| e-ISSN: 2805-4741 | http://iiecons.usim.edu.my

A TALENT DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK FOR HALAL INDUSTRY IN MALAYSIA: HUMAN CAPITAL RESOURCES THEORY PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract**:** *This study introduces a comprehensive Talent Development Framework for the Halal industry in Malaysia, grounded in the Human Capital Resources (HCR) Theory. As Malaysia positions itself as a global leader in the Halal economy, there is a growing need to professionalise and structure the development of Halal Executives—key personnel responsible for ensuring Halal compliance, certification, and integrity across the supply chain. Employing a qualitative research design, this study integrates data from 70 job advertisements and semi-structured interviews with stakeholders including JAKIM, HDC, SMEs, and certified Halal Executives. The findings reveal significant inconsistencies in job scopes, training support, and career progression, especially within SMEs. The proposed framework outlines a five-level professional pathway from Halal Technician to Chief Halal Officer, emphasizing the elevation of individual KSAOs to unit-level strategic resources. Practical policy recommendations include standardised job descriptions, modular training programs, structured mentoring, and a national Halal talent registry. This framework serves as a foundational model for aligning workforce development with Malaysia's national Halal strategy.*

Keywords: Halal industry, talent development, Human Capital Resources Theory, halal executives

1. Introduction

With over 60% of Malaysia's population being Muslim, adherence to Halal standards is not only a religious obligation but a critical national agenda. The Department of Islamic Development Malaysia (JAKIM) is the leading certification authority ensuring all certified products comply with Islamic principles. Other supporting institutions, including the Institute of Halal Research and Management (IHRAM) and the Halal Industry Development Corporation (HDC), have been instrumental in providing Halal-related training to nurture competent Halal talent and meet the growing demands of the global Halal market (Rafida & Rahim, 2020).

Halal certification boosts consumer confidence and expands market access for both Muslim and non-Muslim business owners. To ensure Halal compliance throughout the supply chain, certified Halal professionals are required to monitor and document all manufacturing and logistics processes. As defined by the Manual Procedure for Malaysia Halal Certification (Department of Islamic Development Malaysia, 2014), the Halal certification process involves

three professional groups: Halal Auditors, Halal Executives, and the Halal Certification Panel. Beyond production, the Halal integrity must also be preserved through warehousing, transportation, and distribution activities. This 'farm-to-fork' philosophy highlights the strategic importance of Halal talents in maintaining operational compliance and trust in certified products (Shahar et al., 2019).

A growing challenge in Malaysia's Halal ecosystem, particularly among SMEs, is the lack of human capital expertise to sustain and scale Halal operations. Therefore, there is a need for a structured and inclusive talent development framework that not only addresses certification processes but also prepares Halal professionals—especially Halal Executives—with the competencies and strategic outlook to navigate this complex, multi-sectoral industry. As highlighted in the Talent Management Workshop 2024, held in Luxembourg and organised by EIASM, Halal Executives play a central role in linking individual KSAOs (Knowledge, Skills, Abilities, and Other characteristics) to unit-level outcomes. Their function supports the emergence of strategic Human Capital Resources that can contribute to organisational competitiveness (Hasan & Mokhtar, 2024).

1.1 Halal Executives as Talent

In line with JAKIM's certification requirements, Halal Executives are appointed to oversee and implement Halal Assurance Systems (HAS) within organizations, especially in medium and large enterprises. For micro and small enterprises, the appointment of a Halal Supervisor and a Muslim employee is required instead (Idris et al., 2018). The Halal Executive is primarily responsible for managing Halal certification processes, training, compliance, and ensuring alignment with Islamic principles (Muhammad et al., 2019). A Halal Executive must be a Muslim, with either a formal qualification in Islamic or food-related fields or a minimum of five years of experience in Halal management. They must also be certified by the Halal Professional Board (HPB). Basic IT skills are essential due to digital submission systems like MYeHALAL, formerly known as e-Halal (Muhammad et al., 2019). The role of a Halal Executive minimizes dependency on external certification agencies and empowers internal teams, such as the Internal Halal Committee (IHC), to ensure continuous compliance with Halalan Toyyiban principles (Nuratifah et al., 2019). Acting as the organization's liaison with certification authorities, Halal Executives help maintain integrity, handle disputes, and ensure consistent application of Halal standards (Jais, 2019).

