

ASSESSING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF BRUNEI DARUSSALAM'S HALAL SUPERVISOR QUALIFICATION: BRIDGING SHARIAH COMPLIANCE AND TECHNICAL COMPETENCY

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ABSTRACT

The presence of halal food supervisors in halal-certified restaurants is crucial and is one of the requirements of halal certification. Additionally, the qualification assessment for halal food supervisors has increased scrutiny within the halal industry, especially in Brunei Darussalam. However, the issue of withdrawing halal certification was caused by the negligence of a few halal food supervisors, resulting in the revocation of the halal certificate after a restaurant was found to have breached halal certification standards, and this has raised doubts among the community. Therefore, this study aims to assess the qualification procedures of halal food supervisors, focusing on both shariah aspects and technical competencies. A qualitative approach was used for data collection, involving semi-structured interviews with five participants from the Halal Food Control Division and the Brunei Darussalam Food Authority. Thematic analysis using NVivo software revealed two major themes, such as the regulatory and guideline framework, and strengthening compliance for food safety and hygiene. This study reveals that a comprehensive procedure ensures supervisors are thoroughly assessed on their ability to adhere to halal standards, while technical competencies include implementing halalan thayyiban practices, such as food safety and hygiene. Incorporating these competencies not only validates the supervisors' expertise but also fosters trust among stakeholders, ensuring that the qualification process is reliable, ethical, and efficient.

Keywords: *Qualification, Shariah, Technical, Regulatory, Evaluation*

1. Introduction

Islam is a religion encompassing all aspects of Muslim life, based on worshipping Allah Subhanahu wa ta'ala. Eating and drinking are regulated according to Quran and Sunnah, ensuring halal and thayyib consumption. Islamic law mandates Muslims to consume halal food, which is permissible, and avoid haram (prohibited) food, which is illegal or forbidden. It has been mentioned in the Quran:

وَيُحِلُّ لَهُمُ الطَّيِّبَاتِ وَيُحَرِّمُ عَلَيْهِمُ الْخَبَائِثَ

Meaning: “and makes lawful for them the good things and prohibits for them the evil.”

The *halal* food industry has experienced rapid expansion and development in recent years. Given the rising demand for halal products worldwide, this upward trend is anticipated to continue (Sulaiman, Abdullah, & Hashim, 2023). By 2024, the market for halal goods is projected to exceed USD 6.0 trillion (Azam & Abdullah, 2020).

In addition, the halal food industry is driven by factors such as rapid growth of Islam, increasing non-Muslim consumption for ethical and safety reasons, increasing Muslim consumer power, and consumer knowledge. Maintaining the integrity and authenticity of halal products is crucial, and human resources are essential for success. Halal food supervisors, auditors, and other roles play a significant role in the industry, ensuring halal

certification, controlling food preparation, and acting as representatives during inspections. Therefore, the aim of this study is to assess the effectiveness human resource management is essential for improving business quality.

2. Background of study

The presence of Islam in Brunei Darussalam means it is mandatory for the Muslim community to maintain an Islamic personality. One of the country's efforts in protecting Islam is by giving serious attention to its food consumption in ensuring its *halalan thayyiban* integrity. The administration of halal affairs in Brunei Darussalam is overseen by the Ministry of Religious Affairs (MoRA) and under MoRa is the Brunei Islamic Religious Council (BIRC), which is the highest governing body in Brunei Darussalam with legal authority under the Islamic Religious Council Act and Kadis Court Cap 77 of Brunei Darussalam law. Halal certification is issued and controlled by the Halal Certification Body which is BIRC under the MoRA. Halal certification is the process of verifying the business and its product or services on their compliance with halal standards. To ensure that halal status of the product is maintained and monitored by experts in the field, the Brunei Halal Certification is internationally renowned for its credibility and recognised in both Muslim and non-Muslim countries.

Moreover, a business owner who wishes to apply for a halal certificate or halal permit must first go through the Halal Food Control Division (HFCD) which has the authority to handle the certification procedure, and then through BIRC at MoRA (Raffi, 2019). The HFCD is responsible for the enforcement of Halal Meat Act, Chapter 183 and its regulations, and Halal Certificate and Halal Label Order (HCHLO) 2005 (Borneo Bulletin, 2024). In addition, following to regulations, in Chapter 4 (1) of HCHLO, 2005, the business owner must have at least two halal food supervisors who are acknowledged by BIRC. These supervisors play an important role and are responsible for the halal food products and food processing on the premises (Sulaiman, Salleh, Raffi, & Mahalle, 2022).

Furthermore, a statutory body known as the Brunei Darussalam Food Authority (BDFA) has also been established, acting as a regulatory and competent authority for food safety and quality in Brunei Darussalam following the enactment of the Brunei Darussalam Food Authority Order on 1st January 2021. The BDFA's mandate unified certain functions and responsibilities of divisions and units that were formerly overseen by the Food Safety and Quality Control Division (FSQCD) of the Ministry of Health (MOH) and the Department of Agriculture and Agrifood of the Ministry of Primary Resources and Tourism (MPRT). It functions as a singular point of contact for food-related issues. BDFA ensures that food products in Brunei Darussalam are safe, clean, and of good quality; ultimately ensuring and protecting consumer safety and health. As a result, the halal food supervisor must carry out their tasks to protect Muslims' interests and ensure that the restaurants' food products and utensils are safe, clean, pure, and in compliance with protocols established by BDFA and HFCD.

