Halal-certified slaughterhouse for organic chicken. After interviewing the Halal Executive, Quality Assurance and Senior Production Executive, the following are the main challenges and solutions as shown in Table 4.

Table 4. Summary of The Thematic Analysis of The Interview

Section	Theme
1: Challenges	Financial Limitations
	Struggle Finding Skilled Workers
	Traceability
2: Solutions	Simplifying Operations
	Training and Briefing
	Traceability Upgrade

Source: Authors' findings based on data analysis (2025)

Firstly, the challenges faced by halal-certified slaughterhouse at Negeri Sembilan are financial limitations. These issues severely restrict the company's capacity to maintain stringent halal integrity. Informant 1 highlighted that halal slaughterhouse faces financial limitations, making it challenging to invest in specialized equipment, facilities, and training needed to maintain halal assurance. Ensuring all employees

are consistently trained in halal requirements requires significant investment and attending various costly and time-consuming training programs.

Additionally, facilities must be continuously upgraded and maintained to meet halal certification standards. Insufficient resources impede investments in specialized equipment, such as the spin chiller machine essential for post-slaughter microbial control. Informant 1 added that small Halal slaughterhouses face financial challenges, leading to creative but inadequate methods to maintain quality. Limited resources prevent proper maintenance of essential equipment, like the spin chiller, which should operate at -3°C . However, insufficient ice-making facilities prevent the chiller from reaching this temperature, reducing its effectiveness in eliminating microorganisms from slaughtered chicken. The lack of adequate ice-making facilities prevents the machine from reaching necessary temperatures, thereby compromising product quality and compliance with halal standards.

Furthermore, financial constraints also hinder comprehensive employee training programs in halal awareness, essential for ensuring consistent adherence across production departments. These challenges collectively undermine the company's ability to sustain halal certification and operational efficiency. Informant 1 stated that "...due to limited funds, the company struggles to provide crucial Halal awareness training for production employees, which is essential for monitoring Halal Control Points (HCPs)." Informant 3 agreed that "...insufficient understanding of Halal control points burdens quality control, as workers may mishandle sensitive items like raw chicken, increasing the risk of contamination."

Another significant issue is the struggle to recruit skilled workers. The company faces difficulties in hiring experienced professionals, often resorting to less experienced staff who require extensive training. Informant 2 noted that "These slaughterhouse struggles to hire experts due to limited resources, often relying on inexperienced workers as operators or slaughterers, leading to errors since few people apply for these positions." Informant 2 also stated that "These slaughterhouse struggles to find skilled workers, affecting operational efficiency and product quality".

Inexperienced butchers, for example, can cause significant chicken waste due to improper slaughtering techniques, leading to lower yield, reduced product quality, and higher operational costs." This is consistent with Informant 1 that said "...that unskilled workers not only cause immediate waste but also disrupt overall productivity and workflow. Poorly butchered chickens risk failing halal standards, jeopardizing certification and client trust. Additionally, correcting these mistakes can increase costs and strain the business's finances and logistics."

This shortfall in skilled labor adversely affects operational efficiency and product quality, particularly in critical stages such as slaughtering and machine operation. Informant 3 highlighted that "These slaughterhouse faces major challenges due to a lack of skilled experts to operate and maintain the machines used in their processing section. This shortage affects the production of their chicken-based products, which require extensive automation..." Informant 2 added that "...the lack of experience leads to operational problems, such as production delays due to in-house expertise being unable to handle complex machine repairs. This forces the business to rely on costly and time-consuming external services, impacting the budget and profitability."

High error rates and increased reliance on external repair services for machine breakdowns further strain operational costs and disrupt production schedules. Informant 3 mentioned clearly that "...frequent machine failures disrupt production, delay order fulfillment, and risk customer confidence. Increased strain on other machines accelerates their wear, leading to lower product quality and reduced overall productivity." Addressing these challenges effectively requires not only strategic resource allocation and enhanced training initiatives but also the implementation of robust traceability systems. These systems are crucial for accurately tracking product flow from manufacturing to consumers, ensuring compliance with

halal standards, and bolstering consumer confidence in the organic & halal certified chicken-based products.

The last issue is traceability, which shows that there is a minor issue for management in developing a standard procedure to keep track of the product from the manufacturing part to the end customer. Informant 2 said "...highlighted issues with the halal traceability system at this company, noting the lack of an SOP and reliance on a manual process. This approach is prone to errors and inconsistencies, causing gaps in tracking products and disrupting the traceability chain." Informant 1 agreed that "...the manual traceability system is slow, error-prone, and disrupts the halal status verification if any department fails to update records accurately. This can lead to non-compliance and erode consumer trust in the company's halal standards."

Informant 2 also add that "...without a reliable SOP, crucial details like delivery temperature, release date, and production time are often overlooked or recorded incorrectly. These lapses jeopardize the integrity of the halal supply chain and compliance with certification standards, undermining consumer confidence in the products' halal status." Informant 1 said "...without an automated system, accessing and verifying traceability information is slow and difficult. During recalls or audits, this could lead to incomplete records, risking penalties and reputational damage..."

Solutions to The Challenges of Halal-Certified Slaughterhouse at Negeri Sembilan

The following are some suggested solutions to the problems faced by the halal small slaughterhouse, where these solutions are taken from the suggestions of Informants and recommendations from research papers related to the same issues faced by other slaughterhouses in curbing the problems faced.