1.2 Halal Industry in Malaysia

In Islam, Muslims are obligated to follow the Islamic rules in every aspect of their lives as Islam itself means submitting to the will of God (Allah) and to His Law (Soebahar et al. 2021). In the Qur'an in Surah Al Maidah verse 88, it states: "And eat of the clean and lawful things that Allah has given you and fear have piety towards Allah in whom you believe." Therefore, Muslims are obligated to consume Halal products in their daily lives. Halal refers to the teachings of the Quran and Prophet Muhammad's exemplary conduct as recorded in the Hadith (Samori, Ishak, & Kassan, 2014; Yusuf, Shukor, & Bustamam, 2016). In the context of food products, there are several criteria in Islam that constitute the food as Halal food. The ingredients of the food and drinks must be from the animals or plants that are not forbidden in Islam, and the process must follow the Islamic guidelines and not derived from sinful acts of bribery or stealing (Soebahar et al. 2021).

The majority of the 7.2 billion world population have accepted the trend of consuming halal products. The Muslim population especially in the developing countries is growing at the fastest rate including in the United States, the United Kingdom and European countries. Thus, the Halal markets are gaining popularity all around the world. These days, the concept of Halal market is not only exclusive to Muslims but it has also permeates among non-Muslim consumers due to their growing belief in the cleanliness and safety of halal products (Elias et al. 2017). Similarly stated by Soebahar et al (2021), nowadays Halal products have even seized the attention of millennial customers. Thus, non-Muslim business owners also compete with their Muslim counterparts to penetrate into the Halal market. One of the major reasons of the existence of Halal markets is because of the Muslims' obligation to eat from the Halal sources. The Halal global market is not only limited to food products but also other products, such as cosmetics, pharmaceuticals and toiletries and also to other fields like finance and tourism (Soltanian et al. 2015; Soebahar et al. 2021).

Malaysia is well known as a Muslim country although Malaysians are generally of different races and religions. In the Halal industry, Malaysia is one of the greatest exporting countries of Halal products with a strong support from the government and agencies such as JAKIM, Halal Development Corporation and Malaysia External Trade Development Corporation (MATRADE). In addition, Malaysia has invested millions of dollars to attract and strengthen the Halal industry players, especially local manufacturers including the small and medium enterprises (Elias et al. 2017). In the manufacturing sector, SMEs are defined as enterprises with sales turnover not exceeding RM50 million or the number of full-time employees not exceeding 200. Meanwhile, the sales turnover does not exceed RM20 million or number of full-time employees not exceeding 75 in service and other sectors. SMEs cover 98.5% of the total business community in Malaysia which contributes more than one-third of the Malaysian economy (Elias et al. 2019).

1.3 Halal Certification Procedure in Malaysia

With reference to the Manual Procedure for Halal Certification (Department of Islamic Development Malaysia, 2014), the process of Halal certification involves three experts namely Halal Auditors, Halal Executives and Halal Certification Panel. Halal Auditors are the qualified persons whose background is Islamic or food technology. All the Halal applications from the Halal Executives must be passed to these Halal Auditors first, and they will review the documents, record the fee payments, conduct an onsite audit at the premise, prepare reports and submit them to the Halal Certification Panel for approval. Halal Executive is the person responsible in preparing all the documents needed for the Halal certificate application, monitoring the manufacturing process and providing training to all the workers involved in the manufacturing of the products. Besides, if any non-conformance is detected during the on-site audit, Halal Executive must record and do a corrective action.

