

The Role of Halal Supervisors in Strengthening The Halal Ecosystem in Restaurants in Brunei Darussalam

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Farhanah Hamdan^{1*} & Norkhairiah Hashim¹

¹ Halalan Thayyiban Study Centre, Universiti Islam Sultan Sharif Ali, Kampus Sinaut, KM33, Jalan Tutong, Kampong Sinaut, Tutong, TB 1741, BRUNEI DARUSSALAM.
Email: annhamdan28@gmail.com; norkhairiah.hashim@unissa.edu.bn

*Corresponding Author: annhamdan28@gmail.com

Abstract

Brunei Darussalam is one of the countries where halal certification for food premises is mandatory and supported by a legal framework that requires the appointment of halal supervisors. However, a major concern raised is the possibility of revocation of halal certification due to non-compliance or a failure to maintain hygiene and safety standards. These issues not only undermine consumer trust but also disrupt the credibility of Brunei's halal ecosystem. Therefore, this study explores the role of Halal Supervisors in ensuring halal compliance in restaurants and assesses the implementation of halalan thayyiban practices in restaurants. Using a qualitative approach, data were collected through interviews with certified halal supervisors from halal-certified restaurants. Thematic analysis revealed the consistency of important themes, such as credentialing of halal food supervisors and holistic halal assurance. The findings highlight that halal supervisor play a critical role in ensuring compliance with halal standards, monitoring food preparation, and practicing food safety and hygiene in restaurants. The study concludes that halal supervisors are vital in operationalizing halalan thayyiban principles and recommends enhanced training and stronger institutional support to further empower their role. This study contributes to improving halal governance and reinforces Brunei's position as a leader in halal assurance.

Key Words: Halal Supervisor, Halal Integrity, Halal Ecosystem, Restaurant Compliance



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Introduction

Muslims are required to consume halal food, which is permissible, and refrain from consuming haram food, which is illegal or prohibited, in accordance with Islamic law. Eating and drinking are strictly regulated in accordance with the dietary guidelines outlined in the Quran and Sunnah (Hadith) of Prophet Muhammad sallallahu 'alaihi wassalam. According to the Quran, our consumption should not only be halal but also thayyib. In addition, the halal food industry has undergone a rapid expansion and development in recent years. This upward trend is expected to persist due to the increasing global demand for halal products (Sulaiman et al., 2023). The

market for halal goods is expected to surpass USD 6.0 trillion by 2024 (Azam & Abdullah, 2020). The halal food industry is influenced by four factors: Firstly, Islam is the world's fastest growing religion, which provides a source of fuel to meet global demand. Secondly, there is a growing trend among non-Muslim customers to consume halal food products for ethical and safety reasons. Thirdly, the growing halal consumer power is in line with the global expansion of the Muslim population and is a driver of disposable income. Finally, the increasing awareness of consumers regarding halal products (Irina, n.d)

Furthermore, halal restaurants are an important component in the halal industry. Halal restaurants are establishments that serve food and beverages that comply with Islamic law (Abdullah et al., 2024) Upon satisfying the necessary standards established by regulatory authorities regarding health, food safety, and hygiene in food production, restaurants, regardless of their ownership by Muslims or non-Muslims, will be granted halal certification. The halal restaurant industry is experiencing global expansion, not only in Muslim-majority countries (60%) but also in countries with significant Muslim minorities (Mudai et al., 2020).

However, as the halal food industry expands, preserving the integrity and authenticity of halal products has become progressively difficult and may be neglected, as halal integrity pertains to the halal status of food products from their fundamental components consumed by the consumer. Moreover, human resources constitute the fundamental activity in every sector, and currently, the most successful industry leaders are those who adeptly and efficiently manage human capital (Abdu Salam et al., 2019). Consequently, human resources are essential in the halal food sector. Thus, the halal food industry requires personnel with requisite skills, including regulatory officials, halal food supervisors, halal auditors, and various other positions. In Brunei Darussalam, halal certification is an essential aspect of the food industry, guaranteeing that food products and services comply with Islamic standards of purity, safety, and ethical sourcing.

