

**HALAL TRAINING: ISSUES AND CHALLENGES FROM TRAINERS' PERSPECTIVES IN HALAL PRODUCTS RESEARCH INSTITUTE (HPRI)
LATIHAN HALAL: ISU DAN CABARAN DARI PERSPEKTIF PELATIH DI
INSTITUT PENYELIDIKAN PRODUK HALAL (LPPH)**

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Abstract

Halal education is an essential requirement to increase understanding and awareness among the community and industrial players about halal concepts. The development of the halal industry in Malaysia and on a global level has shown a lot of positive growth every year. Involvement from various agencies such as JAKIM, HDC, and private halal consultants and training centers have helped a lot in terms of education development and providing training modules as a guideline to conduct halal training. However, halal trainers often encounter some participants with different educational backgrounds while conducting halal training, which eventually affects the training delivery and the quality of the training itself. Therefore, the purpose of this research is to analyse the issues and challenges faced by the trainers during halal training. This study adopted a qualitative method where the data was obtained by an interview session with halal trainers from HPRI. Next, the data obtained were analysed using thematic analysis. The findings show that the issues and challenges faced by halal trainers can be categorised into several criteria and factors such as language barrier, misunderstanding, and participants' educational background. This research aims to contribute to the development of halal training in halal education in the future.

Keywords

Issues, challenges, halal education, halal training, trainer

Abstrak

Pendidikan halal merupakan satu keperluan asas untuk meningkatkan kefahaman dan kesedaran komuniti dan pemain industri berkenaan konsep halal. Perkembangan industri halal di Malaysia dan di peringkat antarabangsa telah menunjukkan pertumbuhan yang positif setiap tahun. Penglibatan agensi-agensi seperti JAKIM, HDC, dan syarikat perunding halal swasta dan pusat latihan halal telah banyak membantu dari segi perkembangan pendidikan dan penyediaan modul latihan sebagai garis panduan dalam latihan halal. Walaubagaimanapun, pelatih halal

selalu berdepan dengan dengan peserta daripada latar belakang pendidikan yang berbeza semasa memberikan latihan halal, di mana ia telah memberi kesan kepada kualiti dan penyampaian latihan. Oleh yang demikian, tujuan kajian ini dijalankan adalah untuk menganalisa isu dan cabaran yang dihadapi oleh pelatih halal semasa penyampaian latihan halal. Kajian ini menggunakan kaedah kualitatif di mana data diperolehi daripada sesi temubual bersama pelatih halal daripada IPPH. Data tersebut kemudian dianalisa menggunakan analisis tematik. Hasil kajian menunjukkan isu dan cabaran yang dihadapi oleh pelatih halal boleh dikategorikan kepada beberapa faktor seperti halangan bahasa, salah faham dan latar belakang pendidikan peserta. Kajian ini diharapkan dapat menyumbang kepada peningkatan latihan dalam pendidikan halal pada masa akan datang.

Kata kunci

Isu, cabaran, pendidikan halal, latihan halal, pelatih

1. Introduction

The word "education" means to teach, and it is synonym with the word training (Simpson and Weiner, 1989). While halal education is the knowledge of the religious aspects of Islam, including halal, haram and tayyib. The halal education system is a backbone in the development of a nation. This system provides the knowledge and skills of the various parties to drive the economy and prosper the country. To increase awareness and a clear understanding of halal knowledge, the need for halal education can be done through awareness programs and training for consumers and entrepreneurs of the halal industry (Jamaludin, Ramli, Latif, & Bahli, 2013).

The requirement of halal education is apparent to fulfil the demands of awareness and understanding of halal knowledge and the halalan tayyiban in ensuring halal products and goods are guaranteed to be halal, and consumers are not easily fooled by the sellers that are using fake halal logos. Halal training institutions were established to deliver the education purpose amongst the community and halal industry players, consisting of non-governmental bodies, institutions of higher learning, and private training institutions. Each of these institutions has its vision and mission, organization, training program, and modules related to halal. The primary purpose of establishing each of these institutions is to provide education and training to individuals and entrepreneurs of the halal industry interested in venture into halal fields such as the Halal Executive course.