Once the corrective action is done and all the requirements are met, the HE will re-submit the application to the Halal Auditors. Experts involved as the Halal Certification Panel are the Chairman, Secretary and two experts in shariah and technical committees. The contract in the Halal Certification Panel committee is for two years and can be renewed. The Halal Certification Panel is responsible for the final decision of the Halal certificate application, whether to accept or reject the application. They cannot be directly involved with the auditing and reviewing process to avoid bias (Muhammad et al. 2019).

There was no requirement for Halal Executive mentioned in the MS1500:2000 and MS1500:2004 until the requirement for Halal Executive was first addressed in the second revision of the Malaysian Halal food standards, the MS1500:2009 Halal Food - Production, Preparation, Handling and Storage – General Guidelines". The term "Halal Executive" was later removed from the "Management Responsibility" section and substituted with "Muslim Personnel" in the new revision of MS1500:2019. The Halal Executive was modelled from Clause 3.5.2, while the IHC was from Clause 3.4; Hence, the Halal Executive position is important in the halal certification process. Shariah Advisory Committee (SAC) and Clause 3.5.1 - Shariah Compliance Unit of the MS1900:2005 standards (Jais, 2019).

As mentioned and addressed in the Malaysian Halal food standard, Halal Executive plays an important role regarding the Halal requirements as it is the backbone of the Halal certification integrity. Only Halal Executives can monitor all the manufacturing processes regularly, whether they really meet the Halal requirements or not. Because the on-site audit by the Halal Auditors only takes place several times in a year depending on JAKIM, it is crucial to sustain and maintain the interests of halal talents (Halal Executives) across the halal industry by providing adequate training, rewards and promotion (Rafida & Rahim, 2020).

2. Research Design

To define the dimensions of a talent development framework for Halal Executives, this study adopts a qualitative exploratory approach. The methodology aligns with the basic qualitative design introduced by Merriam (2009), which supports context-specific data interpretation. The research followed a dyadic design to gather two perspectives: secondary data from job advertisements and primary data from semi-structured interviews.

From February 2019 to May 2021, 70 Halal Executive job postings were collected via platforms such as JobStreet, Indeed, Facebook, and Joblum. These were coded and analyzed thematically using Microsoft Excel to extract key trends across job positions, descriptions, specifications, and company requirements.

Thematic patterns revealed recurring terms in job descriptions such as "monitor," "Internal Halal Committee," "training," "raw materials," "standards," "audit," and "Halal application." For job specifications, commonly cited criteria included: experience, Halal Executive certification, educational qualification (Diploma or higher), salary, and gender preferences.

In the second phase, semi-structured interviews were conducted with diverse stakeholders: CEOs of Halal-certified SMEs, officials from JAKIM, the Halal Industry Development Corporation (HDC), the Department of Skills Development under the Ministry of Human Resources, and Halal Executives from across Malaysia—including Sabah and Sarawak. These insights allowed triangulation of perspectives on Halal talent expectations, certification challenges, and organisational needs.

All interview data were analyzed using grounded theory, consistent with Merriam's (2009) guidance. This method allowed emergent themes to be inductively developed, ensuring that the proposed framework reflects the authentic experiences and challenges of stakeholders within the Halal industry ecosystem.

Findings from these multiple sources helped contextualize and validate relevant theoretical perspectives, specifically shaping the proposed Talent Development Framework grounded in Human Capital Resources Theory.

3. Research Findings

3.1 Phase 1: Job Advertisement Analysis

The first phase of the study involved analysing 70 job advertisements for the Halal Executive position, collected from multiple job platforms including LinkedIn, JobStreet, Indeed, Facebook, and Joblum, between February 2019 and May 2021. This analysis offered critical insights into industry expectations, role design, and competency demands.

One of the most notable findings is the multi-functionality expected of Halal Executives. Approximately 49% of job advertisements combined the Halal Executive role with other operational responsibilities such as Quality Assurance, Hygiene, Regulatory Affairs, and Project Coordination. This indicates a trend of role consolidation, particularly in SMEs, where resource constraints may lead to assigning multiple responsibilities to a single employee.