The main proposed solution is simplifying operations by focusing on core products and streamlining processes such as slaughtering and packaging to reduce costs and ensure consistent quality. Focusing on core products and simplifying the production process can help this slaughterhouse reduce complexity, costs, and regulatory compliance challenges, especially in the stringent Malaysian halal market (Rahman, Hassan & Mohammad, 2020). By narrowing their product range to high-demand items like fresh cuts and marinated chicken, the company can standardize operations, improve efficiency, and maintain product quality.

This streamlined approach enables better resource allocation, faster production, and easier adherence to halal standards, which is crucial for consumer trust and market expansion. Additionally, it reduces waste, enhances sustainability, and strengthens marketing efforts, ultimately providing this slaughterhouse with a competitive edge (Ridwan Rajab et al., 2022). This approach, adopted from successful practices in other research, assists in meeting strict halal standards effectively. The alternative of focusing on core products was identified as the best solution, as the candidates interviewed did not provide a specific resolution for this issue.

Next is prioritizes training to uphold halal and food safety standards. Regular internal training sessions and audits are conducted to ensure employees understand and comply with Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) and certification requirements. Informant 3 said, "We provide a morning briefing on SOPs, rules, and daily schedules, and hold monthly training alternating between food safety and halal requirements." By establishing clear SOPs and providing continuous training, this company has strengthened transparency, consumer trust, and regulatory compliance across its operations. Informant 2 elaborated, "Scheduled halal awareness training ensures employees understand SOPs and certification requirements, guiding them in their responsibilities."

The slaughterhouse also maintains and enhances halal and food safety standards through regular training and audits. Informant 1 said, "We conduct monthly internal training on halal and food safety awareness by our halal executive and perform monthly audits covering various compliance aspects, including Halal standards." By involving experts and enhancing operational standards, this slaughterhouse

effectively addresses skill gaps and improves machine maintenance practices, which are crucial for operational efficiency. Informant 2 reiterated, “We conduct monthly internal training on halal and food safety awareness by our halal executive and perform monthly audits on compliance aspects.” Informant 3 added, “We meet with experts to develop operational standards aligned with GMP, Malaysian standards, VHM and halal requirements”.

Lastly, the traceability systems should be improved by implementing digital records and data analytics. This slaughterhouse has significantly improved Halal Assurance Practices with successful initiatives, including a digital record-keeping system for efficient traceability and reduced costs and environmental impact. As Informant 1 said, “Our company digital record-keeping and automated CCP alerts have greatly enhanced our Halal Assurance Practices by tracking all records and ensuring timely action on noncompliance.” Informant 2 added, “We plans to further enhance its system with advanced data analytics to track trends, identify recurring issues, and improve process efficiency and product quality.”

This advancement enables the company to track products from farm to fork, promptly address compliance issues through automated alerts, and minimize environmental impact. The two methods mentioned above, digital record-keeping and advanced data analytics, can greatly improve traceability at this slaughterhouse. Digitizing records consolidates information into a central database, ensuring complete documentation and traceability across the supply chain. This enables timely verification of halal compliance, reducing costs and environmental impact. Automated alerts for Critical Control Points (CCPs) in storage help quickly detect and address non-compliance, maintaining halal certification integrity.

CONCLUSION

This study contributes to the halal assurance literature by offering an in-depth, context-specific analysis of the challenges faced by a halal-certified slaughterhouse specializing in organic chicken production in Negeri Sembilan. By focusing on the practical implementation of the Halal Assurance System (HAS), the study highlights how an enterprise navigate regulatory demands, financial constraints, and operational limitations. From a practical perspective, the findings underscore the pressing need for policy interventions, financial incentives, and structured training programs to support sustainability and compliance in this segment of the halal industry.

Nevertheless, the study is not without limitations. As a single-case study with a small number of purposively selected Informants, the findings are context-bound and cannot be generalized to all halal-certified slaughterhouses. However, the depth of insight generated provides a valuable starting point for further exploration of halal assurance practices in organic and small-scale contexts.

Future research should expand beyond single-case contexts to include comparative studies across different states or countries, as well as multi-case analyses that capture the diversity of halal industry practices. Furthermore, as the global halal market increasingly embraces digitalization, future investigations should examine how digital transformation, automation, and traceability technologies can strengthen the Halal Assurance System while improving operational efficiency.

The future viability of halal-certified slaughterhouses, particularly small-scale enterprises such as the case examined in Nilai, will depend on adopting a proactive stance that integrates technological innovation with strategic collaboration. Sustaining high standards of halal compliance and operational efficiency requires continuous investment in digital traceability systems, automation, and workforce training. By embracing innovation, sustainability, and unwavering adherence to halal principles, halal slaughterhouses of organic chicken can not only preserve their competitiveness but also reinforce Malaysia’s position as a leading global halal hub.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST STATEMENT

The authors agree that this research was conducted in the absence of any self-benefits, commercial or financial conflicts and declare the absence of conflicting interests with any entities involved.

AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTIONS

Ahmad Al-Ihsan Al-Azmi carried out the research, wrote and revised the article. Anis Hamizah Hamid designed the research, supervised research progress, anchored the review, revisions and approved the article submission.

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