# A pre-and post-training assessment of the halal executive training program towards upholding halal food supply chain

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## ARTICLE INFO

## ABSTRACT

The global halal business is projected to be valued at USD 2.3 trillion to cater to the demands and preferences of the world's 1.7 billion Muslim consumers. It establishes the worldwide halal market as a powerful commercial arena and a critical developing sector. The importance of education, especially halal executive training in this competitive industry, should not be disregarded. Therefore, this article embarked on the interrelated outcomes of halal executive training programs among halal executive training participants pre- and post-training. Attention is given to the knowledge gained during training and halal executives' tasks followed by the impact of the halal executive training program in assisting the halal food sector in ensuring an excellent halal supply chain.

## 1. Introduction

At the end of 2020, the scandalous "meat cartel" case; the smuggling of imported frozen meats from non-halal certified slaughterhouses in Canada, Mexico, China, Ukraine, Brazil, Argentina and other countries (Hammim, 2021). The meats were then repacked using fake halal logos for sale in markets across Malaysia (Adam, 2021). These criminal syndicates jeopardised the safety of imported meat, supply chain integrity and halal meat processing (Ariffin et al., 2021). In 2017, the halal certificate of a slaughtering premise was revoked by the Department of Religious Affairs Perak (JAIPk) due to non-compliance of the halal slaughtering regulations (Tanzizi, 2017). These violations are examples of fraudulence in halal certification and non-compliance in a halal management system, which, when extensively highlighted by the media, could intensify risk perception and amplify its consequences (Ahmad et al., 2017). In juxtaposition, consumers still have doubts regarding the halal status of products on the market, despite the widespread usage of track and trace in the halal industry (Shariff and Mohzal, 2021).

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The ramifications of revoking halal certification and recalling products for both halal consumers and businesses are enormous (Ahmad et al., 2017). Bujang et al. (2018) delves into the microbiological features of fresh and processed meats that lead to Halal certification non-compliance owing to Toyyib components. Recently, Nizar and Abidin (2021) discussed the food safety and halal status of food via online food delivery services at the end of the halal supply chain. For halal products, Muslim consumers depend on halal certification, and labelling to ensure that products are produced by halal processing and production methods (van der Spiegel et al., 2012) as the 'halalness' of products is not simply verifiable (Ahmad et al., 2017). This is where the halal management system in a supply chain is crucial. Shariff and Mohzal (2021) studied the crucial halal points (HCP) in halal chicken meat production for customers. The study aims to analyse the existing halal fresh meat track and trace system, identify and integrate HCPs into the track and trace system, and assess the proposed system's performance. Shuib et al. (2021) developed Halal Traceability System (HTS) as an essential tool for assuring the HMSC's Halal integrity by verifying the Halal status of meats. This study provides a concept for a blockchain-based halal chicken meat supply chain Traceability System that incorporates QR codes, RFID, and IoT. A system must be in place to ensure adherence to Malaysian halal standards such as MS1500:2019. Wahab et al. (2022) highlighted selected technology implementation to enhance food supply chain safety, including blockchain technology, the internet of things, big data analytics and others.

Consequently, in 2020, the Malaysian Halal Management System 2020 was introduced to replace the Halal Assurance Management System (HAS) developed in 2011 (JAKIM, 2020a). It explains in-depth the needs for developing, implementing, and maintaining halal to fulfil and comply with the procedures for Malaysia halal certification. This document contains an implementation of Internal Halal Control Systems (IHCS) for micro and small industries and Halal Assurance System (HAS) for medium and large industries. The MHMS 2020 holds the company responsible for ensuring all requirement for Malaysia halal certification complies. Additionally, the activities from farm to table depend on every player in the food supply chain to make the right choices to maintain the food's hygiene and quality. These decisions are significantly influenced by the practices of each firm along the chain, either allowing or obstructing food safety decisions and procedures (Wahab et al., 2022).

When there is a system in place, someone needs to be there to maintain it. People who work as halal executives, halal consultants, halal auditors, and those who work in abattoirs, among other positions, are needed in the halal industry (Mokhtar et al., 2021; Jamaluddin et al., 2015). Obtaining and maintaining halal certification is not an easy task. According to previous research (Rafida et al., 2013), there are still a limited number of talents in this field, particularly those who are skilled in the values components of the halal requirement (Mokhtar et al., 2021; Department of Skills Development, 2009). Interestingly, there are eight indicators of competencies and skill qualification (The Regulated Qualifications Framework (RQF), 2020). Generally, a halal executive is at level 4, which is appropriate for people working in technical and professional fields and capable of managing and developing others (Jamaluddin et al., 2015).