In terms of job specifications, the majority of the advertisements required applicants to possess at least a diploma in Halal-related fields such as food science, Islamic studies, or biotechnology. A significant proportion (43%) stipulated a minimum of one year of experience in Halal management, while 36% required applicants to hold a Halal Executive certification accredited by the Halal Professional Board (HPB). Interestingly, 34% of advertisements did not clearly outline qualification requirements, suggesting a gap in standardised hiring practices.

Thematic content analysis of job descriptions revealed several recurring responsibilities, including:

- Coordinating the Halal Assurance System (HAS)
- Leading the Internal Halal Committee (IHC)
- Monitoring the manufacturing process for Halal compliance
- Managing the application, renewal, and documentation of Halal certification
- Conducting internal training and audits related to Halal standards

These recurring themes indicate a relatively consistent expectation of operational, administrative, and compliance-related duties across the industry. However, interviews later revealed that the actual execution of these responsibilities varied widely depending on organisational readiness and managerial support.

Additionally, gender preferences, though not widespread, were observed in some listings. While 3% of employers preferred female candidates and 6% preferred male candidates, the majority did not specify gender. This observation underscores the need for promoting inclusive hiring practices in accordance with Islamic principles, which do not restrict Halal Executive roles based on gender (Jais, 2019).

3.2 Phase 2: Interview Insights

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with Halal Executives from across Malaysia, including Sabah and Sarawak, as well as with stakeholders from JAKIM, the Department of Skills Development, and the Halal Industry Development Corporation. These interviews provided deeper insights into lived experiences and industry-wide concerns.

Several Halal Executives expressed being overwhelmed by the breadth of their responsibilities. Many were required to manage not only Halal compliance but also food safety, procurement, and logistics. One respondent shared, "I know I'm expected to handle Halal certification, but I also manage procurement and food safety without clear separation. There's no defined track for promotion either. It's hard to see where I'm headed in this role." This highlights a major challenge in role clarity and professional development.

Another critical issue was the lack of structured training support, particularly for new entrants. Respondents noted that although certification was a hiring requirement, many employers did not provide sufficient onboarding or practical exposure. One respondent remarked, "We need structured mentorship. Fresh graduates are entering the industry without practical exposure. A short course or placement could help them understand real operations before they're left alone to manage audits or compliance."

Stakeholders from JAKIM and the Department of Skills Development echoed these concerns, citing an urgent need for national job standards and competency frameworks. They also noted the importance of formalising CPD opportunities, particularly in the context of evolving standards like MS1500.

Respondents across various roles advocated for better coordination between regulatory bodies and industry actors. Many suggested implementing national career ladders, standardising job scopes, and providing government incentives for Halal talent development.

In sum, the qualitative findings complement the job advertisement analysis by emphasising the systemic gaps in training, clarity, and recognition of Halal professionals. These insights substantiate the need for a coherent framework that defines roles, supports competency growth, and aligns stakeholder expectations across the Halal industry.

4. Contextualising Halal Executives' career development into Talent Management perspectives

4.1 Defining Halal Talent

The definition of "talent" varies across organisations and is often influenced by the nature of the job and the industry (Tansley, 2011). In the context of the Halal industry in Malaysia, a unique ecosystem has emerged where professional certification for Halal Executives is regulated by JAKIM. Once certified, these professionals are expected to apply their knowledge and skills within organisations seeking or maintaining Halal certification.

Given the critical role of Halal Executives and the nature of Halal operations, this study adopts an inclusive talent management approach—where all individuals involved in Halal

management, including Halal Executives, Halal Supervisors, and Halal Experts, are recognised as Halal talent (Hasan, 2023; Hasan & Saufie, 2021; Krishnan & Scullion, 2017; Valverde et al., 2013). This contrasts with exclusive models that focus only on high-potential individuals. In the SME context, inclusivity ensures greater retention, performance continuity, and learning diffusion across functional units.