The Brunei Halal Certification is issued and controlled by the Brunei Islamic Religious Council (BIRC) under the Ministry of Religious Affairs (MoRA). The authority verifies businesses and products' compliance with halal standards and Brunei Halal Certification is internationally renowned for its credibility and stringent certification in both Muslim and non-Muslim countries (Khalid et al., 2018). Moreover, the halal certification encompasses the application process for these qualified supervisors, who also need to sit for the oral and written tests set by HFCD. If the halal food supervisor passes the exam, the certificate will be issued by the BIRC. Moreover, an essential component of this certification process is the designation of Halal Supervisors, who are vital in upholding the integrity of halal practices in restaurants. The business owner must have at least two halal food supervisors who are acknowledged by BIRC. According to the Halal Certificate and Halal Label Order of 2005, Halal Supervisors are mandated to oversee food preparation, ingredient procurement, and adherence to halal standards (Hashim et al., 2022).

In summary, the halal ecosystem in Brunei is underpinned by a comprehensive framework comprising regulations and audits aimed at ensuring halal compliance and food safety. Supervisors are the principal enforcers of this ecosystem, connecting regulatory standards with operational practices in the restaurant sector. Their role extends beyond merely supervising halal practices; they are pivotal in guaranteeing the adherence to both halalan

thayyiban, lawful and wholesome food practices. Study Objectives is to explore the role of halal supervisors in ensuring halal compliance in restaurants and to assess the implementation of halalan thayyiban practices in restaurants.

Problem Statements

Brunei Darussalam has formulated guidelines, standards, and laws regulating the *halal* status of food products, but business owners still face problems in ensuring the products are genuinely *halal*. The first issue pertains to the credibility of *halal* food products in terms of their compliance with the related law. In March 2025, a non-halal food product was found in one of the restaurants in Kiarong during an inspection, resulting in the revocation of its *halal* certification. Officers discovered a packet of “Special Pork Chicharon San” in the restaurant’s kitchen. The product’s presence infringed the halal certification’s requirements. Consequently, the restaurant’s halal certificate and halal supervisor accreditation were promptly revoked (Fadley Faisal, 2025). The next issue is that the supervisors’ lack of adherence to thayyiban practices can negatively impact human health. Food safety issues have increased, with 31% of inspected premises unsatisfactory in 2022. Complaints include infestations, cleanliness issues, poor food handling, contaminated items, and food poisoning. Investigations are ongoing to address these issues (James Kon, 2023). In addition, the HFCD handles halal food supervisor assessments without providing specific practical training. Supervisors are given supplementary talks and briefings, but there’s limited opportunity to strengthen practical skills like handling contamination risks or making syariah-based decisions.

These challenges compromise the credibility and efficacy of the halal certification system and obstruct the establishment of a resilient halal ecosystem within Brunei’s restaurant sector. To resolve these issues, it is essential to comprehend the roles and responsibilities of Halal Supervisors, examine the practical application of halalan thayyiban principles, and ascertain methods to enhance the support system for Halal Supervisors.

Methodology

A qualitative method was used in this study to explore and gain a richer understanding of the study phenomena. Furthermore, participants are selected using purposive. Purposive or judgmental sampling is a technique in which settings are intentionally chosen by individuals or events to provide useful information that cannot be accessed by other choices (Taherdoost, 2016). A descriptive qualitative approach will be utilised, with thematic method of analysing the data. The 10 participants who took part comprised with four males and six females, in which eight participants from Brunei-Muara and two participants from Tutong. Participants were from Brunei, Malaysia and Indonesia. The secondary data will be gathered from journals, articles, and other scholarly sources. This data will provide a broader context for understanding the halal food sector, halal supervision practices, and theoretical perspectives on halalan thayyiban.

Furthermore, the study employed inter-rater reliability to measure the reliability of the themes. Inter-rater reliability is crucial in thematic analysis; it is to ensure the identified themes

are reliable and not solely based on the subjective reliability and interpretation of one study in which inter-rater reliability refers to different raters agreeing in their assessment when evaluating the same items (Ayush Parti, 2024). The themes in this study were evaluated using inter-rater reliability by three experts, who were from academic and syariah departments, both from Brunei and abroad, such as UNISSA, HFCD, and International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM). This is important to ensure the clarity, consistency, and alignment of the themes with the study objectives. After the data analysis process was carried out, the study obtained a total of two themes. From the Fleiss Kappa analysis, the agreement value between the panels for each theme in the study was a value of 1, which is almost perfect agreement based on Landis and Koch (1997). In other words, the themes extracted by the study are in accordance with the study objectives and based on expert approval.

