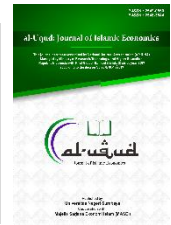




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Enhancing human resource development as a strategic imperative for halal certification in food MSMEs

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Abstract

This study examines the challenges, solutions, and strategies related to human resource (HR) development in food MSMEs to obtain halal certification, particularly in regions such as North Sumatra, Padangsidempuan City, South Tapanuli Regency, and Mandailing Natal Regency, where the number of halal-certified MSMEs remains limited. Despite having a large Muslim population, MSMEs in these areas face difficulties in tapping into the halal industry. The study identifies three main issues: limited HR capacity, low-quality HR, and lack of experience. Using the Analytic Network Process (ANP) method, the findings reveal that HR development through training and education is the most effective solution, although the level of agreement among informants is moderate. Additionally, the study proposes key strategies to address these challenges, including improving technical skills and fostering attitudes, work ethics, and knowledge, with a high level of agreement on these priorities.

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Introduction

Indonesia has excellent potential prospects to improve and change the level of halal food, Islamic finance, halal tourism, fashion, media and entertainment, cosmetics, and medicine. Given that 87% of Indonesia's population is Muslim, the potential is huge when compared to other countries' Muslims (Suwanan et al., 2021). However, Indonesia is one of the countries with a slow response, even failing to utilize the benefits provided by the halal industry quickly (Batubara & Harahap, 2022). The lack of response of the halal industry is due to industry factors, limited resources, lack of support from government regulations, and other supporting infrastructure. A Muslim's need for halal products should be supported by halal guarantees. (Bahrudin et al., 2024). However, not all products circulating in Indonesia are guaranteed to be

halal. Muslim consumers are among those who are disadvantaged by the number of products without halal labels or non-halal information) (Abu Siri, 2023). Halal product guarantees for MSMEs in the form of halal certificates are very important because with halal certification, food products that are consumed by the public have received legality and legal protection from the government (Abu Siri, 2023). However, in reality, not all entrepreneurs can obtain halal product guarantees, especially MSMEs for several reasons, including lack of assistance, lack of socialization, complicated requirements and others (Arifin et al., 2020).

Many factors influence the importance of human resource development in food MSMEs to obtain halal certification (Pratikto et al., 2023). According to (Warto (2020), found that the major obstacles to halal certification, especially for halal food or food, are the attitude of business actors who tend to be unaware, more pursuing profits, low public response to halal products, lack of government attention, business actors are more protected than consumers. From the aspect of knowledge and information, the problems faced by MSME actors include the lack of socialization about the obligation of halal certification either by the government or related parties so that information has not reached MSME actors (Ririn, 2022). The low level of human resources who understand halal certification is not only the absence of halal auditors but also the small number of MSMEs that have halal awareness. North Sumatra, although the majority of the population is Muslim, the number of MSMEs that have halal certification is still relatively small. This shows the gap between market potential and reality (Saifuddin et al., 2020).

Table 1. North Sumatra MSMEs

No.	Information	Amount
1	MSMEs	196.471
2	Food and beverage MSMEs	43.224
3	Halal-certified food and beverage MSMEs	22.999

Source: Department of Cooperatives and MSMEs and LPJH North Sumatra, 2024

Likewise in Padangsidempuan City, South Tapanuli Regency, and Mandailing Natal Regency, there are still few halal-certified MSMEs.

