HALAL HUMAN CAPITAL AND WAGE DETERMINATION IN THE HALAL INDUSTRY: AN INTERPRETIVE STUDY IN MATARAM CITY

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to examine how halal industry actors interpret the role of halal human capital in the wage structure of the halal industry in Mataram City. Adopting a qualitative approach with an interpretivist paradigm, the research explores perceptions, experiences, and practices regarding the value of halal competencies in determining employee remuneration. Data were collected from 20 informants, including halal business owners, employees, and industry practitioners, through direct observation, in-depth interviews, and document analysis. Data analysis followed Miles and Huberman's interactive model, comprising data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. Findings indicate that halal human capital is recognized as a critical component of workforce competence, encompassing both technical production skills and understanding of halal standards, such as raw material knowledge, compliance with halal production procedures, and hygiene principles. However, these competencies are primarily acquired informally through daily work experience and guidance from business owners. Wage determination in halal enterprises largely follows MSME patterns, based on work experience, job type, and working hours, with halal competence not yet serving as a primary factor. The study highlights the need to formally recognize and integrate halal human capital into human resource management policies to strengthen the role of halal competencies in the industry.

Keywords: Halal Human Capital; Wage Structure; Halal Industry; Interpretive Study

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1. INTRODUCTION

The development of the halal industry in recent decades has shown rapid growth and has become one of the global economic sectors with great potential in driving economic growth and community welfare. The halal industry is no longer limited to food and beverage products, but has expanded to include various sectors such as pharmaceuticals, cosmetics, logistics, tourism, and Islamic finance (Fibrianti et al., 2023). This expansion shows that the halal industry has developed into a complex and integrated economic ecosystem involving various actors in the production and distribution chain (Voak et al., 2023). In Indonesia, the growth of the halal industry has also been driven by increasing public awareness of halal products and government policy support for the development of a national halal ecosystem (Rizkitama et al., 2025). At the regional level, local governments have also begun to develop the halal industry sector as part of their local economic development strategies, including in West Nusa Tenggara Province (Basit et al., 2025).

As the halal industry grows, the need for human resources with specific competencies in the halal field is also increasing. The halal industry not only requires workers with technical skills, but also individuals who understand halal principles in the production, distribution, and supervision of products (Hashim & Shariff, 2016). The complexity of the halal supply chain and the increasing standards of halal certification require workers who have a sufficient understanding of sharia principles in industrial practice (Kudus et al., 2025). In this context, human resource development is an important factor in maintaining the integrity, quality, and credibility of halal products in the global market (Nur'Aini Ihsan et al., 2022). In addition, education and training focused on halal competencies also play an important role in increasing the capacity of the workforce in applying halal standards in the production process (Riofita & Iqbal, 2022).

In labor economics studies, the quality of human resources is often explained through the concept of human capital. Human Capital Theory explains that education, skills, experience, and training are forms of investment that can increase labor productivity (Xomidjonov, 2026). Individuals with higher levels of education and skills tend to have better productivity compared to individuals with lower levels of education (Alam et al., 2020). This increase in productivity can ultimately lead to higher wages for workers (Hasibuan & Handayani, 2021). Therefore, investment in human resource development is an important strategy for organizations to improve efficiency and competitiveness in the labor market (Sutarman, 2022).

In the context of the halal industry, the concept of human capital has evolved into a more specific concept, namely halal human capital. Halal human capital refers to human resources who not only have professional competence in a particular industry, but also have an understanding of halal principles and halal certification standards (Harahap et al., 2024). These competencies are important because the halal industry is not only related to technical aspects of production, but also to compliance with sharia principles in all business processes (Talib et al., 2024). In organizational practice, workers with specialized competencies often receive additional compensation or wage premiums due to their greater contribution to organizational productivity (Leoni & Gritti, 2017). In addition, the wage system in an organization is also influenced by various factors such as skills, experience, and workforce productivity, which are reflected in the company's wage structure (El Balshy & Ismael, 2023).

Previous studies have shown that the quality of human capital is closely related to labor wages. Workers with higher skills and education tend to earn higher wages than workers with lower skills (Acemoglu, D., & Restrepo, 2018). Work experience and professional training have been shown to increase individual productivity and have an impact on increasing labor income. as demonstrated by research using firm-level panel data in Belgium, which found that training programs resulted in a 23% productivity premium for trained workers and a 12% wage premium, even after controlling for the endogeneity of inputs and training using a control function approach (Konings & Vanormelingen, 2015). In addition, workforce

skills are also an important factor in determining the wage structure within an organization (Olafsen et al., 2015). In the context of the halal industry, halal competence is beginning to be seen as a form of specialized skill that can increase the value of labor in organizations (Rosli et al., 2022). Halal education and training play an important role in improving the capacity of the workforce in applying halal standards in industry, as evidenced by the development of a training framework based on several key standards such as MS1500:2009, MS1480, MS1514, and MS2400 Halal Supply Chain, which are designed to strengthen sharia understanding, implementation of the Halal Assurance Management System (HAS), and industry readiness in the halal certification process (Mohamed et al., 2020).