Findings and Discussions

Cultivating A Competent Halal Food Supervisor

The first part focuses on halal food supervisors and their understanding of their responsibilities in relation to the restaurant setting. The study can determine whether the participants have the skills and qualifications to work as competent supervisors by asking about their responsibilities. Table 1 shows the responses and theme mapping for holistic halal assurance practices.

Table 1: Responses and Theme Mapping for Cultivating Competent Halal Food Supervisor

Sub-Themes	Number of Participants	Participant Responses
Commitment to Halal Compliance	2	<p>“My roles and responsibilities in the restaurant are to prepare food and drinks and, at the same time, to supervise, where I must ensure the food and beverages are halal. Secondly, to make sure the food, drinks, and the restaurant are always in a clean state for perfect customer consumption, the most crucial part is ensuring the food products are halal and edible.” - Participant A</p> <p>“I always work professionally and responsibly to ensure the food products we use in the restaurant and what we serve are guaranteed halal and good quality. I continuously improved my knowledge and skill practices regarding halal aspects, cleanliness, and maintaining food safety to ensure food quality.”- Participant B</p>

Adherence to Halal Standards	3	<p>“I’m responsible for ensuring the food served is according to Brunei Darussalam Halal Food Standards. I also prepare documents for halal certification.”- Participant D</p> <p>“To ensure all food products are halal and abide by the Brunei Halal Standard regulation and to monitor that the food preparation process is done following the halal standard.” - Participant G</p> <p>“Ensure all food ingredients used in the restaurant are from halal certified suppliers and manufacturers. Every restaurant is required to hire halal food supervisors. Recognize international halal certification bodies and know color codes that are BIRC approved. Preparing files for halal certification for every restaurant branch to BKMh, always keep up to date on recent issues and news from BKMh.” - Participant H</p>
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The first sub-theme is commitment to halal compliancy, which shows all participants constantly ensuring the food is halal, clean, and safe. Participants highlight their dual responsibility in food preparation and oversight, ensuring both effective operation and strict adherence to halal compliance and cleanliness. A halal food supervisor is appointed to carry out duties such as syariah and halal monitoring, which must be done on a regular basis. Furthermore, they oversee helping managers or the owners with all halal-related matters. Their responsibilities include ensuring that the technical procedures meet all halal regulations, safety, hygiene, and food handling. In addition, according to the guideline of the halal food supervisor, the duties of the halal food supervisor are as follows (Bahagian Kawalan Makanan Halal, 2008):

- a. The halal food supervisor is responsible for controlling halal food products at the place of business.
- b. The halal food supervisor is responsible for controlling matters on the preparation and handling of cooked ingredients, including tools and appliances used in the place of business.
- c. The halal food supervisor is responsible for ensuring the business place prepares, sells, or serves halal products only.
- d. The halal food supervisor is responsible for ensuring only halal ingredients are used in the place of business.
- e. The halal food supervisor is responsible for informing us about any changes in food ingredients.
- f. The halal food supervisor is responsible for ensuring all equipment and utensils used in the place of business are pure and permitted by Hukum Syara’.

The study by Rosli et al. (2022) aligns with this, asserting that halal executives must demonstrate strong leadership skills to supervise and guide their teams in complying with all halal requirements and standards. Halal executives are regarded as authoritative figures in halal-related matters. While the specific positions may vary, the fundamental idea remains consistent: ensuring effective supervision and leadership is essential for upholding halal compliance in food establishments.

Furthermore, the participants emphasize serving food products and preparation that meet Brunei Halal Standards, managing halal certification documents such as sourcing from halal-certified suppliers, and keeping up to date on relevant halal issues as stated in the guideline “The halal food supervisor must ensure compliance with Brunei Darussalam standards PBD 24:2007 on Halal Food and Guideline for Halal Certification (BCG Halal 1).”

Holistic Halal Assurance

This theme generated from the analysis of the participants’ views on *halalan thayyiban* practices is holistic halal assurance. This theme includes the overall principles and practices of *halalan thayyiban* in restaurants. This theme contains the integration of food products with the halal certification and halal logo and shows how comprehensive practices, such as food quality, safety, and hygiene, are understood and implemented in restaurants. Table 2 shows the responses and theme mapping for holistic halal assurance practices.