It is important to highlight that inclusive talent practices, although beneficial at early stages, may reach a threshold where the associated costs outweigh the performance benefits—a phenomenon known as the "too-much-of-a-good-thing" effect (Hasan & Saufie, 2021). Therefore, the development of Halal Executives must be strategic and scalable to avoid redundancy, burnout, and inefficiencies.

Building on this foundation, we propose a contextual definition:

> "*Certified professional Halal talent possessing Knowledge, Skills, Abilities, and Other characteristics (KSAOs), which are elevated to unit-level contributions and potentially provide a competitive advantage in the market.*"

This definition is rooted in the Human Capital Resources Theory (Ployhart & Moliterno, 2011; Ployhart et al., 2014; Ray et al., 2023), which asserts that unit-level strategic advantages emerge from individuals' KSAOs when they are accessible and utilised by the unit.

4.2 KSAOs of Halal Executives

Halal Executives are entrusted with a wide range of responsibilities that require domain-specific knowledge, technical and managerial skills, and personal attributes that align with Islamic values and Halal compliance. Their core KSAOs are summarised below:

Knowledge:
- Halal and haram concepts (Shariah-based)
- Local and international Halal regulations (e.g., Trade Descriptions Act 2011)
- Malaysian Halal standards, certification manuals, and Halal Management System
- Scientific, process, and technical knowledge relevant to products/services
- SOP development and supply chain knowledge

Skills:
- Coordination and implementation of Halal Management Systems
- Verification of compliance and risk assessment
- Handling non-conformance and executing corrective actions
- Coaching and communication across departments
- Crisis management and audit preparedness

Attributes:
- High integrity, responsibility, and teamwork
- Halal awareness and forward thinking
- Organisational skills and document management
- Ethical conduct and non-disclosure of confidential information

These KSAOs serve as the foundation for talent development initiatives and are essential for transitioning individual capabilities into organisational resources.

4.3 Job Role Complexity and Mismatch

Analysis of job postings revealed that many Halal Executive positions are bundled with additional roles such as Quality Assurance, Regulatory Affairs, or Hygiene. This multitasking environment can cause role ambiguity and affect job satisfaction and performance (Hassan et al., 2015; Ramhit, 2019). Moreover, disparities in training and job clarity create a mismatch between expectations and deliverables.

Some companies fail to disclose proper job descriptions, leading to potential misalignment between job roles and applicant expectations (Minh Thanh et al., 2021). This results in increased turnover and reduced job engagement, particularly among newly certified Halal Executives who may feel overwhelmed or underprepared for multi-role demands.

Additionally, job specifications often require at least one year of experience, posing challenges for fresh graduates entering the Halal workforce. Despite completing internships, many applicants lack the professional exposure demanded by employers. As such, government support in subsidising training and industry-accredited certifications is vital to ensure talent readiness and reduce entry barriers.

To overcome these challenges, it is critical to institutionalise job analysis, competency-based profiling, and clearer job-person matching practices in the Halal industry. These measures will help bridge the gap between talent supply and organisational needs.

5. A framework for Halal talent in Malaysia Halal Industry

The framework below (from Slide 15) applies the Human Capital Resources Theory to map individual KSAOs to progressively strategic roles in the Halal industry. Starting from individual capacities (Halal Technician and Halal Executive), the model outlines a pathway toward unit-level contributions and competitive advantage (e.g., Halal Specialist and Chief Halal Officer). It reflects the elevation of talent from technical execution to strategic leadership within the Halal value chain.

The development of a structured talent framework is essential to sustaining the growth and credibility of Malaysia's Halal industry. Guided by the Human Capital Resources Theory, the proposed framework positions Halal Executives as the pivotal talent group within the Halal ecosystem. The framework builds on the multilevel model of talent progression, recognising how individual-level KSAOs contribute to unit-level human capital resources and, ultimately, to strategic advantage.