Table 2. MSME data of Padangsidempuan City, Mandailing Natal Regency, South Tapanuli Regency

No.	Information	Madina	Tapsel	Pasid
1	MSMEs	5.853	12.231	10.641
2	Food and beverage MSMEs	4.092	7600	1.028
3	Halal-certified food and beverage MSMEs	11	24	30

Source: Regional Trade and MSME Cooperative Office Padangsidempuan City, Mandailing Natal Regency, South Tapanuli Regency 2024

Based on the table above, it can be seen that this number is still far from what is expected by the government. The potential for halal-certified MSMEs in each of these regions is very large, considering that this region has a variety of natural resources and local cultures that support the production of halal products. For the context of South Tapanuli, Padangsidempuan, and Mandailing Natal, human resources are one of the factors considered to influence halal certification (Sa'adah & Asnawi, 2022). Based on the background of the problem above, the purpose of this study is to examine the problems, solutions and strategies faced in the importance of human resource development in food MSMEs to obtain halal certification.

Literature Review

Human Resource Development (HRD)

Human Resource Development (HRD) is an effort made by organizations to improve the quality and capability of individuals or groups in facing challenges and achieving desired goals (Alamsyah et al., 2023). According to (Ulrich, (1997), HR development focuses on improving the skills, knowledge, and behavior of individuals within the organization to support organizational goals. In the context of food MSMEs, HR development includes training in technical and managerial skills, as well as an understanding of the importance of halal certification (Alfarizi & Ngatindriatun, 2022).

According to Noe (2013), HR training is essential to improve individual performance in organizations. For food MSMEs, relevant training includes an understanding of halal standards, production systems that comply with halal principles, and managerial techniques to ensure a smooth certification process (Prawiro & Fathudin, 2023). This training can help MSME players minimize errors that can hinder the halal certification process (Nurjamjam, 2024). HR development also contributes to fostering a positive corporate culture, where employees feel motivated and engaged with the company's goals (Mansaray, 2019). A good recruitment process is the first step in building a strong HR team. MSMEs need to ensure that they recruit employees who not only have technical skills but also have values that are in line with the company's vision and mission. HR development includes not only the improvement of technical skills, but also the formation of attitudes, knowledge, and work ethics by the principles of Islamic economics. With effective HR development, MSMEs can better adapt to market dynamics and consumer demands. Good HR development enables employees to understand and implement the quality standards required in halal food production.

Expanding on the literature review, the urgency of developing human resources for obtaining halal certification is further underscored by the increasing global demand for halal food products, which requires MSMEs to be competitive in a rapidly evolving market. Halal certification is not just a legal or religious requirement, but it is also a strategic tool for ensuring product quality, safety, and authenticity, which are critical factors for consumers in both Muslim and non-Muslim markets (Ab Talib, 2017). The process of obtaining halal certification is complex and requires a deep understanding of Islamic dietary laws, food processing, sourcing of ingredients, and cross-sector collaboration between certification bodies and food producers (Ab Talib, 2017). This complexity creates a clear need for well-trained professionals within MSMEs who can manage the certification process effectively (Dadzie et al., 2024).

Moreover, the critical role of human resource development is in ensuring that MSMEs are not only compliant with halal certification standards but can continuously innovate and adapt to changing market demands (Makhtum & Faraby, 2024). A highly skilled workforce can facilitate better management of production practices, quality assurance, and documentation processes, essential to passing halal audits (Lestari et al., 2022). Many MSMEs, especially in emerging markets, face challenges related to the lack of skilled professionals who are capable of interpreting and implementing halal guidelines in food production (Prawiro & Fathudin, 2023).

Studies indicate that businesses that invest in human capital through ongoing education and training can reduce the risk of non-compliance and increase consumer trust in their halal-certified products (Iffat et al., 2024). The literature emphasizes that developing human resources for halal certification is not solely about acquiring technical knowledge; it also involves fostering a culture of quality, ethical standards, and responsibility among employees (Fathoni et al., 2024).

Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs)

MSMEs have a very important role in the economy, especially in creating jobs and increasing people's income. The Ministry of Cooperatives and SMEs (2018) states that MSMEs contribute

more than 60% to Indonesia's GDP and absorb more than 90% of the workforce. However, MSMEs often face challenges in terms of limited knowledge and resources, especially in terms of management and regulations such as halal certification. MSMEs are stand-alone productive business units, conducted by individuals or business entities in all economic sectors. In principle, the distinction between Micro Enterprises (MEs), Small Enterprises (SEs), Medium Enterprises (MEs), and Large Enterprises (LEs) is generally based on initial asset value (excluding land and buildings), average turnover per year, or the number of permanent workers (Tambunan, 2022). However, the definition of MSMEs based on these three measurement tools differs by country.

Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises aim to grow and develop their businesses in order to build a national economy based on equitable economic democracy (Wahyuni & Hartono, 2019). For MSMEs, the biggest challenge in obtaining halal certification is the limited knowledge of halal standards, as well as the lack of resources to fulfill the requirements set by halal certification agencies such as the Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI). The development of skilled human resources is crucial to overcome these challenges (Mahmood, 2022). Many MSMEs face limitations in terms of human resources and access to training or information on halal certification. The high cost of training and the lack of affordable training facilities are obstacles for MSMEs in developing competent human resources in the halal field (Batubara & Harahap, 2022). In addition, MSMEs know the importance of halal certification, they are often constrained by cost, time, and resource issues to fully meet halal standards (Batubara & Harahap, 2022). Therefore, the development of human resources that can overcome this problem is very important so that MSMEs can still obtain halal certification efficiently (Effendi, 2023).

Training programs should go beyond technical skills to include awareness of the broader importance of halal certification, such as its impact on global trade, consumer confidence, and business growth (Vita & Soehardi, 2023). These programs can also help address cultural and communication barriers, ensuring that all employees, from production workers to management, understand the significance of halal principles and are motivated to uphold them in their daily practices (Mabkhot, 2023). Collaborative efforts between private sector stakeholders, regulatory bodies, and educational institutions are essential in creating comprehensive training programs that support MSMEs throughout the halal certification process and beyond, ensuring they can fully leverage the opportunities presented by the growing halal food market (Syahrizal et al., 2023). Human resource development for halal certification in food MSMEs underscores that this is a multifaceted issue requiring technical, cultural, and strategic approaches (Sari & Supiandi, 2023). The urgency of building a competent workforce in halal food industries is paramount to ensure that MSMEs can meet certification requirements, maintain high product quality, and successfully tap into the expanding global halal food market (Andespa et al., 2024).

Methodology

This research method is qualitative research (Moleong, 2002) that is converted into quantitative research using the *Analytic Network Process* (ANP) method. This method is a development of the AHP method, The ANP method consists of three stages (Stofkova et al., 2022). The first stage involves distributing questionnaires and in-depth interviews to informants who have sufficient competence to represent the population as a whole (Jason & Glenwick, 2015). The results of the second stage were used to create an appropriate ANP network for questionnaire development (Wijayanti et al., 2022). To create strategic policies and alternative prioritized solutions. The third stage of ANP analysis was used to fill out the questionnaire, respondents used a verbal scale comparison and a numerical scale; in the ANP method, the numerical scale

uses a range of 1 to 9 (Khairrani et al., 2022). *Super decision software* was then used to process the data collected from filling out the questionnaire.

According to (Saaty, 2022), the ideal rater agreement rating is another level such as very high (1,000), high (0,578), Medium (0,235), low (0,118), and very low (0,063). The location of this research is in the Indonesian part of North Sumatra, namely in Padangsidempuan City and South Tapanuli Regency and Mandailing Natal Regency. The number of research informants is 9 (nine), with the consideration that they are considered to have sufficient ability to provide opinions related to the research subject. The first is 4 people from MSME practitioners/actors, 3 people from regulators, and 2 people from academics.

Result and Discussion

This analysis uses the *Analytic Network Process* (ANP) method to develop the importance of human resource development in food MSMEs to obtain halal certification. At the beginning of this research, variables were defined as part of the ANP network structure. Food MSME development problems based on several previous studies from various articles, journals, books, and others are categorized according to their type (nodes, clusters, or criteria). The results of the informants' agreement resulted in variables that are relevant to this study. Therefore, the network is arranged in the form of a complex network because of the many problems in food MSMEs, MSMEs to obtain halal certification must determine the priority of problems, solutions, and strategies in the network framework.