In MHMS 2020, there is a requirement for the appointment of the halal executive in medium and large industries to cater to the skilled worker needs, particularly in ensuring adherence to halal requirements. Their role is to ensure that every process of preparing halal product follows the guidelines from Jabatan Kemajuan Islam Malaysia (JAKIM) (Mokhtar et al., 2021). One of the essential requirements to become a halal executive is obtaining a halal executive certification registered with the Halal Professional Board (HPB) JAKIM. Currently, there are 32 halal executive training providers across Malaysia endorsed by JAKIM.

This paper discusses the tasks of halal executives and the pre-and post- training effects of the halal executive training program among halal executive training participants. The importance of the halal executive training program in enhancing the halal food business, as well as the knowledge obtained throughout training, were reviewed.

## 2.    Halal executive

### 2.1  Impetus of the halal executive

The world's 7.2 billion people have adopted the trend of eating halal foods. Muslim populations are rapidly increasing in developed and developing countries alike, including the United States, the United Kingdom, and European countries. As a result, halal markets systematically scale-up to all corners of the globe (Mokhtar, 2021). The Muslims' obligation to eat from halal sources is one of the main reasons for the formation of halal markets. The global halal market encompasses not just food products but also cosmetics, medicines, toiletries, finance, tourism, and logistics (Bruil, 2010; Moloud et al., 2015; Erfan et al., 2021).

The halal market has also acquired awareness among non-Muslim consumers regarding the belief in the purity and safety of halal products (Ezanee et al. 2017). Halal-certified food products also guarantee hygiene and cleanliness and fulfil health-conscious consumers in preparing and producing their food (Mahdzar et al., 2021). Halal Certification Malaysia has gained traction among Malaysian and international food producers in this area. According to Erfan et al. (2021), halal items are crucial not just for Muslims but also for millennial customers. As a result, non-Muslim business owners compete with Muslim-owned businesses to access the Halal market (Mokhtar, 2021). Another probable explanation for the rise is that food goods with halal certification and logo have a competitive edge over other products since they have become the customer's preferred option (Ahmad & Wahid, 2007). The issuance of the halal logo through certification procedures assists consumers in ensuring and buying the right food product (Aini and Safira, 2021).  Bruil (2010) stated that in addition to halal products being processed are in line with Islamic standards, halal certification also signifies the manufacture of a high-quality product because the product has gone through a careful process to avoid cross-contamination and processing faults. After the establishment of Malaysian Halal Certification, the demand for certified and competent halal executives and committee members increased dramatically (Hashim & Shariff, 2015).

In general, the halal executive oversees halal-related tasks, such as administering the company's or industry's halal certification application (Muhammad et al., 2020). Aside from establishing Halal Assurance Systems (HAS) and an Internal Halal Committee (IHC), current requirements in the manual method state that a halal executive must be chosen by management in a multinational firm and a medium-sized business (Jais, 2019). In the case of a small or micro business, the management must assign one halal supervisor and a Muslim worker to be in charge of halal certification issues (Fazilah et al., 2018).

In Malaysia, Malaysian Muslim citizens are eligible for a halal executive role, and they must either have a background in Islamic studies or have completed halal executive training. It is interesting to note that there was no reference to Halal Executive in the MS1500:2000 and MS1500:2004. Only in MS1500:2009 Halal Food - Production, Preparation, Handling, and Storage – General Guidelines, the halal executive's second revision of the Malaysian Halal food standards was introduced. Subsequently, in the revised MS1500:2019, the term "Halal Executive" was eliminated from the "Management Responsibility" section and replaced with "Muslim Personnel" (Jais, 2019).

The job descriptions for Halal executives differ from one company to another. However, some of them are comparable. For example, HE must adhere to the Food Safety Management System (FSMS) and Halal Assurance System (HAS), which meet the ISO 22000, MS 1480, MS 1500, and HAS 23000 standards. HE is responsible for coordinating the company's HAS and reporting to management on the systems' effectiveness and applicability. HE must guarantee that all employees follow JAKIM, JAIS, LPPOM MUI, and other halal and food safety regulations. Furthermore, HE should provide in-house training on halal regulations to all operators, including new employees.

Furthermore, HE is responsible for leading the Internal Halal Committee (IHC) / Halal Management Team (HMT) and training all employees to guarantee that the company's enforcement and manufacturing fulfil the standard. They are also in charge of all Halal and food safety certification applications (New Product, New Application, and Renewal). HE must also handle audits and inspections by any certification organisation, such as JAKIM, JAIS, and LPPOM MUI. In addition, HE must ensure that all raw materials are qualified and halal compliant. Furthermore, they must verify that critical activities such as raw material

selection, new product creation, manufacturing facility cleaning, materials purchase, arriving material inspection, material or product handling and storage, and transportation are carried out according to procedures (Mokhtar, 2021).