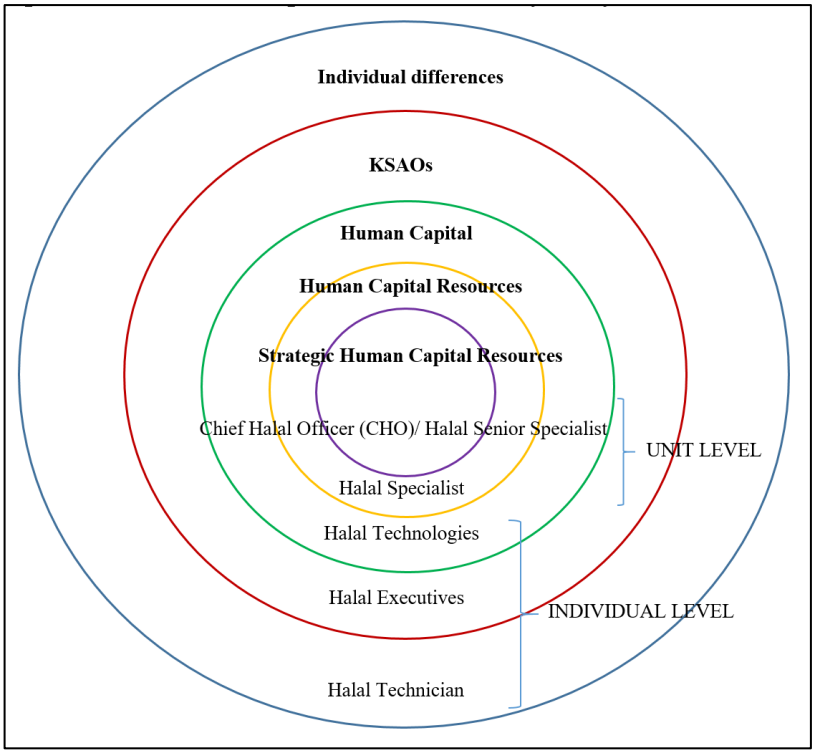


Figure 1: Talent Development Framework for the Halal Industry in Malaysia (adapted from presentation slide, Hasan & Mokhtar, 2024)

Figure 1 visualises the gradual elevation of Halal talent along five core roles in the industry: Halal Technician, Halal Executive, Halal Technologist, Halal Specialist, and Chief Halal Officer. Each role corresponds to a deeper level of professional development, responsibility, and organisational contribution.

Table 1. Developmental Progression of Halal Talent Roles

Position	**Development Level**	**Description**
Halal Technician	Individual Level	Entry-level role with basic heterogeneous KSAOs, assisting in documentation, clerical support, and preliminary Halal procedures.
Halal Executive	Individual Level	Certified role responsible for Halal certification coordination, internal audits, compliance monitoring, and training.
Halal Technologist	Individual Level	Applies scientific and technical expertise in Halal systems, focusing on production processes, R&D, and system integration.
Halal Specialist	Unit Level	Experienced executive capable of leading strategic Halal projects across departments and providing policy advisory.
Chief Halal Officer	Unit Level	Top management role representing strategic Human Capital Resource with decision-making authority in Halal leadership and governance.

This structure mirrors the professionalisation of Halal careers and reflects a career ladder consistent with the KSAO-based progression model (Ployhart & Moliterno, 2011).

5.1 Talent Development Ecosystem and Policy Alignment

For the framework to be effectively implemented, institutional alignment across multiple agencies is essential. The Halal talent development ecosystem consists of several key institutions, each playing a critical role in nurturing, certifying, and supporting the workforce in the Halal sector.

First, the Department of Islamic Development Malaysia (JAKIM) serves as the central authority responsible for Halal certification and the professional qualification of Halal personnel. It ensures standardisation across the industry and maintains the integrity of Halal certification processes nationwide (Muhammad et al., 2019).

Second, the Department of Skills Development (DSD) under the Ministry of Human Resources is responsible for developing and enforcing national competency standards. It provides the accreditation and certification pathways necessary for Halal professionals to progress through formal talent pipelines (Hashim & Shariff, 2016).

Third, the Department of Standards Malaysia defines and governs technical standards, including the Malaysian Standard MS1500. These standards establish operational benchmarks for production, handling, storage, and Halal system management (Samori et al., 2014).