Moreover, it is important for entrepreneurs and small or medium traders to fulfil their trust towards the customers. Halal food supervisors should be honest in all their duties and responsibilities. To support this statement, His Majesty Sultan Haji Hassanal Bolkiah Mu'izzaddin Waddaulah Ibni Al-Marhum Sultan Haji Omar 'Ali Saifuddien Sa'adul Khairi Waddien, Sultan and Yang Di-Pertuan of Brunei Darussalam shared his concern on *halal* restaurant ethics during an Eid celebration with Yayasan Sultan Haji Hassanal Bolkiah on 10th September 2011:

“The owner of a restaurant or any other eatery places should be responsible in ensuring that all types of food are not only *halal* but also pure according to *syariah*. Therefore, every ingredient should be from a *halal* source, avoiding the opposite or those that are ambiguous of their lawful or unlawful status.” (His Majesty His Majesty Sultan Haji Hassanah Bolkiah. (2011).

A total of 771 restaurants were recorded to hold halal certificates as of July 2022. Out of that, 673 restaurants in Brunei-Muara, 44 were in Tutong and Belait, and while 10 in Temburong hold a valid *halal* certificate (Kementerian Hal Ehwal Ugama, 2023). In 2022 and 2023, a total of 1,112 registered halal food supervisors served at *halal*-certified restaurants in the country.

3. Problem Statements

Brunei Darussalam has formulated guidelines, standards, and laws regulating the halal status of food products, however instances of non-compliance by a few of halal food supervisors persists such as breaches halal certification and failure to uphold the safety and hygiene standard. For example, On March 2025, a restaurant in Gadong had its Halal Certificate and Halal Supervisor Accreditation Certificate withdrawn after authorities discovered non-halal food on the premises and this has violated halal certification standards, prompting an inquiry pursuant to the Halal Certificate and Halal Label Order, 2005 (Junaidi, 2025). Similar cases were in September 2023, whereby the halal certificates and halal food supervisor certificates in a restaurant in Gadong was annulled after 25 litres of pork fat (refined fat), 35 solid packets of duck blood, and 58 other types of doubtful food items were found and used in cooking (Othman, 2023). In June 2022, 31 premises inspected by HFCD were found to have not applied for halal certification, three used the BIRC halal label and logo without permission, while six others displayed expired halal certificates (Mahmud, 2022). These have created serious doubts and confusion among consumers and have breached their trust on halal food supervisors. This highlights possible gaps in the qualification of halal food supervisors, particularly in their ability to monitor compliance and to follow halal standards.

The supervisors should also be aware that BIRC and BDFA can revoke their halal certification process at any time if there is an offence on *thayyiban*. For instance, cleanliness is a state that is free of dirt, insects, and trash, and is one of the signs that could convince customers to visit a restaurant without doubt. According to statistics compiled by BDFA in 2022 on the hygienic quality of food premises inspected, 130 food premises (31%) were found to not be satisfactory. This is an increase from 2021, whereby only 50 (19%) out of the 457 food establishments inspected were deemed to be unsatisfactory (Kon, 2023). The supervisors may lack of technical knowledge and poor enforcement of hygiene and food safety management in which will lead to poor sanitation practices in halal-certified restaurants. As such, these issues need to be addressed as much as possible to ensure consumers in Brunei are eating and consuming *halalan thayyiban* food.

This incident raises concerns about the current qualification procedures for halal food supervisors, which may not adequately prepare them to enforce compliance, and suggests potential weaknesses in supervision and monitoring. Lastly, the recent cases of a halal-certified restaurant having their Halal Certificate revoked due to the presence of non-halal food this highlights the need of qualified halal food supervisors in guaranteeing compliance with halal standards and the need for stronger qualification procedures. Thus, this study aims to assess the qualification procedures of halal food supervisors by focusing on both *syariah* aspect and technical competencies.

4. Materials and methods

This research employed a qualitative method. The semi-structured interview act as a primary data and the interview was conducted involving five participants from HFCD and two BDFA. The interview was conducted around 29th May to 16th December, 2023 and the participants in this study are summaries in Table 1:

Table 1: Summary for the Semi-Structured Interview Schedule

No	Acronym	Ministry	Section	Position
1	Participant “K”	Ministry of Health	Brunei Darussalam Food Authority	Acting Chief Technical Officer
2	Participant “L”	Ministry of Health	Brunei Darussalam Food Authority	Head of Food Trade Division
3	Participant “M”	Ministry of Religious Affairs	Halal Food Control Division	Food Officer from the Halal and International Policy Unit
4	Participant “N”	Ministry of Religious Affairs	Halal Food Control Division	Head of Inspection Unit
5	Participant “O”	Ministry of Religious Affairs	Halal Food Control Division	Religious Officer at the Halal Education Unit

Aside from semi-structured interview, this study also used legal documents such as official reports, laws and acts as a primary data and secondary data from journals, books and articles related on halal food supervisors. In this study, purposive or judgmental sampling was chosen. The chosen tool for the analysis of qualitative data in this research was NVivo software version 12. The utilisation of NVivo, significantly efficient in the data analysis process such as organisation and management of data. Firstly, the researcher used NVivo software to generate initial codes for transcribed interviews, which were then manually analysed for meaningful segments and patterns. Although some software supports automatic coding, it is crucial to verify its accuracy. Secondly, the researcher manually identified themes, ensuring consistency and contextual relevance in the analysis, while still aligning results with research objectives. As a result, by integrating NVivo’s systematic coding functionalities with manual classification, will ensure consistency and contextual relevance in the analysis.