## 2.2 Terms and roles of halal executive training in Malaysia

According to MHMS 2020 and Manual Procedure for Halal Certification (Malaysia) 2020, the halal executive must be a Muslim Malaysian. The individual must have at least a diploma in halal management or equivalent or have at least five years of management experience in the halal industry. JAKIM also demands that halal executives receive halal executive accreditation from the Halal Professional Board (HPB) by attending the halal executive training/course.

Companies and people in the business require specific and economic training and development to be competitive in today's global economy (Hashim et al., 2016). Training is a part of the organisation's human resources development (Rajeev et al., 2009). According to Johnstone et al. (2000), a company does not have to be run, operated, or owned by Muslims to make halal products; instead, it is sufficient if the product is created under rigorous regulations, supervision, support, and direction, with the most significant component being the presence of a qualified and competent Muslim production inspector to verify that the halal needs, and standard requirements are met. Hence, halal executive training fulfils this duty, with a syllabus underlined by the competent authority (JAKIM) and and organised by a halal training provider certified by Halal Professional Board (HPB) (JAKIM, 2020a). The overall training must fulfil at least 70 hours of training, and participants should complete all written tasks, group activities, oral presentations and most importantly, pass the exams.

The usefulness of training is also essential in creating employee commitment. Employees/ participants enter training programmes with specific requirements and expectations. Low commitment, negative attitude change, and increased turnover may result from training programmes that do not match the expectations and needs of participants. According to one study, participants who received "realistic alerts" and accurate training material before training had higher outcomes than those who did not receive any information about the training process. Organisations must ensure that training is relevant, communicated effectively, and able to match the expectations of the personnel attending to use training as a vehicle to generate commitment (Brum, 2007).

Furthermore, when the government and organisations offered little/ no training, some Halal Executives were unable to complete the tasks assigned to them (Ketan, 2018). To become one of the halal talents acknowledged in the halal business, authorities or organisations must provide sufficient training with suitable knowledge and expertise.

Under the Manual Procedure for Halal Certification (Malaysia) 2020, non-conformance on halal training can be categorised under minor: 32.1(f) Non-conformance about halal training; or major: 32.2(h) Non-conformance with regard to halal executive, or halal supervisor and Muslim personnel including slaughterman/halal checker. Generally, Halal Executive Training covers CO1 Halal Manual & Record Administration; CO2 Internal Halal Committee; CO3 Halal Quality Assurance; CO4 Halal Certification and CO5 Halal Internal Audit Facilitation. Course outcomes (CO) indicate achievements that learners should accomplish at the end of a course (Yeo, 2019). A competent halal executives must equip themselves with this knowledge to enable a smooth halal journey in a company.

## 2.3 Entrance and exit survey for halal executive training

It is a requirement underlined by HPB JAKIM for the participants to answer entrance and exit surveys for all halal executive training. Training evaluation aims to predict the extent to which the trainee's work performance will improve, authenticate training as a trading instrument, examine the return on investment, and adjust course content and training techniques (Tarik, 2018). A Professional Certification in Halal Executive was organised for 31 Food Science and Technology students under the PENJANA KPT-PACE program sponsored by the Ministry of Higher Education. Additionally, there were four participants from a

government-linked company, totaling 35 participants for the program. The training took eight days, from 8.30 am to 10.30 pm daily, except on the last day the exam was held. Training includes lectures, discussions, presentations, group activities, individual and group assignments, quizzes, and final exams. Interestingly, many industrial experiences were shared among the participants that made the essence of the halal executive training.

The pre and post-test results were summarised in Table 1. Performance Rating Scale is given as Likert scale; 5: Strongly agree; 4: Agree; 3: Partially agree; 2: Disagree, and 1 : Strongly disagree