Table 3. Synthesis Results of Informant Priorities The importance of Human Resource Development in Food MSMEs to obtain Halal Certification and Total *Geometric Mean*

Decomposition	Practitioner	Regulator	Academic	G-Mean
Problem Aspect				
HRM (Human Resource Management)	0.28210	0.07162	0.08678	0.12670
HRM Problems				
Low Quality	0.31615	0.49011	0.15156	0.25997
Lack of Experience	0.41138	0.19305	0.12891	0.20479
Limited HR	0.27248	0.31684	0.71954	0.32397
Solution Aspect				
HRM Solutions	0.21895	0.37890	0.33698	0.21350
HRM Solutions				
Training	0.29886	0.34196	0.41027	0.22218
Education	0.21880	0.21727	0.11468	0.15769
HR Development	0.48234	0.44077	0.47506	0.37270
Strategy Aspect				
HR Training Strategy	0.35864	0.22746	0.52005	0.32342

Informants have different opinions on the prioritization of problems, solutions, and strategies for the importance of human resource development in food MSMEs to obtain halal certification. Therefore, after obtaining the priorities of each informant, the *geometric mean* is sought to determine the priority order of all informants. Findings *rater agreement* (W), a metric that shows the degree of agreement (*agreement*) of informants on problems, solutions, and strategies in a cluster. Analysis through the ANP approach aims to build a model. The analysis begins by prioritizing the problems of food MSMEs to obtain halal certification in general. Based on literature review and in-depth interviews with several academics/experts and

regulators as well as MSME players in Padangsidempuan City and South Tapanuli Regency and Mandailing Natal Regency. The problems of food MSMEs to obtain halal certification can be seen from the human resources criterias. This aspect was compiled in a questionnaire in the form of *pairwise comparison* and submitted to 9 respondents. This journal presents the data processing results from the questionnaires completed by respondents, which show that the characteristics of the problems are generally significant. The wide range of respondents demonstrates this, and the respondents' agreement scores (rater agreement) in identifying problem priorities in the HR element.

HR Problem Analysis

In terms of priority of these criteria, the criterion of limited human resource is the top priority in the problem of food MSMEs to obtain a halal certification with a value of 0.323. Then followed by the criteria for low-quality problems of 0.259, and the last priority is the problem of inexperience at 0,204.

The result of obtaining *the rater agreement* value of all informants is $W = 0.037037037$. This means that the level of agreement of informants on the priority order of HR problems is 3.70%, which shows a very low level of agreement because the answers vary from informant to informant. The results of the synthesis of priorities per informant show that out of 9 (nine) informants, 3 informants answered that the problem of limited human resources is the highest priority, then 4 informants answered that the problem of low quality is a priority problem, and then 2 informants answered that inexperience is a problem.

HR Solution Analysis

This discussion will describe the results of the synthesis on the HR sub-solution cluster to determine the importance of human resource development in food MSMEs to obtain halal certification (Rafiki & Abdul Wahab, 2016). Based on the results of data processing using *Super Decision Software*, it is found that based on the combined opinions of the informants, the most prioritized HR solution in the importance of human resource development in food MSMEs to obtain halal certification is a dynamic HR development solution of 0.372, followed by a training solution with a value of 0.222 and the last is an education solution of 0.157. The result of obtaining *the rater agreement* value of all informants is $W = 0.218379465$. This means that the level of agreement of informants on the priority order of HR solutions is 21.83% which shows a moderate level of agreement because the answers vary for each informant. The most prioritized HR development solution in the importance of human resource development in food MSMEs to obtain halal certification, then 3 informants answered that the training solution was a priority solution.