To ensure the reliability of the identified themes, the researcher employed the inter-rater reliability process using a theme reviewer approach. The inter-rater reliability measures the extent which different raters agree in their assessment when evaluating the same items or events. This is to ensure that the assessment method is reliable in confirming the consistency and generalisability of findings (Parti, 2024). Furthermore, the Kappa statistics is always used for the inter-rater reliability analysis, Cohen’s Kappa is used when there are two raters or observers, while Fleiss’ Kappa is adaption of Cohen’s Kappa for three or more raters (Mc Hugh, 2012).

In this study, Fleiss’ Kappa Index is used to determine the level of agreement of the theme under study. This is made by matching the unit from the interview data with the dominant theme in a qualitative data such as in the interview (Mahmod & Ishak, 2003). Moreover, the themes in this study were evaluated by three experts which were from academic and *syariah* department, both from Brunei and abroad such as UNISSA, HFCD, and International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM). The Fleiss Kappa’s values can range from 0 to +1 and the correlation between Fleiss’ Kappa and the inter-rater agreement:

Table 2: The Fleiss’s Kappa and Inter-rater agreement

Value of Kappa value (κ)	Interpretation
< 0.00	Poor agreement
0.00-0.20	Slight agreement
0.21-0.40	Fair agreement
0.41-0.60	Moderate agreement
0.61-0.80	Substantial agreement
0.81-1.00	Almost Perfect

Source: Landis and Kosh (1977)

Therefore, all selected panels were requested to give their assessment to ensure the clarity, consistency, and alignment of the themes with the study objectives. The panels are requested to rate per themes using the criteria stated in Table 3:

Table 3: Theme Evaluation Scale

Scale	Interpretation
1	Not Relevant
2	Somewhat Relevant
3	Quite Relevant
4	Highly Relevant

Table 4: Theme Reviewer's Result

Theme Reviewer's Result					
Theme	Expert 1	Expert 2	Expert 3	Total of Agreement	Interpretation
Regulatory and Guideline Framework	4	4	4	1	Almost Perfect Agreement
Strengthening Compliance for Food Safety and Hygiene	4	4	4	1	Almost Perfect Agreement

After the data analysis process was carried out, the researcher obtained a total of two themes which are regulatory and guideline framework and strengthening compliance for food safety and hygiene. 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 researcher is in accordance with the study objectives and based on expert approval.

5. Results and Discussion

5.1 Regulatory and Guideline Framework

Based on the initial codes, the regulatory framework and guideline emerged as the first main theme, and three sub-themes have been identified from the interview with HFCD. This theme signifies the rules and standards established by regulatory bodies such as enforcers and auditors. It includes laws and standards that the halal food supervisor should adhere to; the law also encompasses the appointment of supervisors in restaurants. Furthermore, this theme also emphasises on the enforcement and monitoring involved in on-site audits.

Table 5: Responses and Theme Mapping for Regulatory and Guideline Framework

Sub-Themes	Number of Participants	Participant Responses
Compliance with Halal Standards and Guideline	2	<i>"Guideline for halal food supervisors, our auditors and enforcers refer to these guidelines to check whether they are qualified or not. As for halal food supervisors, in addition to knowledge of fundamental Islamic law and food handling, I forgot what they refer to it as, but it is something like the Brunei Darussalam Standard for Halal Food. From there, we can get</i>

		<p><i>the measures for halal food. It's fundamental. BCG Halal guidelines are essential for halal certification, and I believe the halal food supervisors already know about this. Moreover, the applicants do not have to purchase the book, although it is needed for future reference.</i>" - Participant M.</p> <p><i>"Previously, we also asked them to bring their food handler certifications authorised by the Ministry of Health or an equivalent."</i> - Participant N</p>
Appointment of Halal Food Supervisors	3	<p><i>"A halal food supervisor cannot work from one company branch to another unless permission is given by the authority. Without permission, the halal food supervisor should remain at the designated place."</i> - Participant M</p> <p><i>"Every restaurant needs a minimum of two halal food supervisor certificates displayed at the counter. If the halal food supervisor decides to change the workplace, for example, to a different restaurant, they have to go through the application process to become for the new workplace."</i> - Participant N</p> <p><i>"We usually recommend that every business registers at least four or five halal food supervisors. They can make these five applicants and appoint them as halal food supervisors. In my opinion, it would be better to have many halal food supervisors in a restaurant to avoid queries or difficulties in the future, especially when the inspection is being done. For example, this morning, we went to a business premise and found out that one of the halal food supervisors had quit their job, which is considered breaking the law. Thus, we suggested the restaurant's owner appoint more halal food supervisors, which must be done immediately. Although the requirement only requires two people per restaurant, it would be great if the owner registered and appointed as many halal food supervisors as possible during registration. As a result, this can lower the shortage or absence of a halal food supervisor in the restaurant."</i> - Participant O</p>
Enforcement	2	<p><i>"When we do an on-site audit, we always emphasise on checking the thayyiban part. If they make a mistake, we can find and reprimand them. For example, if the uncooked material is not separated from the cooked material. The premise's cleanliness could be more unsatisfying if you see uncooked ingredients mixed with others. Hence, we forward some to BDFA for further investigation. Thus, as you can see from here, BKMh is not the only entity that inspects premise investigation. The checklist we are referring to here involves monitoring, conducted twice a year, according to the guidelines. This occurs after the business premises have been granted a halal certificate or permit. The monitoring aims to ensure that businesses with halal certification or permits comply with all requirements and conditions. This includes verifying whether the appointed halal food supervisor is properly accredited and is fulfilling their duties and responsibilities."</i> - Participant M</p> <p><i>"Any serious matters will be directly passed to BDFA. Every business premise must list all the ingredients in the food or drinks. They must write down the brand that they are using. If they were found to use a different brand (when applying), it is considered against the law. For example, they use salt from the brand AK, so during the inspection, if we found they use the brand Plyman, then it is a wrong and non-compliant act. Every halal food supervisor should be aware of this matter. Moreover, even if the restaurant wants to add new food ingredients, the restaurant must make a new application for additional</i></p>