Lastly, the Halal Industry Development Corporation (HDC) plays a strategic role in aligning policy, mobilising funding, and facilitating collaboration between public and private stakeholders. HDC also champions Halal talent development initiatives and provides support for industry-wide implementation (Rafida & Rahim, 2020).

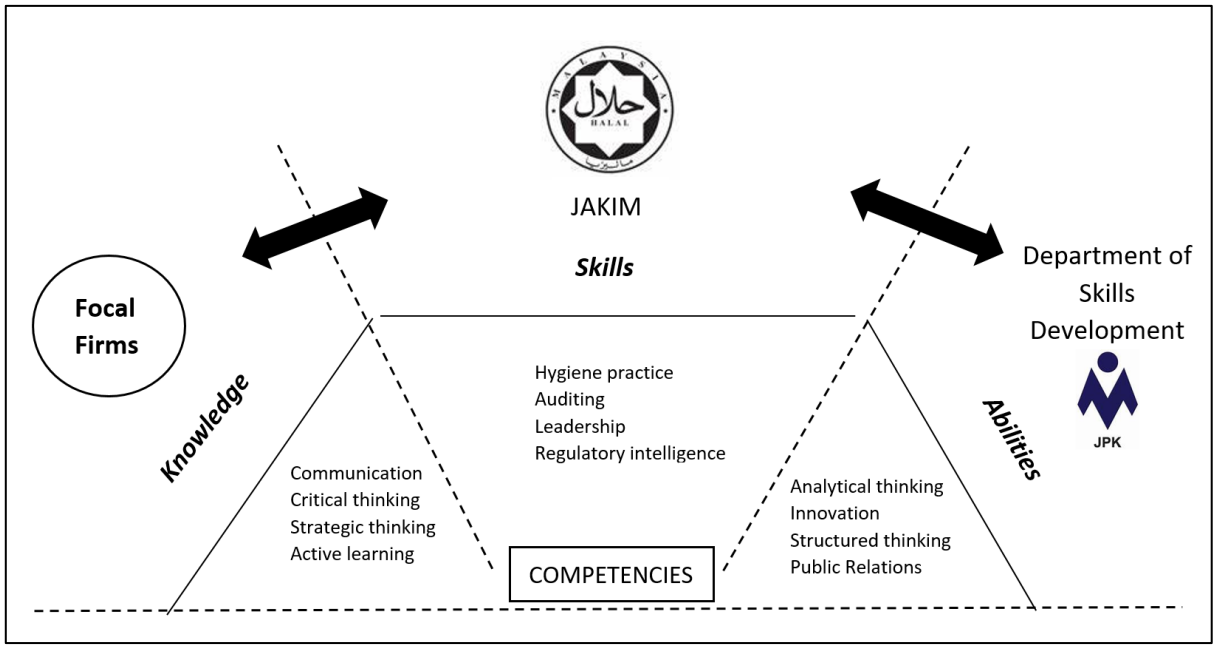


Figure 2: Knowledge, Skills and Abilities of Halal Talents in Halal Industry

Figure 2 above highlights important competencies relevant in mapping Knowledge, Skills and Abilities of Halal talents in the Halal industry. Since, the proposed talent development framework uplifts the competencies from the individual to unit level, competencies like strategic thinking, critical thinking, analytical thinking and structured thinking are essential in order to become part of the strategic human capital resources in the Halal industry. The framework indicates the importance to establish a strong cooperation between multiple parties and agencies involved in talent development in the Halal industry.

In order to operationalise this framework effectively, a coherent and supportive policy environment must be established. This should include the formulation of structured career pathways supported by national occupational standards tailored specifically for Halal roles. Furthermore, ongoing professional development should be institutionalised through certified training modules to ensure knowledge relevance and competency (Soebahar et al, 2021).