Table 1: Pre and post results for halal executive training

| Questionnaire | Entrance Test Rating | Exit Test Rating |
|---|---|---|
| CO1: Halal Manual and Record Administration | | |
| 1. Establish Halal Assurance Management System Manual | | |
| i. I am able to understand the introduction to the Halal Assurance Management System of Malaysia Halal Certification Guidelines | 1.84 | 4.44 |
| ii. I am able to understand Halal Assurance Management System elements | 1.78 | 4.33 |
| iii. I am able to identify the source of the Halal Assurance Management System reference | 1.70 | 4.50 |
| iv. I am able to explain the Halal Assurance Management System establishment process | 1.68 | 4.22 |
| 2. Implement Halal Assurance Management System Manual | | |
| i. I am able to identify the type of notification | 1.56 | 4.44 |
| ii. I am able to understand notification format | 1.53 | 4.39 |
| iii. I am able to understand the organisational structure | 1.64 | 4.47 |
| iv. I am able to determine the content of the notification | 1.44 | 4.36 |
| CO2: Internal Halal Committee | | |
| 1. Develop Halal Policy | | |
| i. I understand the Guidelines for Halal Assurance Management System of Malaysia Halal Certification | 1.54 | 4.46 |
| ii. I am able to understand internal halal policy development procedure | 1.27 | 4.38 |
| iii. I am able to understand the company management stance and commitment to implementing HAS | 1.35 | 4.30 |
| 2. Form Internal Halal Committee (IHC) | | |
| i. I am able to understand the company's internal policy in Internal Halal Committee (IHC) formation | 1.48 | 4.38 |
| ii. I am able to understand Guidelines for Halal Assurance Management System of Malaysia Halal Certification on Internal Halal Committee | 1.43 | 4.31 |
| iii. I am able to understand Internal Halal Committee member's competencies and selection criteria | 1.43 | 4.44 |
| iv. I am able to understand the company's internal policy on the appointment of the Internal Halal Committee members | 1.40 | 4.44 |
| v. I am able to understand internal human resources policy and guidelines on new recruitment procedures | 1.43 | 4.31 |
| 3. Manage IHC Meeting | | |
| i. I am able to understand the roles and responsibilities of Halal Executive in managing IHC meeting | 1.58 | 4.61 |

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|---|---|---|
| ii. I am able to understand the usual agendas covered during IHC meeting | | |
| iii. I am able to understand how to prepare IHC minutes of meeting | 1.50 | 4.47 |
| iv. I am able to understand post-meeting follow-up on the implementation plan | 1.53 | 4.42 |
| 4. Implement the Halal Training Program | 1.63 | 4.42 |
| i. I am able to understand the company's training policy and guideline | | |
| ii. I am able to understand the guideline for the Halal Assurance System of Malaysia Halal Certification on Training Program | 1.50 | 4.61 |
| | 1.42 | 4.50 |
| iii. I am able to understand the method of training evaluation | 1.50 | 4.58 |
| iv. I am able to understand the guidelines for Internal Halal Committee documentation system | 1.31 | 4.53 |
| CO3: Halal Quality Assurance | | |
| 1. Describe the products and/or services manufacturing process | | |
| i. I am able to understand the introduction of describing the products and services | | |
| ii. I am able to understand components of product/ services description | 1.43 | 4.64 |
| | 1.40 | 4.50 |
| iii. I am able to identify the complete list of materials associated with Halal products/ services | 1.26 | 4.42 |
| 2. Facilitate endorsement of flow diagram by IHC | | |
| i. I am able to understand the introduction of constructing and confirming flow diagram | 1.46 | 4.56 |
| ii. I am able to understand process flow diagram | 1.49 | 4.58 |
| iii. I am able to identify the plant schematic diagram | 1.40 | 4.61 |
| iv. I am able to understand the verification of process flow diagram and schematic diagram | 1.37 | 4.44 |
| 3. Establish a Halal Critical Control Point (HCCP) | | |
| i. I am able to understand the introduction of describing the halal threats/ contamination | 1.60 | 4.54 |
| ii. I am able to identify halal threats/ contamination | 1.46 | 4.54 |
| iii. I am able to understand the establishment of criteria limits for HCCP | 1.49 | 4.43 |
| iv. I am able to understand the establishment of a monitoring system | 1.46 | 4.43 |
| v. I am able to understand the corrective actions for non-conformance | 1.34 | 4.49 |
| 4. Establish verification process | | |
| i. I am able to understand the requirement of verification | 1.37 | 4.53 |
| ii. I am able to identify activities relating to verification | 1.29 | 4.39 |
| iii. I am able to understand the internal verification process | 1.26 | 4.42 |
| iv. I am able to understand the scope of the verification process | 1.26 | 4.44 |
| 5. Establishing traceability system | | |
| i. I am able to understand the purpose of establishing the traceability system | 1.44 | 4.57 |
| ii. I am able to understand the benefits of establishing the traceability system | 1.61 | 4.57 |
| iii. I am able to understand the traceability chain | 1.56 | 4.60 |
| iv. I am able to understand the procedure for conducting traceability system | 1.44 | 4.57 |
| 6. Establish the management procedure for the recall of products | | |
| i. I am able to understand the introduction of product recall and complaint management | 1.40 | 4.60 |
| ii. I am able to understand the classification of complaint | 1.29 | 4.57 |
| iii. I am able to understand ways of handling a customer complaint | 1.20 | 4.51 |