	<i>ingredients used in the food. Usually, BKMH always enforces this.” - Participant O</i>
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Figure 1 presents the tree index of the open coding process, illustrating how these themes and sub-themes were derived from the interview data:

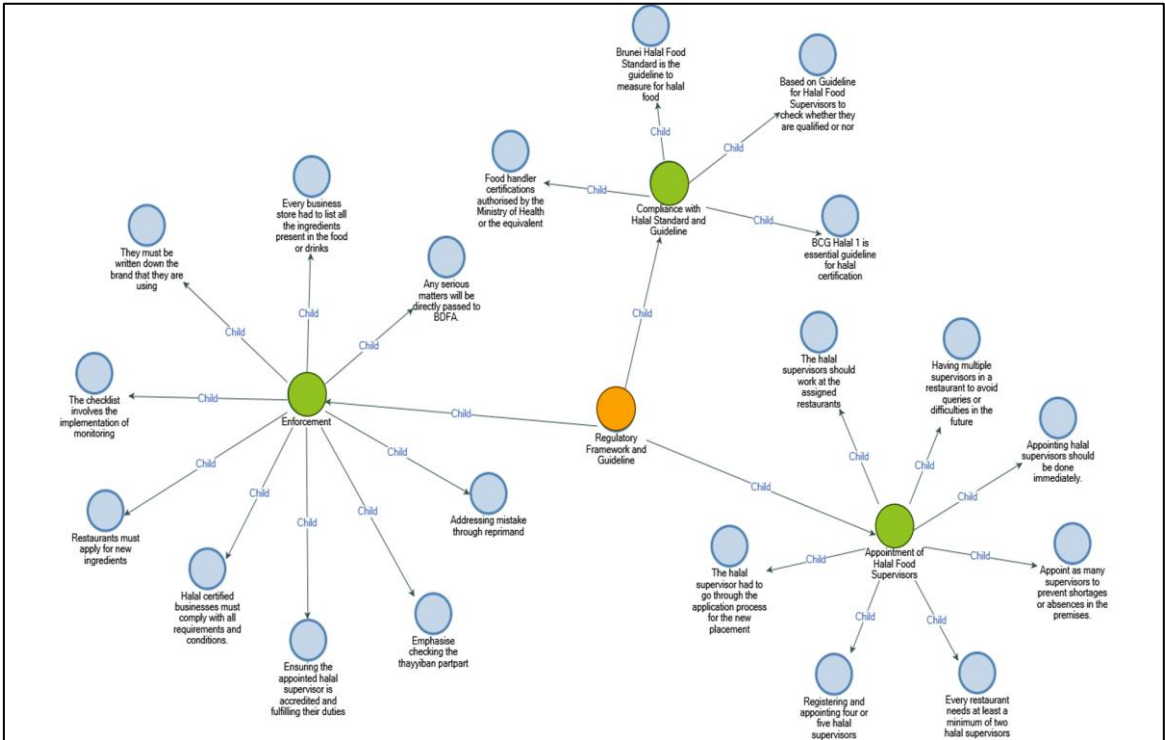


Figure 1: Tree Index Figure from NVivo Under Regulatory Framework and Guideline

Table 6: Details of Initial Codes Identified Based on Regulatory Framework and Guideline

Main Theme	Sub-Theme	Initial Codes
Regulatory Framework and Guideline	Compliance With Halal Standard and Guideline	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Based on Guideline for Halal Food Supervisors to check whether they are qualified or norPBD24:2007 is measures for Halal foodBCG Halal 1 guidelines are essential for Halal certificationFood handler certifications authorised by the Ministry of Health or the equivalent
	Appointment of Halal Food Supervisors	<ul style="list-style-type: none">The halal supervisor should be assigned to specific restaurantsEvery restaurant needs at least a minimum of two halal supervisorThe Halal supervisor must go through an application process for new placementRegister at least four or five Halal supervisors.Appoint lots of halal supervisors is to avoid queries or difficulties in the futureAppoint halal supervisors must be done immediately.Appointed as many halal supervisors to prevent the shortage or absence of a halal supervisor in the premises.