Table 2: The Responses and Theme Mapping for Holistic Halal Assurance Practices

Sub-Themes	Number of Participants	Participant Responses
Halal Certification and Halal Logo	3	<p>“The product is halal and has the halal logo and recognized halal certification.” – Participant C</p> <p>“Ensuring the ingredients sold to consumers are halal.” - Participant F</p> <p>“Purchase products that are halal certified.” - Participant I</p>
Food Quality	2	<p>“I always practice choosing fresh and good ingredients so that they are always in a good state and of good quality.” - Participant A</p> <p>“Look into every product ingredient’s quality to ensure ingredients are always fresh, clean, and safe for consumption.” - Participant H</p> <p>“Foods are halal and have a longer expiration duration.” – Participant F</p>
Food Safety Practices	3	<p>“The cleanliness and food safety of every worker, machine, and kitchen utensil, and safety and cleanliness using MOH guidelines and BKMH guidelines.” - Participant H</p> <p>“Ensuring food safety.” - Participant J</p>

		"I always ensure the food is halal and clean." – Participant C
Food Hygiene Practices	3	"Guide employees in the cleanliness and ethical ways of serving the food to customers." – Participant E
		"Maintaining cleanliness." – Participant H

Table 3 reveals holistic halal assurance involves the presence of halal certification and a halal logo on food and drink products. The participants perceive halal certification as a guarantee to consumers that the food is served, prepared, and processed according to halal certification standards. This instils greater confidence in Muslim consumers, allowing all visitors, including non-Muslims, to eat with confidence. This certification process includes rigorous requirements such as the presence of halal food supervisors, detailed documentation of ingredients, and regular audits of food preparation areas to maintain hygiene and safety standards (Azli Azney, 2017). This study emphasizes on the importance of the halal logo and halal certification and supports the study by Nadzirah and Aghwan (2023), who found that the halal logo plays an important role in bringing the product to market, with producers' trust and confidence in consumers.

The second sub-theme is food quality. Many suggest that *halalan thayyiban* is more than just food permissibility; it is also about maintaining superior food quality, safety, and cleanliness throughout the production and supply chain. This is in line with a study by Hassan et al. (2020), whereby *thayyiban* is safety, nutrition, quality, hygiene, purity, and health. Participants also emphasize the importance of food quality factors such as freshness, nutritional value, and taste, as well as strict food safety practices, in ensuring that the food meets *halalan thayyiban* standards. Abdullah (2012) asserts that prioritizing consumer needs is a crucial aspect of quality; it must provide individual satisfaction, such as sensory elements, that cater to the tastes of most consumers.

This study also identified participants' emphasis on food safety and hygiene practices. They ensure all halal products served and prepared in their restaurants are clean and safe. This reinforces findings by Rahim et al. (2018), whereby it conforms to *halalan thayyiban* principles, characterized by cleanliness, safety, and nutrition. Furthermore, the participants are found to adhere to appropriate food handling practices in restaurants and follow the standard guidelines from MOH and HFCD to prevent food contamination. These findings are consistent with broader definitions of *halalan thayyiban*, which include not only the legal aspect but also the food quality, safety of food, and reinforcing hygiene practices.

The study reveals that halal supervisors play an important role in strengthening the halal ecosystem through integrating regulatory standards into everyday practices. To support this role, ongoing training, clear operational guidelines, and increased collaboration with relevant authorities should be prioritized. These measures will support Brunei Darussalam's commitment to a strong, credible, and trustworthy halal system in the restaurant industry.

Conclusions

This study emphasizes how crucial Halal Supervisors are to strengthening the halal ecosystem in restaurants across Brunei Darussalam. Beyond certification, a strong halal ecosystem includes a comprehensive system of halal assurance that includes quality, hygiene, compliance, food safety, and ongoing oversight. Results show that halal supervisors who are dedicated and capable play a key role in maintaining and observing *halalan thayyiban* practices. Every stage of the food process, from sourcing to serving, complies with halal regulations and Islamic principles. Furthermore, the existence of a well-functioning halal ecosystem in restaurants is contingent upon several interrelated elements, including regular supervisor training, clear guidelines from authorities, efficient operational management, and continuous collaboration amongst stakeholders. Together, these components form a strong ecosystem that upholds the integrity of halal food, fosters consumer trust, and improves the reputation of Brunei's food service industry. It is imperative to make consistent efforts in supervisor development, policy support, and institutional collaboration to further strengthen this ecosystem. In addition to empowering Halal Supervisors, these initiatives will guarantee that Brunei's restaurant industry maintains the highest halal and *thayyiban* standards in a highly competitive global setting.

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