Halal training is one of the general requirements under the Malaysia Halal Assurance System (HAS). There are two (2) types of training that need to be equipped, especially for those individuals who are involved and interested to join in halal industry which are: (1) halal awareness training and (2) halal competency training. The halal training must be provided according to the syllabus by the competent authority, which is the Department of Islamic Development Malaysia (JAKIM) and organized by a halal training provider certified by Halal Professional Board (HPB) (MHMS, 2020). The duration of the halal training and education program varies. This is because of the different modules that cover the programs. The minimum duration is from 2 days and the maximum is six months (Mohammad Aizat et al., 2015). The module should cover several scopes but not limited to the list as shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Types of halal education modules

No	Types of Halal Education Modules
1	The understanding of Sharia and fatwa
2	Malaysia Standards
3	Manual Prosedur Pensijilan Halal Malaysia (MPPHM)
4	Malaysia Halal Management System (MHMS)
5	Related Halal Law and Regulation
6	Critical Ingredient (If related)

Source: Author (2021)

The halal certification authority does not offer a halal education training program. This is because it functions as the integrity authority in charge of confirming and providing halal certificates to the applicants, and it is not based on economic profits. It is best to avoid any conflict of interest under the certification authority (Mohammad et al., 2015). As a result, many institutions offered halal education, whether in universities, private sectors, or non-government organisations (NGO) existed in Malaysia.

The first institute of higher education to develop halal research and services center was Halal Products Research Institute (HPRI) in Universiti Putra Malaysia. The institution was established to provide halal education and training opportunities besides conducting research on halal products. Among the programs and training modules conducted by HPRI in the Halal Executive course is the “Halal Executive Program: Sharia and Science”. The program aims to raise awareness of halal concepts and issues based on the integrative approach of Shariah knowledge and applied science.

However, to develop practical halal education knowledge, the halal trainers often face handling halal education and training because they will encounter participants from different educational and experience backgrounds. The most vital questions are who will receive the training, their level of existing knowledge on the subject, their learning style, and who will conduct the training (HR Guide, 2013). The trainer will also face a variety of challenges from participants who have no basic knowledge about halal. This is because they need to deal with and manage the different levels of people management, such as development and training (Mohammad et al., 2015). The trainer also needs to know how to handle situations where participants undergoing halal training can give their full attention while training is being implemented.

The issues and challenges mentioned are vital to be highlighted and resolved to improve the halal training efficiency. Therefore, this study was conducted to analyse the issues and challenges halal trainers face during halal training so that proper action plans can be formulated and implemented in future to ensure the conveyance of halal education is effective.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Halal Training and Education

Halal training and education can be divided into three (3) categories which are: (1) food and beverages; (2) non-food products (pharmaceuticals, healthcare products, medical devices, cosmetics, and toiletries) and (3) services (logistics, packaging, marketing,

printing and electronic media, travel and tourism). There are needs for Sharia and technical management education and training that comply with standards set by the authorities such as JAKIM and the Department of Standards Malaysia (Syamsul, Mashitoh, & Yusop, 2013).

Today, the ultimate success of the halal industry depends on the managements' ability to combine the education of Sharia and technical management (Hashim & Shariff, 2016). Currently, the global halal industry, halal companies, and human capital working in various areas such as abattoirs, manufacturing food products, food outlets, pharmaceutical, cosmetics and healthcare products, and the logistics industry require specialized halal training and development to increase their business competitiveness (Mohd Shariff, 2014). The halal training and education bring more positive impacts. This is because the training could help the halal industry by ensuring the halal integrity and quality produced and offered by the industry player are elevated to the level of standard to equivalent with the requirements and in excellent conditions.

3. Problem Statements

Past studies have shown many research studies related to halal training in terms of module development, the requirement, and the importance of halal training to the halal industry. Some of the issues are when halal training and education cannot provide new skills set in halal education to match with the development of halal industry (Jamaludin, Kamarudin & Ramli, 2015). An increasing number of halal research and training is done by the universities and training providers (Ahmad et al., 2018; Halal Dialog Session with Industry, 2014; Hashim & Shariff, 2016). However, it is hard to monitor structured halal training programs provided by the Halal Professional Board. Furthermore, halal training programs/ modules/ courses vary in content and syllabus, and training durations (Halal Dialog Session, 2014). Another issue is that the level of discussion and coverage of depth and duration of halal training is inconsistent and insufficient to finish (Hashim & Shariff, 2016).

Meanwhile, from another perspective related to the challenges of halal education, the result of training programs that do not meet the expectations and needs of participants may be lower commitment, negative attitude change, and an increase in turnover. This is due to the inexperienced and different entry-level participants (Brum, 2007). However, the issues and challenges that focus on the trainer's perspective are not discussed frequently, primarily related to halal education and training issues and challenges from the trainers' perspectives.

4. Research Methodology

In this study, a qualitative method (Kothari, 2004) is used to determine the issues and challenges faced by the trainers during halal training. To obtain rich information or experience about the issue willingly, a semi-structured interview (Rubin and Rubin, 2011; DiCicco-Bloom) was conducted with the experts who are directly involved in halal training as trainers through purposive sampling technique. The sampling frame of this study consists of two trainers at the HPRI as they are directly involved with the halal training. Through interviews, factual data can be obtained in exploring the perceptions and experiences (Forman & Damschroder, 2007) of the trainer to find out the issues

and challenges faced by the trainers during halal training. The interviews were held on 14 May 2020 by the researchers themselves through a telephone call. The face-to-face interview could not be done as Malaysia was in the Movement Control Order (MCO) at that time. The interview process lasted 60 to 90 minutes and the interview questions were constructed to identify the issues and challenges faced by trainers in conducting halal training.