Enforcement	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Emphasise checking the thayyiban part• Addressing mistake through reprimand• Any serious matters will be directly passed to BDFA.• Every business store had to list all the ingredients present in the food or drinks.• They must be written down the brand that they are using.• Restaurants must apply for new ingredients• The checklist involves the implementation of monitoring• The halal certified premises must comply with all requirements and conditions.• Ensuring the appointed halal supervisor is accredited and fulfilling their duties
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The first theme involves the discussion with HFCD. HFCD is the agency under the Syariah Affairs Department at MoRA. According to Ibrahim (2022), this agency helps BIRC deal with the enforcement aspect under halal affairs in the controlling and monitoring of food and goods sold in the country to ensure that they are guaranteed halal. Additionally, HFCD significantly upholds the integrity of halal food in Brunei and enhances consumer confidence in halal products both locally and globally through its stringent standards and certification process (Rahim & Sulaiman, 2024). This framework is essential to ensure that the production of halal food adheres to the Islamic dietary laws. A thorough regulatory framework for halal certification is necessary; it is essential for maintaining consumer confidence and the integrity of halal certifications. The Brunei Government has introduced two legislations known as the Halal Meat Act (HMA), CAP 183 and the HCHLO, 2005. These two legislations are the most important mechanisms for dealing with halal matters in the Sultanate. They are based on syariah law, a more systematic administration of Muslim affairs relating to halal certification and further protecting *masalahah*.

The halal food supervisors play a crucial role in maintaining the integrity of halal certification. They are responsible for ensuring that the food premises meet halal standards and certification requirements, as stated in PBD 24:2007, and it is essential to comply with PBD 24:2007 for obtaining halal certification in Brunei. The participants in this study highlight PBD 24:2007 as a key reference for the supervisors to ensure that the food served in their restaurant meet halal standards. This study thus further supports Deuraseh (2019), explains PBD 24:2007 as the standard of halal food and safety according to hukum syarak which is permissible for consumption based on Islamic law and asserts that Muslim countries require guidelines and comprehensive laws to ensure that every marketed halal product satisfies syariah requirements based on the Quran, to ensure its safety and halal status. Furthermore, the supervisors must have a thorough understanding of Islamic dietary laws and food handling procedures. pervisors are essential for ensuring halal compliance and integrity in restaurants.

In addition, the supervisors must follow certain halal standards during the certification process. Auditors and enforcers utilise these guidelines to verify that the supervisors possess the required knowledge and skills. As mandated by BCG Halal 2, “the place of business must establish and execute halal procedures that comply with PBD 24:2007 and BCG Halal 1.” (BCG Halal 2, 2007). Moreover, PBD 24:2007 provides a structured approach for auditors to evaluate whether food products meet halal requirements. The auditors must assess compliance in accordance with HCHLO, 2005 and ensure the effective implementation of all halal procedures in food production and handling (BCG Halal 2,

2007). Consequently, to ensure a thorough understanding, Sulaiman and Hashim (2021) highlight that after receiving the application form, HFCD will conduct oral and written tests for the halal food supervisors.

An additional noteworthy observation is the extent to which the halal certification framework strictly regulates the assignment of halal food supervisors to ensure consistent compliance with halal standards across different places. As mentioned in previous guidelines, every restaurant needs at least two or more halal food supervisors. These supervisors are required to remain at their assigned locations unless they receive permission from the relevant authorities to work at another branch (Bahagian Kawalan Makanan Halal, 2008). This policy helps maintain a more focused and effective supervision at each site. It also ensures that the supervisors are committed to maintaining halal standards without the distraction of overseeing multiple branches.

This study highlights the comprehensive system involves audits, ingredient transparency, and continuous monitoring, which are essential for maintaining the halal certification integrity. As mandated in BCG Halal 2, all supporting documents such as halal certificates, records, list of ingredients and packaging materials are submitted to verify that all the requirements under HCHLO, 2005, Brunei Darussalam Halal Food Standard PBD 24:2007, and the Brunei Darussalam Certification Guideline for Halal Certificate and Halal Label – Guideline for Halal Certification (BCG Halal 1) are addressed. (BCG Halal 2, 2007).

Furthermore, the participants also mentioned that regular monitoring is conducted to ensure ongoing compliance with halal certification requirements. This process involves a thorough review of the business premises to verify adherence to all conditions and guidelines set forth during the initial certification. It also includes reviewing the accreditation and performance of halal food supervisors to ensure they are effectively fulfilling their roles. A study by Suleiman et al., (2021) adds that surveillance audits are conducted at any time to ensure that the premises always comply with halal food standards. If the premises are found to have committed an offence, the halal certificate will be revoked.

5.2 Strengthening Compliance for Food Safety and Hygiene

The next analysis focuses on the guidelines and regulations enforced by BDFA regarding food safety and hygiene in restaurants, highlighting the vital role halal food supervisors play in ensuring restaurants meet the requirements for food safety, quality, and hygiene standards. It reveals that strengthening compliance for food safety and hygiene serves as the second theme.