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|---|---|---|
| iv. I am able to understand ways of handling non-conformance products | 1.20 | 4.37 |
| v. I am able to understand the disposition of non-conforming products | 1.23 | 4.51 |
| 7. Obtain approval of verification procedure | | |
| i. I am able to describe the approval process of HAS document | 1.22 | 4.47 |
| ii. I am able to understand the documentation system and records management records required for approval of the verification procedure | 1.22 | 4.50 |
| CO4: Halal Certification | | |
| 1. Prepare documents for application for Malaysia Halal Certification | 1.54 | 4.60 |
| i. I am able to understand the Malaysia Halal Certification procedure | 1.43 | 4.60 |
| ii. I am able to identify documents required for the certification procedure | | |
| 2. Submit Halal application online | 2.14 | 4.66 |
| i. I am able to understand the Halal application procedure | 1.97 | 4.57 |
| ii. I am familiar with online application system: My-eHalal | 2.06 | 4.74 |
| iii. I am able to understand the application fee | | |
| 3. Facilitate on-site Audit based on audit scope | | |
| i. I am able to understand the information required for the audit | 1.57 | 4.69 |
| ii. I am able to understand types of audit | 1.66 | 4.74 |
| iii. I am able to understand the definition of auditor | 1.60 | 4.69 |
| iv. I am able to understand audit preparation | 1.63 | 4.60 |
| v. I am able to understand audit documentation | 1.54 | 4.51 |
| vi. I am able to understand consideration during the on-site audit | 1.49 | 4.54 |
| vii. I am able to understand the type of non-compliance | 1.63 | 4.57 |
| viii. I am able to understand the verification of the panel report | 1.49 | 4.51 |
| 4. Prepare feedback on audit findings / NCR | | |
| i. I am able to understand the generation of audit findings | 1.63 | 4.41 |
| ii. I am able to understand the actions required to follow up on the audit findings | 1.57 | 4.51 |
| 5. Accept application result | | |
| i. I am able to understand revision follow-up with the auditor | 1.61 | 4.59 |
| ii. I am able to understand the verification of the Malaysia Halal Certification Panel Report | 1.72 | 4.62 |
| iii. I am able to understand the establishment of the Malaysia Halal Certification Panel | 1.75 | 4.57 |
| iv. I am able to understand the conditions for the use of the Malaysia Halal Certificate and Halal Logo | 2.06 | 4.73 |
| 6. Maintain Halal post compliance | 1.77 | 4.69 |
| i. I am able to understand the requirements of Halal as Shari'ah compliance | 1.80 | 4.64 |
| ii. I am able to understand the responsibility of the company in maintaining Halal Certification | | |
| iii. I am able to understand the measures of Halal Certification monitoring and enforcement | 1.57 | 4.56 |
| iv. I am able to understand the identification of the Halal ongoing program | 1.63 | 4.58 |
| CO5: Halal Internal Audit Facilitation | | |
| 1. Manage Halal Audit Program | | |
| i. I am able to understand Halal Assurance Management System documents related to audit | 1.37 | 4.50 |
| | 1.37 | 4.53 |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| ii. I am able to understand the Halal Audit category to be performed | 1.46 | 4.62 |
| iii. I am able to understand the objectives and scope of the audit | 1.23 | 4.44 |
| iv. I am able to understand how to develop a Halal audit master plan | | |
| 2. Liaise with auditors and auditees | 1.40 | 4.49 |
| i. I am able to understand the composition of audit notice/memo / letter content | 1.49 | 4.51 |
| ii. I am able to understand the method of notification | 1.40 | 4.66 |
| iii. I am able to understand how to obtain a Halal Audit report | 1.37 | 4.60 |
| iv. I am able to determine audit reporting format | | |

From Table 1, overall, the Exit Test Rating is higher than the Entrance Test Rating. Entrance tests were provided before a topic was explained and discussed, while Exit tests were provided after all lectures and activities were completed for the specific issues. The detailed survey could evaluate whether the newly appointed Halal Executive could ensure all manufacturing activities follow the MPPHM 2020 (JAKIM, 2020b) standard operating procedures. Currently, there are seven schemes provided in the halal executive course, and the utilisation of these schemes is by the different halal products or services produced or provided by the companies. It is noteworthy that each scheme and standard utilised in halal certification is distinct and specific. For example, transportation-related schemes or pharmaceutical products are needed to fulfil transportation and pharmacy requirements. In contrast, schemes related to the provision of food and beverages must meet MS1500 food-related criteria (Harun et al., 2021).