However, research specifically examining the relationship between halal human capital and wage structures in the halal industry is still relatively limited. Most studies focus more on aspects of halal competency development and halal certification systems in the industry (Tukiran et al., 2025). Despite the growing importance of halal competencies, it remains unclear whether such competencies are economically valued in labor markets, particularly in wage determination within halal industries. In fact, from an Islamic economic perspective, the wage system is not only based on labor productivity, but must also consider the principles of justice and worker welfare (Maihendra et al., 2026). The concept of ujrah in Islamic economics emphasizes that workers must receive fair compensation in return for the services they have provided (Gojali et al., 2022). In addition, the principle of distributive justice also emphasizes the importance of fair income distribution to reduce social inequality in society (Yasmeen, 2023). Islamic work ethic values such as honesty, responsibility, and justice also form the basis for creating harmonious working relationships within organizations (Prayogi et al., 2023).

Based on the above description, this study aims to understand how halal industry players interpret the role of halal human capital in the wage structure of the halal industry in Mataram City. Through an interpretive approach, this study seeks to explore the perceptions, experiences, and practices that have developed among halal industry players regarding the value of halal competencies in determining the wage system for workers. This understanding is expected to contribute to the development of literature on halal human capital and provide input for the development of human resource management policies and practices in the halal industry.

2. METHODS

This study employed a qualitative method with an interpretivist paradigm approach to understand how actors within the halal industry interpret and construct the meaning of halal human capital in the wage structure of the halal industry (Isik, 2025; Pervin & Mokhtar, 2022). This epistemological stance is grounded in the assumption that social reality is socially constructed and context-dependent, thereby requiring an in-depth exploration of participants' subjective meanings and lived experiences rather than relying on positivistic generalizations. The research was conducted in Mataram, which serves as one of the centers of economic activities and halal industry development. The city hosts various halal-based businesses, particularly within the micro, small, and medium enterprise (MSME) sector, which plays a significant role in strengthening the regional halal industry ecosystem (Akbar et al., 2025). The research involved 20 informants selected through purposive sampling, a technique that allows the selection of participants based on specific criteria relevant to the research objectives. The selection criteria included: (1) direct involvement in halal-based business operations, (2) a minimum of two years of experience in the halal industry, and (3) prior exposure to halal certification processes or halal-related training. The participants consisted of halal business owners, workers involved in halal-based businesses, and individuals with experience in managing the halal industry, such as halal auditors or halal process facilitators. The number of informants was determined based on the principle of data saturation, whereby data collection was continued until no new themes or significant insights emerged from subsequent interviews. Data collection was carried out through three primary techniques: direct observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation. The interview instrument was

developed in the form of a semi-structured interview guide derived from key indicators of human capital (education, skills, experience, and training) and halal human capital (knowledge of halal principles, understanding of halal certification, and implementation of halal standards in work practices). The overall research procedure and stages are illustrated in Figure 1.

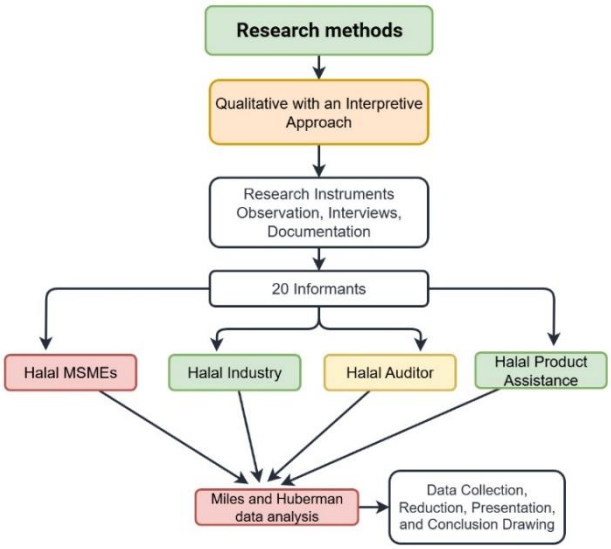


Figure 1. Research Procedure Flow

Figure 1 illustrates the research procedure applied in this study. The data analysis employed the Matthew B. Miles and A. Michael Huberman interactive analysis model, which consists of four stages: data collection, data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing (Qomaruddin & Sa'diyah, 2024). *First,* the researcher conducted a literature review to explore the conceptual understanding of the role of halal human capital within the wage structure of the halal industry from various academic sources, as well as examining previous related studies. The researcher also carried out direct observations to examine the implementation of halal competencies in daily work activities. In-depth interviews were conducted with selected informants using a semi-structured interview format based on an interview guide developed from the concepts of human capital and halal human capital. In addition, documentation was utilized to complement the data obtained from observations and interviews, particularly documents related to human resource management and halal business activities in Mataram. *Second,* the researcher performed data reduction by selecting and organizing the collected data according to the research focus, namely the role of halal human capital in the wage structure of the halal industry. At this stage, the researcher conducted open coding to identify initial categories, followed by axial coding to establish relationships between categories, and selective coding to develop core themes that represent the central phenomenon under study. *Third,* the data were presented through descriptive and thematic analysis to facilitate interpretation. *Finally,* the last stage involved verification and the drawing of conclusions based on the analyzed findings.