This theme focuses on improving food safety and hygiene practices in restaurants that serve halal cuisine. It entails regular inspections of food establishments based on an 11-point checklist. The Public Food Health Act requires these inspections. Halal food supervisors address non-compliance issues through enhanced sanitation procedures and effective kitchen management practices. These measures are critical to ensure the cleanliness and safety of halal meals served to customers. The structured examination process is designed to enhance supervisors' understanding of proper food handling procedures. Table 7 shows the responses and theme mapping for evaluation and strengthening compliance for food safety and hygiene:

Table 7: Responses and Theme Mapping for Strengthening Compliance for Food Safety and Hygiene

Sub-Themes	Number of Participants	Participant Responses
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Food Premises Inspection	2	<p><i>“The score from the premise inspection has a significant impact on the overall evaluation. Even with a valid food handler’s certificate, proper practice must still be followed.” - Participant K</i></p> <p><i>“Inspections are conducted by BDFA. We assess cleanliness of food premises and food handling methods. It is essential for our food handlers to understand that they must attend the courses we provide and we conduct inspections based on an 11-characteristic checklist for restaurants. These criteria cover various aspects of premise operations, such as cleanliness, including food storage such as the refrigerator. During inspections, we assess whether areas, such as under the tables, are properly cleaned. The level of scrutiny varies, with some aspects requiring strict adherence and others allowing for some flexibility. This variation can affect the overall inspection score.” - Participant L.</i></p>
Corrective Measures	2	<p><i>“The Public Food Health Act is currently in effect. However, it may be unclear for halal food supervisors. Therefore, clarifying what should be included in the Public Food Health Act is crucial. We will send out warning letters to anyone we found is not following protocols in place to guarantee food safety. This letter will indicate our dissatisfaction with the premise and provide written recommendations for improvement.” - Participant K</i></p> <p><i>“On the day of inspection, a consultation is held involving not only the food handlers but also the manager and supervisor. During this session, they are given a report, detailing the checklist items that require corrective action. They are given a 2-week period to resolve any problems that have been found. If the premises appear unsatisfactory, the restaurant must be thoroughly cleaned within the given timeframe. Following the 2 weeks, we will return for a follow-up inspection.” - Participant L</i></p>
Non-Compliance Issues	2	<p><i>“Minor issues can be resolved right away.” - Participant K</i></p> <p><i>“When it comes to restaurants, we usually encounter minor issues. We often observe recurring issues like food residue left on the floor, food being prepared directly on the floor, and even cleaning tasks being carried out in drains. However, in the future, with a proper license, they will not be allowed to operate if they continue with such practices, although there might be some exceptions. For major issues, they might face temporary closure, possibly for 2 weeks. But for minor issues, they can continue operating as long as they focus on improving cleanliness.” “Serious concerns include major issues such as rat infestation. It is regarded as a serious issue if we discover evidence of a rat infestation. Resolving significant problems, such as pest infestations, is our primary objective.” - Participant L.</i></p>
Structured Examination Process	2	<p><i>“Personal hygiene and using proper food handling techniques. Basically, wearing hairnets, gloves, and aprons, as well as understanding proper food handling practices, such as storing food in accordance with its temperature requirements. For instance, how to store raw and cooked food in the refrigerator separately and how to ensure that food cannot be left out of the refrigerator for longer than a day (24 hrs). Additionally, make sure food is reheated correctly to prevent contamination. Food in the refrigerator needs to be properly arranged, with cooked food on top and raw food underneath.” - Participant K</i></p>

“The exam is structured to reflect this simplicity, with a 15-minute briefing followed by a brief and short explanation and then test. It is multiple choice.” - Participant L

Figure 2 presents the tree index of the open coding process, illustrating how these themes and sub-themes were derived from the interview data:

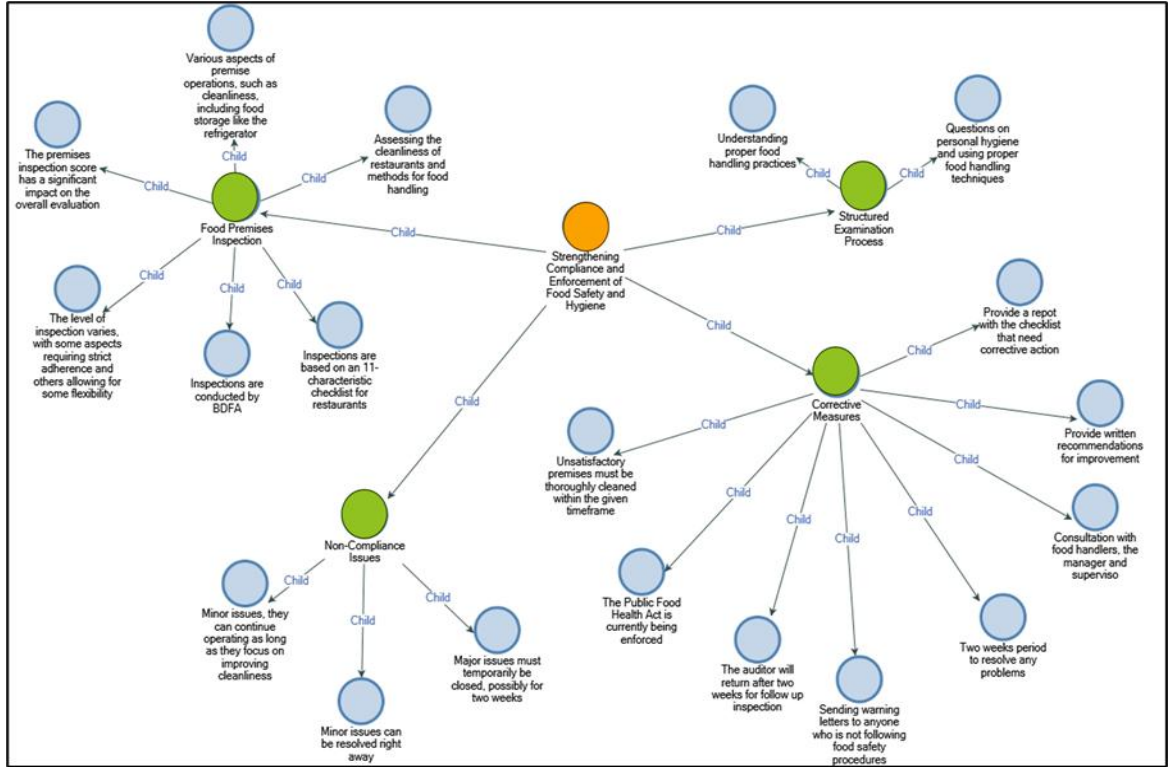


Figure 2: Tree Index Figure from NVivo Under Strengthening Compliance and Enforcement of Food Safety and Hygiene

The initial codes were then divided into four sub-themes, and the details of the initial codes have been summarised in Table 8:

Table 8: Details of Initial Codes Identified Based on Strengthening Compliance and Enforcement of Food Safety and Hygiene

Main Theme	Sub-Theme	Initial Codes
Strengthening Compliance and Enforcement of Food Safety and Hygiene	Food Premises Inspection	<ul style="list-style-type: none">BDFA conducts inspectionsAssessing the cleanliness of food premises and methods for food handlingInspections based on an 11-characteristic checklist for restaurantsVarious aspects of premise operations, such as cleanliness, including food storage, like the refrigeratorThe level of inspection varies, with some aspects requiring strict adherence and others allowing for some flexibilityThe premises inspection score has a significant impact on the overall evaluation
	Corrective Measures	<ul style="list-style-type: none">The Public Food Health Act is currently in enforcedSending warning letters to anyone who is not following food safety proceduresProvide written recommendations for improvement

	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Consultation with food handlers, the manager and the supervisor.• Provide a report with the checklist that needs corrective action• A two-week period to resolve any problems.• Unsatisfactory premises must be thoroughly cleaned within the given timeframe.• The auditor will return after two weeks for a follow-up inspection
Non-Compliance Issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Major issues must be temporarily closure, possibly for two weeks• For minor issues, they can continue operating as long as they focus on improving cleanliness• Issues with minor issues can be resolved right away
Structured Examination Process	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• A 15-minute briefing, and short explanation and then test• It is a multiple-choice choice• Questions on personal hygiene and using the proper food handling techniques.• Understanding proper food handling practices

To strengthen the credibility of halal products in Brunei, the country established BDFA in 2021 to guarantee consumer food safety. The formation of BDFA in 2021 represents a significant advancement aimed at ensuring the safety and quality of food products in Brunei (Rahim & Matusin, 2024). Furthermore, BDFA ensures that all food in Brunei Darussalam is safe and of good quality through the enforcement of relevant food legislation and the implementation of a robust food safety system. This authority ensures all food businesses, operators, and persons follow good standards for personal hygiene and food products by monitoring, inspecting, testing, and certifying food or premises (Brunei Darussalam Food Authority, 2022). Hence, Halal supervisors are essential for ensuring halal compliance and integrity in restaurants. Halal supervisors will fulfil their responsibilities to safeguard the interests of Muslims and ensure that the facility’s goods and utensils are halal, pure, clean, and safe, thereby preventing the introduction of haram products and contamination during preparation and processing (Aminuddin & Sulaiman, 2025).

The Public Health (Food) Act (Chapter 182) and the Wholesome Meat Order 2011 also play a role in controlling food safety and quality. This legislation empowers the MOH in relation to labelling, hygiene practices, and food safety. The primary objective of these two Acts is to protect the public from elements that harm human health and create fraud in the preparation, sale, and consumption of food, as well as related matters. As far as halal matters are concerned, these acts are also a measure to control halal issues in terms of hygiene, purity, health and quality of food that conform to the concept of halalan thayyiban.

The discussion with participants began with food inspection. The BDFA inspection process includes a thorough checklist comprising 11 criteria related to operational inspection; these include food supply, food storage, food provision, food presentation, food handling, cleaning, toilets, waste management, vector control, premises and equipment condition, and documentation and management. BDFA mandates food handler inspections to ensure they are educated on food safety protocols. The inspections focus on aspects such

as sanitation and proper food handling techniques. This process is critical for maintaining high food safety and hygiene standards in restaurants, emphasising the supervisors' practical application of knowledge and adherence. To differentiate between inspection and auditing, Deuraseh and Heradhyaksa (2020) defined inspection as a specific halal process that occurs during inspection, while auditing examines proof of compliance operating outside of inspection times. To emphasise this, the Brunei Government has implemented a scoring system to evaluate food premises:

- a. A score of 70% or higher is considered satisfactory.
- b. A score ranging from 51% to 69% is deemed unsatisfactory, prompting the manager/supervisor to attend a counselling session and implement corrective actions within a specified timeframe. The premise will then be re-evaluated. If the premise does not achieve a score of 70% during the re-inspection, the Licensing Authority will be informed, and the premise will be recommended for closure.
- c. A score below 50% is considered highly unsatisfactory, resulting in the immediate closure of the premise. The manager/supervisor must attend a counselling session, and the premises will undergo a re-inspection 3 days after closure. The premise will only be permitted to resume operations if it is deemed satisfactory upon re-inspection, by achieving a score of 70% or higher. Alternatively, the premise will remain closed for 7 consecutive days. (Ministry of Health, n.d).