For Entrance Test, the least rating (1.20) is given for iii. I am able to understand ways of handling customer complaints, and iv. I am able to understand ways of handling non-conformance products under 6. Establish the management procedure for the recall of products (CO3 Halal Quality Assurance). Customers who file complaints allow a company to correct specific operational flaws, learn from unpleasant situations, and, as a result, re-establish their satisfaction and trust. On the other hand, customers have certain expectations about how the company should handle the complaint and what compensation should be acceptable to cover their psychological, financial, and time costs when filing a claim (Filip, 2013).

According to Siti Aminah (2020), some business owners took advantage of the growing Halal market by imitating certifying logos. Furthermore, some of them are only using the logo for profit rather than applying and comprehending the measures necessary to maintain the Halal compliance of their manufacturing plant. As a result, some companies' Halal certificates have been cancelled. This unethical behaviour may reflect poorly on the Halal compliance's legitimacy. Consumer awareness of Halal compliance has been growing over time. Nowadays, consumers are more concerned about the manufacturing process of halal products rather than merely purchasing products bearing the halal logo. As a result, the halal product production process must adhere to Halal standards to maintain and improve halal status assurance (Nuratifah et al., 2019). Hence this knowledge would be beneficial in accommodating such encounters.

The highest ratings for Entrance Test are 2.14, 1.97 and 2.06 for i. I am able to understand the Halal application procedure, ii. I am familiar with online application systems: My-eHalal and iii. I am able to understand the application fee under 2. Submit Halal application online (CO4 Halal Certification). 2.06 rating was also given for iv. I can understand the needs for using Malaysia Halal Certificate and Halal Logo under 5. Accept application result (CO4 Halal Certification). Overall, these ratings are higher compared to the others. Interestingly, this description scored the highest on Exit Survey (4.73). This shows that participants acknowledged some understanding of the Malaysia Halal Certificate and Halal Logo. Most participants have some background in food science and technology, so it is highly relatable to the halal subject taught in the course. Maybe some emphasis was given to this topic; hence higher rating was established.  In contrast, the least rating is iv. I am able to explain the Halal Assurance Management System establishment process (4.22) under 1. Establish Halal Assurance Management System Manual (CO1 Halal Manual and Record Administration). Different companies and schemes may need different management systems. Hence this task could be arduous and challenging.

*2.4      The enhancement and outcome of the halal executive training*

It was observed that all rates increased in the exit survey. The research was based on primary data acquired through structured questionnaires from 35 respondents. The program's effectiveness was assessed by asking whether the training's content was adequate to meet demand. The level of understanding of the content and likelihood of skill application in the professional sector, were used to measure the benefits and utilisation of the learning. The study discovered that the levels of relevance and knowledge, skill, and attitude growth were high.

*2.4.1   CO1: Halal manual and record administration*

It is of utmost importance that halal executives can establish and implement the Halal Assurance Management System Manual for their companies. The general principles of the Halal Assurance Management System Manual, a component of the Malaysian Halal Management System 2020, are summarised as Figure 1.
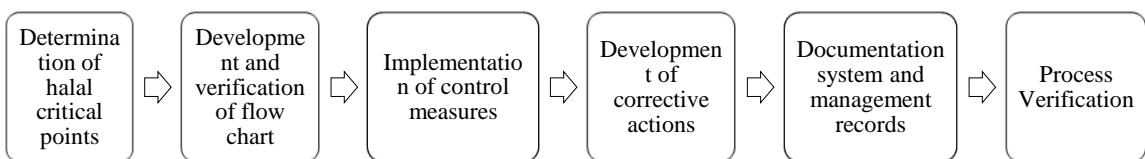


Figure 1: General principles of the halal management system (JAKIM, 2012), Malaysian Halal Management System (2020), HACCP (1997))

Identifying the critical halal point (HCP) is the first step in establishing Halal Assurance Management System (HAS). HCP is a critical step in the development of HAS. The Halal Critical Point (HCP) is a point in the process flow where actions can be taken to eliminate failures to comply with Shariah criteria. To maintain the integrity of the production and halalness of the product, the HAS plan is built around the HCP. This is a serious responsibility to be taken, and an excellent halal executive needs to accomplish this with integrity (Jais, 2020).

*2.4.2   CO2: Internal halal committee*

Under CO2, a halal executive must be able to develop a halal policy, form an internal halal committee (IHC), manage IHC meetings and implement halal training programs for the staff. An IHC supports the HAS system. IHCs that are dysfunctional render the HAS system outmoded and ineffectual. The members of the committee must be well-versed on halal issues. IHC recommendations, particularly those relating to NCR, must be provided to higher-ranking management for rapid action on topics such as the company's halal policy, management, and potential costs. Halal training for IHC members must be updated regularly (Jais, 2020). Therefore, apart from being knowledgeable, a halal executive must be proficient and proactive in carrying out their tasks. The halal executive must also know their colleagues and roles in the company to understand IHC members' competencies and selection criteria.