To address resource constraints, particularly in SMEs, targeted financial incentives or subsidies are necessary to enable companies to invest in upskilling their workforce. Finally, a national digital platform for Halal talent mapping and competency tracking would enhance visibility, monitoring, and planning across the ecosystem, ensuring a future-ready and data-informed approach to Halal talent management (Elias et al., 2019).

The development and validation of this framework align with national aspirations outlined in Malaysia's Halal Industry Master Plan and the National Policy on Industry 4.0, especially concerning talent readiness and competitiveness.

5.2 Strategic Importance of the Framework

By aligning role definitions with career development and policy support, this framework empowers SMEs and large enterprises alike to invest in structured Halal talent pipelines. It also reduces reliance on external audits by institutionalising internal compliance capabilities. The result is a sustainable, resilient, and competitive Halal workforce prepared for global market challenges.

In sum, the framework serves as a roadmap for building individual competencies that evolve into unit-level strategic human capital—ensuring Malaysia's continued leadership in the global Halal economy.

6. Discussion and Recommendations

The findings of this study underscore the increasing complexity of the Halal Executive role and the pressing need for a coherent and well-supported talent development framework. The integration of job analysis and qualitative insights confirms both the functional expectations and systemic shortcomings facing Halal talent in Malaysia.

The discussion is organised around three core themes: (1) Role Complexity and Competency Mismatch, (2) Talent Progression and Human Capital Resources, and (3) Recommendations for Policy and Industry Practice.

6.1 Role Complexity and Competency Mismatch

As revealed in Phase 1, many organisations require Halal Executives to assume overlapping roles, combining Halal compliance with responsibilities in quality assurance, regulatory affairs, and logistics. While this reflects operational efficiency within SMEs, it may dilute Halal-specific focus and introduce role ambiguity. This mismatch can hinder professional identity and performance effectiveness, especially for early-career professionals.

The lack of clearly defined job descriptions in nearly one-third of the job postings suggests an absence of standardisation across the industry. This inconsistency leads to varied expectations, which in turn contributes to job dissatisfaction, performance variability, and turnover. Findings from Phase 2 further reinforced this gap, with respondents highlighting their confusion about responsibilities and lack of defined career trajectories.

6.2 Talent Progression and Human Capital Resources

From a theoretical lens, the Human Capital Resources (HCR) Theory offers a valuable framework for structuring talent development pathways. Halal Executives, when equipped with the necessary KSAOs and aligned with organisational goals, evolve into unit-level resources that contribute to long-term strategic advantage.

The proposed framework reflects a vertically integrated talent pipeline—from entry-level Halal Technicians to strategic leadership roles like Chief Halal Officers. Such progression requires more than technical competence; it demands leadership capabilities, cross-functional agility, and strategic thinking—skills that must be nurtured intentionally through structured learning and mentoring (Ployhart et al., 2014).

6.3 Recommendations for Policy and Practice

To enhance Halal talent development in Malaysia, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. Standardised Job Descriptions: Develop national job profiles for Halal-related roles through collaboration between JAKIM, the Department of Skills Development, and industry representatives.
2. Competency-Based Training: Design modular CPD programs linked to clear occupational standards. These programs should be accessible to both new entrants and current professionals to enable upskilling and role expansion.
3. Mentorship and Industry Placement: Establish structured mentorship schemes and industry placements for fresh graduates to bridge the academic-practice gap. Early exposure to real Halal operations is key to talent readiness.
4. Career Pathway Framework: Promote the adoption of the proposed talent development framework within SMEs and MNCs alike to encourage long-term career growth and leadership development among Halal professionals.
5. Incentives for Talent Investment: Introduce financial schemes, grants or tax incentives for companies that invest in Halal talent certification and CPD participation.

6. Digital Talent Registry: Create a national Halal talent database to track competencies, certifications, and progression. This can support workforce planning, policy interventions, and research.

The alignment of these recommendations with institutional policies, national Halal strategies, and stakeholder collaboration is essential. Malaysia's aspiration to be a global leader in the Halal economy requires not only product integrity but also a professionalised and empowered workforce.

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