Moreover, the participants discuss non-conformance issues and how minor issues are common in restaurants and can often be resolved promptly. However, recurring or major issues, such as rat infestations, may result in temporary closures until they are resolved. This approach ensures that serious violations are addressed promptly to maintain food safety standards. As stated in BCG Halal 4, in Clause 2.16, non-conformance means activities carried out not in accordance with halal procedures and requirements:

- a. Minor - involving hygiene and cleanliness.
- b. Major - involving the change of ingredients, manufacturers and suppliers, machinery and relocation of the plant. The above offences (minor and major) will result in the suspension of the certificate or permit and subject the manufacturer to remedial and corrective actions, requiring resubmission of the application.
- c. Serious - involving the use of Haram ingredients e.g. non slaughtered animals, pork or its derivatives in the production. This will result in the revocation of the certificate or permit and may lead to the prosecution of the company in court. (BCG Halal 4, 2007).

This process highlights the importance of understanding and complying with regulations. Leinwand et al. (2017) state that food safety inspectors often detect non-compliance in operations relevant to food safety during restaurant inspections. This is why the Public Food Health Act provides the legal framework for food safety. BDFA ensures compliance by issuing warning letters to establishments that fail to follow protocols, detailing the necessary improvements.

Additionally, the participants emphasise the importance of Corrective Action Requests (CARs) following a food premises inspection. The process is comprehensive, involving consultations with food handlers, managers, and supervisors. As legislated in BCG Halal 4, in Clause 2.8, whereby "follow-up activity to obtain evidence that the non-conformance given as CARs are being satisfactorily corrected and implemented and that the halal procedures and requirements have been maintained. A follow-up audit can be on-site

or adequacy/document audit” (BCG Halal 4, 2007).” A report is provided, outlining the corrective actions needed within a two-week period (BCG Halal, 2007). Follow-up inspections ensure that issues are resolved, highlighting the ongoing responsibility of halal food supervisors to maintain standards.

Another significant finding in this study is that to guarantee food safety, BDFA mandates that all individuals involved in food handling must successfully complete a fundamental food safety training programme and obtain a food handler certificate. Akabanda, Hlortsi, and Owusu-Kwarteng (2017) also emphasise the importance of providing proper education and training to enhance food handler knowledge, which ultimately ensures the safety of the food prepared.

Finally, the participants elaborate on the food handler assessment process, which involves a 15-minute briefing, explanation, and a multiple-choice test. By rigorously testing their knowledge, BDFA ensures that supervisors are prepared to uphold the highest standards of food handling and cleanliness in halal-certified restaurants. Regular inspections and assessments strengthen compliance with food safety regulations, enhance the reliability of halal food establishments, and reduce health risks.

6. Conclusion

To conclude this study, it can be seen from the results and discussion above, which compile information from interviews conducted with HFCD and BDFA in Brunei Darussalam. The finding reveals that HFCD has established a comprehensive qualification procedure for halal food supervisors, particularly in terms of the Shariah aspect, to ensure that they meet stringent halal standards by verifying that all food sources and ingredients are halal-certified and preventing cross-contamination with non-halal elements. The qualification procedure comprehensively assesses the supervisors’ understanding of the technical aspects of food handling, ensuring they fulfil all responsibilities. Furthermore, the combination of extensive food safety training, practical demonstrations, stringent inspection criteria, and uncompromising performance requirements establishes a strong framework for evaluating the credentials of halal food supervisors. These measures ensure that supervisors possess the necessary skills and knowledge to maintain food safety and hygiene standards in their establishments. This demonstrates that the current qualification assessment procedures implemented by HFCD and BDFA play a crucial role in ensuring the quality of the assessment. This comprehensive approach not only validates the expertise and competencies of the supervisors but also guarantees their capacity to consistently implement these standards, thereby upholding the authenticity and security of *halal* food services in Brunei Darussalam. Nonetheless, their efficacy can be evaluated by analysing the strengths and possible areas for enhancement. Thus, this study suggests that adequately assessing and training halal food supervisors to uphold Brunei Halal Standards enables the HFCD qualification process to maintain the integrity and reliability of halal food supervision in restaurants. This study suggests to increase the credibility of the halal certification system and help to create a more efficient supervision system by spotting possible training such as ongoing programmes provided by HFCD and BDFA, enhance regular monitoring to ensure consistent adherence to halal standards and identifying competency gaps, so this will reduce instances of non-compliance and revoked certifications in the halal food industry.

7. Acknowledgement

The researchers extend their utmost gratitude to the officers of HFCD and BDFA. The researchers treasure their invaluable insights and knowledge that contributed to this study.

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