*2.4.3   CO3: Halal quality assurance*

Next, a halal executive must be able to describe the products and/or services manufacturing process, facilitate endorsement of flow diagram by IHC, establish Halal Control Point (HCP), establish verification process, establish traceability system, establish the management procedure of recall of products and obtain approval of verification procedure. Although these steps were taught during the course, and hands-on

activities were done to complement and deepen participant's understanding of the topic, the real deal is when halal executives return to their companies and implement the knowledge they have gained.

A flow chart must be created for the entire halal supply chain and production flow. Each step in the flowchart should be compared to the actual process to ensure all necessary steps are included. The IHC will use the flowcharts to identify any possible risk of haram contamination. Next, the creation and implementation of control measures are also crucial. If any haram risk is found in the process flow chart, the IHC will take corrective measures to avoid the haram risk from occurring. In addition, the correction plan must consider the current halal standard and Shariah rules. IHC too, will guarantee that appropriate corrective action is implemented and documented, ready to be presented to certifying bodies and audited if necessary. Different products must be manufactured before and throughout the ratification process. The final step in implementing HAS is ensuring that all aspects of the Halal Assurance plan are carried out correctly and effectively by the Halal Standard and Shariah law. HAS verification is split into two categories: i. HAS activity verification to ensure that all actions are completed appropriately. ii. HAS system verification confirms that the system is comprehensive and effective in meeting the HAS goal. Process validation is carried out to guarantee that the criteria developed at HCP are effective and meet Shariah requirements (Jais, 2020). Figure 2 shows a diagram depicting the process of educating/training Halal executives, the environment supporting the system, and the program's outcomes to the stakeholders.

### 2.4.4   CO4: Halal certification and CO5: Halal internal audit facilitation

It is well known that halal certification requires various preparation and documentations in place. This would be another task of a halal executive, including preparing documents for application for Malaysia Halal Certification, submitting Halal application online, facilitating the on-site audit based on audit scope, preparing feedback on audit findings/NCR, accepting halal application results and maintain halal post compliance. Additionally, halal executives must be able to manage halal audit programs and liaise with auditors and auditees. Any non-conformance must be documented and described in an NCR, and the halal executive must subsequently take corrective action. Resubmit the completed halal certification application once the disciplinary action has been performed and all requirements have been met is crucial. The final step in the halal certification procedure is to apply for approval to the Malaysia Halal Certification Panel (Muhammad et al., 2020). Interestingly, only halal executives of the respective companies could continuously check all manufacturing processes to determine whether they are meeting halal regulations or not (Mokhtar, 2021). Due to the challenging tasks that require high commitment, halal executive training is tailored to serve all these purposes and equip the halal executives well.

## 3.    Participant's opinion after halal executive training

To further explore the training outcome, further probes were conducted to gauge the participants' current opinions a few months after they had attended the training program. Five (5) Informants responded to the questions through WhatsApp communication. Questions focused on their feelings and the usefulness of the training to their current job. All answers were received in Malay and later transcribed and translated into the English language. Thematic analyses were conducted to understand informants' patterns, similarities, and differences. Based on the research, three main themes emerged: New Insights into Halal Industry, Better Halal Documentation and Halal Certification Preparation.

### 3.1    New insights and perspectives about halal industry

In the post-training, it is identified that informants gauge a new view of the halal industry. Where before the training they understand limits to certain products, especially foods. These are essential elements where it helps to align understanding and eliminate misconception about the scope of the Halal Industry. According to Informant B:

*"I discovered that halal is not only on food, but on other things including cosmetics, daily necessities and even transportation. Apart from that, I can also get hands-on how to apply for halal from beginning to end. Being able to find out the details of things that some people may have overlooked."* – Informant B

Similarly, to Informant B, Informant D indicates that the knowledge gathered, and method used in training give her a new spectrum in understanding the situation that those who have experienced in the industry further transferred through this training. This is based on the following remarks:

*"Post halal training helps to increase the knowledge of executive halal because there are many modules done as group activities. For me, when the training is done that way, again together with people who have been involved in the industry for a long time can give a little bit of an overview of other industries that also require halal certification other than the food industry."* – Informant D

### 3.2    *Better at halal document and certification preparation*

The second theme that emerged from the interview is focused on better ability in handling document preparation. This is a very focused skill which indicates that the training is not only understanding on concept or theory of the halal industry but also touches on the technical skills in screening the specific documents and processes that are critical in ensuring the overall activities within the Halal supply chain is smooth. Three of the informants below shared a similar perspective about how they gathered better at Halal document and certification preparation.