Strategy Cluster Analysis

From the solutions generated above, the highest synthesis value is the HR Development subcriteria with a value of 0.372 using *Super Decision Software*. HR development includes not only the improvement of technical skills, but also the formation of attitudes, knowledge, and work ethics by the principles of Islamic economics (Wirtati, 2021). With effective HR development, MSMEs can better adapt to market dynamics and consumer demands (Rosita et al., 2024). Good HR development enables employees to understand and implement the quality standards required in halal food production (Yuli & Wojtyla, 2020). This discussion will describe the synthesis results in the HR Development sub-strategy cluster for the importance of human resource development in food MSMEs to obtain halal certification (Marlina et al., 2023). Based on the results of data processing using *Super Decision Software*, it is found that the priority of HR development includes not only the improvement of technical skills, but also the

formation of attitudes, knowledge, and work ethics by the principles of Islamic economics. With effective HR development, MSMEs can better adapt to market dynamics and consumer demands. Good HR development enables employees to understand and implement the quality standards required in halal food production. This discussion will describe the synthesis results in the HR Development sub-strategy cluster for the importance of human resource development in food MSMEs to obtain halal certification. Based on the results of data processing using *Super Decision Software*, it is found that the most prioritized HR development strategy in the importance of human resource development in food MSMEs to obtain halal certification is dynamic technical skills, which is 0.323, followed by attitude formation with a value of 0.167, then work ethics of 0.147 and finally knowledge of 0.129. The result of obtaining *the rater agreement* value of all informants is $W = 0.461349693$. This means that the level of agreement of informants on the priority order of HR development strategies is 46.13%, which shows a moderate level of agreement because the answers vary for each informant.

This study utilizes the Analytic Network Process (ANP) method to analyze the significance of human resource development (HRD) in supporting food MSMEs in obtaining halal certification. The ANP framework used in this research systematically structures the challenges, solutions, and strategies into clusters and nodes, reflecting the complexity of MSME development. Through the integration of literature reviews and data collected from practitioners, regulators, and academics, the study provides a comprehensive perspective on the key issues faced by food MSMEs in their pursuit of halal certification. Identified Problems The findings reveal significant challenges related to human resource management (HRM) in MSMEs. The analysis highlights three primary HRM-related issues: low quality of human resources, lack of experience, and limited personnel availability. Among these, the lack of experience emerged as a critical factor, particularly emphasized by practitioners (41.13%), while regulators and academics noted concerns over limited personnel availability (31.68% and 71.95%, respectively). These findings indicate that MSMEs often face difficulties in hiring skilled workers who possess the necessary expertise and qualifications for halal certification compliance.

To address these challenges, the study proposes a range of HRD solutions. Key strategies include training programs, education, and continuous human resource development. Training programs received the highest priority among practitioners, emphasizing the need for skill enhancement and practical knowledge dissemination. In contrast, regulators and academics emphasized structured HR development programs and long-term educational initiatives to build capacity and sustain improvements in MSMEs. The geometric mean results further reinforce the need for holistic approaches that balance immediate training requirements with broader developmental goals. The study also examines strategic approaches for implementing HR development initiatives. The prioritization of strategies highlights the importance of targeted training programs aimed at addressing specific deficiencies in MSME human resources. The geometric mean for training strategies (32.34%) suggests that all respondent groups acknowledge the pivotal role of training as the primary method for enhancing HR capabilities. This consensus supports the argument that MSMEs require both short-term and long-term interventions to achieve and maintain halal certification standards.