The interview questions were validated by expertise in the field who the academicians in Halal Management are. In acquiring a rigorous and meaningful inference, the data from the two interviews were analysed using narrative analysis (Polkinghorne, 1995). This method gathers and analyses information from interviews according to the research objectives. Then, the analysis will be classified into themes to answer the research objective (Lieblich, Tuval Mashiach, & Zilber, 1998).

5. Results

The findings show some issues and problems faced by halal trainers while conducting training for halal executive participants. Three (3) significant issues were highlighted by the informants.

5.1 Language Barrier

“There were a few times when the participant is not a Malaysian, even though we have explained that the training course for Halal Executive is only valid for Malaysia Halal Certification only, some participants from Pakistan or Jordan, insisted to take the course because he has paid the fee. As trainers, we need to address the participant and convey the training in English, obviously in the language that he understands. However, other local participants might face a problem to understand, thus the training needs to be repeated in Bahasa Melayu”.

(Informant 1)

Among the issues and problems are the trainers at HPRI have to accept participants in halal executive courses from overseas, such as Pakistan, Jordan, and other countries as well. This has caused a problem in terms of the language used in delivering the training, in which the trainer faces a little constraint to communicate with participants from overseas. This is due to some participants from overseas may not speak and understand English well enough (Azzwan & Azhar, 2017), causing every word spoken by the trainers cannot be understood. In addition, in terms of the explanations of the modules being discussed, it is also quite limited if foreign participants could not understand the content and presentations provided by the trainers. According to Othman & Jamaludin (2021), conveying Halal education amongst them had not yielded a tangible result due to language differences (Othman & Jamaludin, 2021).

“For me, it is the language factor that we have constraints. This is because I have to teach the participant in English. However, other local participants could hardly understand English, so I need to repeat in Malay”.

(Informant 2)

Informant 2 also mentioned the same problem as Informant 1. The informant also pointed out that when foreign participants joined in halal training, the trainers had to

use English as an intermediary language to ensure that participants understood what was being said. Suppose a participant from Malaysia cannot understand what is conveyed by the trainer in the English language. In that case, the trainer must repeat again in the Malay language so that all participants can understand. This will eventually be causing repetition and the training will be more time consuming.

5.2 Misunderstanding

The interviews also revealed that issues that arose among trainers were part of the participants misunderstood the Halal Executive certificate. They thought that this Halal Executive certificate could be used at all levels in the halal industry, for example to be a halal auditor and halal consultant. These participants also thought that if they obtained this Halal Executive certificate, they could open a consultant company to teach the public about the concept of halal.

“Some participant thinks that if they obtain the Halal Executive certificate, they can conduct a halal audit or start up a halal consulting firm. However, little did they realized that they are not yet competent enough. They need to realise that if they have no working experience in the related field, it is difficult to actually advise on getting a halal certificate.”

(Informant 1)

“The problem is when that person has no expertise in any field, be it agriculture or food manufacturing, but he wanted to be a halal consultant! To be a consultant, he needs to be in the field himself for at least 5 or 6 years to fully understand and experience all sort of things.”

(Informant 2)

According to both informants, Halal Executive certificates can only be used to carrying out duty as Halal Executive, which is ensuring the companies adhere to the guidelines and standards so that all production operations are kept in compliance with the SOPs set out in MPPHM 2020. According to informants, each scheme presented in the halal executive course is in general form as each scheme and standard used in halal certification and halal application is different. For example, schemes related to the provision of food and beverages must meet MS1500 food-related standards, if transportation-related schemes or pharmacies are required to meet transportation and pharmacy standards. In addition, to become a consultant in the halal field they need to have experience working in the industry and there must be exposure to the industry they are interested in. These experiences and expertise are crucial to ensuring that individuals who want to become halal consultants are familiar with the situation and work environment in the halal industry.

5.3 Various Educational Background

In halal training programs, the problem that a trainer often faces is that they have to deal with participants who come from various backgrounds. For example, in one training session, there were participants among university students and workers from the industry. However, participants with no basic halal knowledge might encounter a few problems because they know nothing on halal requirements that need to be met in the halal application.