*"I can <u>better examine each document</u> to meet the requirements to apply for a Halal certificate and be able to make improvements in the factory. I was able to ensure that every activity in the factory was recorded and documented for future reference and facilitate the traceability of every product produced."* - Informant A

*"In my opinion, training like this is very helpful to me in my work, especially when my company wants to apply for halal certification for our process plant. About that, through this training, I can manage the application for the certificate smoothly, for example, making a building layout plan, documentation and others in the process of obtaining a halal certificate."* - Informant C

*"I learned a lot about HALAL, especially in terms of auditing and the HALAL system of a company. Now I have just been appointed as a HALAL EXECUTIVE in a small company and must be applying what I have learned during the course into my job scope"* - Informant E

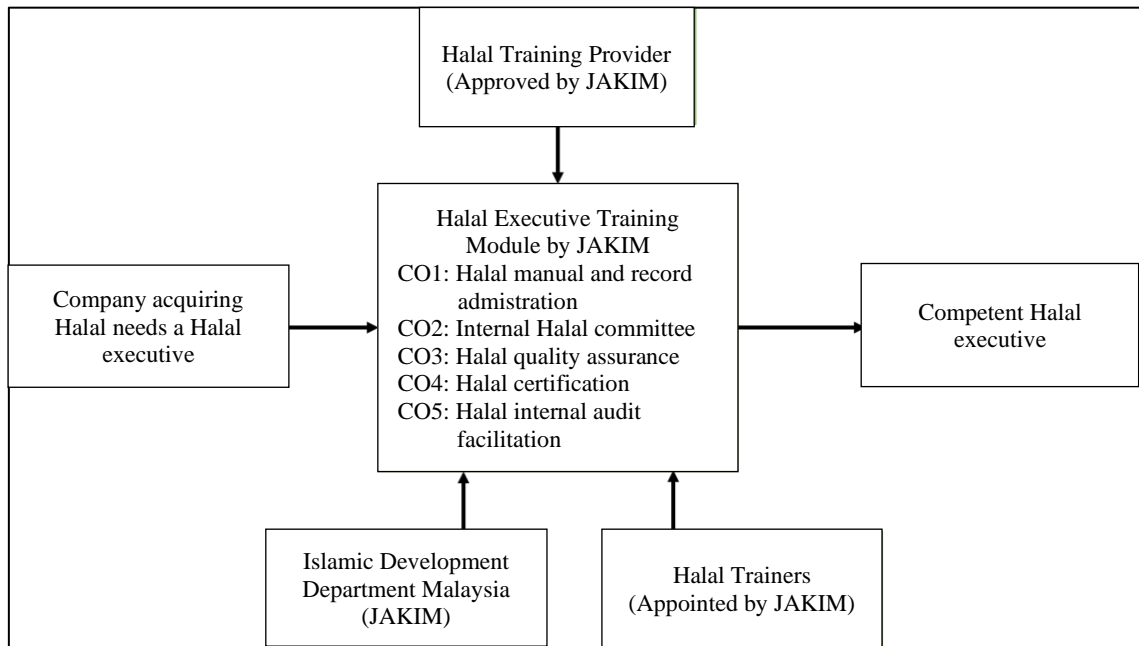Figure 2: The process of educating/training Halal executives, the environment supporting the system, and the program's outcomes to the stakeholders.

## 4.    Conclusion

This study highlights the responsibilities of a halal executive and the outcomes of the recently organised halal executive training according to participants' self-assessment via the entrance and exit survey. In the halal executive training, a lot of course outline (CO) needed to be accomplished. These subjects are based on various obligations of a halal executive in a company. All knowledge gained during the training should be ample to facilitate the halal executives in their field, including in halal logistics and supply chain. This paper summarised the knowledge acquired during training and the halal executive training program's positive influence in supporting the halal food business in guaranteeing an excellent halal supply chain. After completing the program, three themes were gauged: new insights and perspective about the halal industry, better Halal documentation and halal certification preparation. This paper could give some expectations of newly appointed halal executives, companies hiring new halal executives, and trainers to improve their performance.

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## Conflict of interest statement

The authors agree that this research was conducted without any self-benefits, commercial or financial conflicts and declare the lack of conflicting interests with the funders.

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**Authors' contributions**

Nina Naquiah and Siti Aimi Sarah gathered the data, wrote and revised the article. Mohd Nasir Taib conceptualised the central research idea. Both Siti Aimi Sarah and Aishah Bujang acquired the research fundings and supervised research progress. Abdul Khabir anchored the review and revisions on qualitative data. Mohd Nasir Taib approved the article submission.