The rater agreement metric (W) further validates the consistency and reliability of the informants' responses. By employing a structured pairwise comparison method, the study ensures that the prioritization of problems, solutions, and strategies is based on collective insights rather than individual biases. This methodological approach strengthens the robustness of the ANP model, providing a reliable foundation for policy recommendations and practical interventions. The application of the ANP method provides valuable insights into the prioritization of challenges, solutions, and strategies for HRD in food MSMEs seeking halal certification. The findings highlight the critical need for targeted training programs,

comprehensive educational initiatives, and systematic HR development plans. These measures are essential for addressing existing HR deficiencies and ensuring that MSMEs can meet halal certification requirements effectively. The study's emphasis on stakeholder collaboration—encompassing practitioners, regulators, and academics—underscores the importance of a multi-faceted approach to capacity building. Future research should explore the long-term impact of these interventions and assess their scalability to other regions and industries.

The analysis of human resource (HR) problems in food MSMEs highlights limited human resources as the top priority, with a value of 0.323. This issue is followed by low-quality HR (0.259) and inexperience (0.204). These results emphasize that the availability and competence of human resources are critical obstacles to obtaining halal certification. Despite identifying these priorities, the rater agreement value ($W = 0.037$) indicates a very low level of agreement (3.70%) among the respondents, reflecting variations in their perspectives. Among nine informants, three prioritized limited HR, four emphasized low quality, and two considered inexperience as the main challenge. This variability underscores the need for flexible strategies to address diverse viewpoints. The synthesis of HR solutions prioritizes dynamic HR development as the most effective approach, with a value of 0.372. This is followed by training programs (0.222) and educational initiatives (0.157). These findings suggest that enhancing HR capabilities through continuous development is key to overcoming current deficiencies. The rater agreement value ($W = 0.218$) indicates a moderate agreement (21.83%), reflecting some consensus among informants regarding the importance of HR development. The emphasis on dynamic HR solutions points to the need for flexible and adaptive training programs that focus not only on technical skills but also on broader competencies to meet halal certification requirements effectively.

The strategy analysis prioritizes HR development, particularly focusing on dynamic technical skills, which received the highest score of 0.323. This is followed by attitude formation (0.167), work ethics (0.147), and knowledge enhancement (0.129). The synthesis results suggest that technical skills are paramount in enabling MSMEs to meet halal certification standards, while complementary elements such as attitudes and work ethics reinforce the adoption of Islamic economic principles. The rater agreement value ($W = 0.461$) indicates a moderate agreement level (46.13%), reflecting a more aligned perception among informants on strategy prioritization. These findings highlight the importance of a comprehensive HR development approach encompassing skill enhancement, ethical practices, and knowledge building. Effective HR strategies not only enable MSMEs to comply with halal certification requirements but also equip them to adapt to market dynamics and consumer expectations. Future research should focus on the implementation of these strategies and evaluate their long-term impacts on MSME performance and competitiveness.

Conclusion

The problems faced in the importance of human resource development in food MSMEs to obtain halal certification are divided into three problems, the top priority is the problem of limited human resources, followed by the problem of low quality, then the problem of inexperience. Informants have a level of agreement in determining the main priority of the problem of the importance of human resource development in food MSMEs to obtain halal certification due to the variety of answers given by informants. To address the existing issues, the most effective solution was to prioritize human resource development in food MSMEs to achieve halal certification. The main priority found to overcome these problems is the HR development solution, followed by training solutions, education solutions. The level of agreement of informants in determining the top priority in solving the importance of human resource development in food MSMEs to obtain halal certification due to the variety of answers

given by informants. The most prioritized alternative in determining the importance of human resource development in food MSMEs to obtain halal certification is to implement technical skills strategies, attitude formation strategies, work ethics, and knowledge. Informants have a high level of agreement in determining the top priority in strategies to overcome the problem of the importance of human resource development in food MSMEs to obtain halal certification due to the variety of answers given by informants.

Author Contribution

Ade Khadijatul Z Harahap: Creating and Designing analyses; Reviewing the draft; Writing paper.

Muhammad Ramadhan: Review of the draft, literature review, and result discussion.

Isnaini Harahap: Review of the draft, literature review, and result discussion.

Declaration of Competing Interest

Author declare that have no conflict of interest.

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