"This halal executive course modules are prepared by JAKIM, in which the sequence of modules needs to be complied with. For example, JAKIM has set that the module Halal Auditing need to be the last module taught after other four modules. So, we at halal training centers just need to develop teaching materials based on JAKIM guidelines for the content of the course. This means that our scope is just what JAKIM allowed or just what JAKIM outlined in this course."

(Informant 1)

Based on the interview, Informant 1 did mention on the content of the training courses are from JAKIM. Therefore, whenever there are participants with no basic halal knowledge, the trainer has no choice but to still carry on the training with the teaching materials. They cannot simplify the modules because it is standardized by JAKIM. The real challenge will be on how to convey the training so that all participants understood the content of the training. Informant 2 gave literally similar answer as Informant 1:

"If the participant comes from food and beverage industry, he can relate to his working experience in the factory so minimal explanation is fine; if the participant is a fresh graduate or student in related field, he can recall on what he has learnt in his study so he will easily understand the contents of the training. However, when the participant has no experience in halal industry and no basic halal knowledge, it will be a challenge for the trainer. The way trainer conveying the training might be a little different."

(Informant 2)

According to the information above, a halal trainer is someone who is experienced in halal education and halal training programs. The results of the interview with informants found that there are several methods to handle this issue about the problems of participants that have no basic knowledge of halal who attend halal executive courses to attend training. The method practised by the trainer for participants to understand the concept of halal in the subject being taught is to explain that halal can be the main aspect of daily human life. However, the approach needs to be different for these participants, as the engagement will be different. These two data shows that when participants come from different educational backgrounds, the outcome of the training might not be well conveyed because of the difference in their understanding level. It shows that the trainers play an important role in addressing all participants with different backgrounds and must answer questions from various types of halal industries.

6. Discussion

The study shows that the main problems halal trainers face while delivering the halal training are language barrier between the trainer and participants, misunderstandings of the participants on the outcome of the training, and participants' various educational backgrounds.

According to Bourquob (2018), there are two forms of communication: verbal communication and non-verbal communication. In training delivery, both forms of communication are involved. However, effective two-way communication becomes even more complicated when a language barrier occurs (Ramlan et al., 2021). The objective of the training is supposed to transfer knowledge from the trainer to the participants. However, the language barrier will affect the efficiency of the training; thus,

the transfer of knowledge will be even poorer. Through the interview conducted, both informants agreed that the language barrier due to the foreign participants' mother tongue is not Bahasa Melayu or English. The findings are supported by a study by Abdullah (2009), in which the language barrier has impacted training efficiency due to poor communication between trainer and participants. What native speakers often do not realize is that frequently it is not the other person's accent but their own way of speaking that creates the most significant barriers to effective communication (Berardo & Deardorff, 2012; Javadpour & Samiei, 2017). Thus, language barriers can easily impact work performance because messages can easily be misconstrued (Ramlan et al., 2021).

The informant's second issue is the participants' misunderstanding in terms of the training outcome. Most participants thought they could be halal consultants to other companies when they successfully obtained the Halal Executive Certificate. According to the MPPHM (2020), the Halal Executive Certificate obtained through halal training from Halal Training Providers registered under the Halal Professional Board (HPB) JAKIM will make the person to be credible enough to work as a Halal Executive or Internal Halal Auditor. Therefore, participants should be aware of the training outcome before registering for the training.

The last issue highlighted by the informants is participants' various educational backgrounds. Educational background of the participant is the prior knowledge they have. During halal training, it is vital to the trainer to determine the participants' educational background because it will help the trainer choose the best method to deliver the training and determine the training pace. According to Tobias (1994), prior knowledge has long been considered the most important factor influencing learning. If the participants possess prior knowledge of halal, it will be easier for the trainer to deliver the training. The real challenge is when the participant has little knowledge of the subject matter. This statement is supported by Hailikari et al. (2008), whereby the instructors had a clearer impression of the participants' prior-knowledge level, which helped them adapt their teaching to the needs of the learner.

7. Conclusion

Halal education is a key aspect in giving the public an understanding and awareness of the importance of halal concepts in daily life. This halal education is also essential for all groups, especially those working in the food production industry. For the industrial player group, it is crucial for them to know about the halal concept so that the products produced are quality, clean and safe. It also ensures that halal integrity can be maintained during the product development process. In halal education, the halal trainer is the person who plays a role in conveying the knowledge of halal concepts. They are the individuals responsible for teaching halal concepts and halal integrity to all parties such as the public, students, industrial players and so on. Through this research, three main issues faced by halal trainers were identified: the language barrier between the trainer and participants, misunderstandings of the participants on the outcome of the training, and participants' various educational backgrounds. Therefore, the issues and challenges faced by halal trainers need to be well addressed and solved to ensure the conveyance of halal education is effective. Thus the halal training delivery will improve and help efficient knowledge transfer.

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