To ensure data validity and trustworthiness, this study employed methodological triangulation by comparing data obtained from observations, interviews, and documentation, as well as source triangulation across different categories of informants. Member checking was also conducted by returning the interview summaries to selected participants to confirm the accuracy of interpretations. Ethical considerations were carefully observed throughout the research process, including obtaining informed consent from all participants, ensuring confidentiality and anonymity, and allowing participants to withdraw at any stage of the study. Furthermore, researcher reflexivity was maintained by critically reflecting on the researcher's positionality, potential biases, and influence on the research process, particularly during data collection and interpretation.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Profile of Informants and Research Context

This research was conducted in Mataram, which is one of the centers of economic activity in the region. The city hosts various business activities related to the halal industry, particularly in the food and beverage sector, micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs), and service sectors that support the development of the halal industry. Most of the halal businesses included in this study are small and medium-scale enterprises producing processed foods, culinary products, and halal-based household products. Production activities are generally carried out on a family-business scale or within small enterprises involving both permanent and temporary workers. Several

businesses also collaborate with halal process facilitators to fulfill the requirements for halal certification.

This study involved 20 informants who were selected using a purposive sampling technique. The informants were chosen based on their involvement in halal industry activities in Mataram.

Table 1. Distribution of Research Informants

Informant Category	Number	Percentage
Halal business actors	8	40%
Halal industry workers	7	35%
Halal auditors	3	15%
Halal process assistants	2	10%
Total	20	100%

Based on Table 1, this study involved 20 informants selected through purposive sampling by considering their direct involvement in the halal industry ecosystem in Mataram. The composition of informants shows that the largest group consists of halal business owners with 8 individuals (40%), followed by halal industry workers with 7 individuals (35%). Meanwhile, halal auditors account for 3 individuals (15%), and halal process facilitators consist of 2 individuals (10%). This distribution indicates that most informants are positioned at the operational and managerial levels, directly involved in the production activities and management of halal businesses.

From an analytical perspective, this composition enables the study to capture multi-level interpretations of halal human capital, ranging from strategic decision-making (owners), operational practices (workers), to regulatory compliance (auditors and facilitators), thereby strengthening the validity of thematic interpretations.

The distribution of informants' work experience is presented in Table 2 below.

Table 2. Informant's Work Experience

Length of Experience	Informant's Work Experience
< 3 year	5
3–5 year	7
6–10 year	6
> 10 year	2

Based on Table 2, the distribution of informants' work experience in this study indicates a considerable variation in experience within the halal industry in Mataram. The majority of informants have 3–5 years of work experience, totaling 7 individuals, followed by 6 informants with 6–10 years of experience. Meanwhile, 5 informants have less than 3 years of work experience, and 2 informants have more than 10 years of experience.

This variation of experience is analytically significant as it reflects different levels of embedded knowledge and tacit understanding of halal practices, which subsequently influence how halal competencies are perceived and valued within organizational wage structures.

3.2 Halal Competence as a Form of Human Capital



Figure 2. MSME Business Actors at the Mataram City Bazaar

Based on the documentation presented in Figure 2, the activities of MSME entrepreneurs participating in a bazaar event in Mataram can be observed, showcasing a variety of halal business products.



Figure 3. MSME Business Activities at the Mataram City Bazaar

The bazaar activities reflect the development of the halal industry ecosystem at the local level.

From a thematic perspective, these observations indicate that halal competence is embedded not only in production processes but also in market-facing activities such as product presentation and consumer communication, suggesting that halal human capital operates across the entire value chain.

The interview with halal business actors states:
"Workers employed in our business must understand the ingredients used in the production process..."

This statement reflects what Human Capital Theory conceptualizes as knowledge-based capital, where workers' understanding of halal and haram ingredients constitutes a specialized cognitive asset that enhances production reliability and compliance (Xomidjonov, 2026).

From an interpretive perspective, halal human capital functions as a foundational element in the production process.

More importantly, this competence can be categorized as "specific human capital" (Beckerian perspective), which is highly relevant to the halal industry and less transferable to non-halal sectors, thereby increasing its strategic value within halal-based organizations.

3.3. Integration of Halal Competence in Work Practices

A halal industry worker explained that understanding halal standards has become an integral part of daily work activities. "In our workplace, we are always reminded to maintain cleanliness..." Based on this statement, halal competence is embedded in routine work practices.

This indicates that halal human capital is operationalized through habitualized practices, where workers internalize halal standards into daily production routines, reflecting what can be interpreted as embodied knowledge within labor processes.

Azalie et al. (2022) revealed that halal competence is understood as the ability to follow halal production procedures.

From a theoretical perspective, this aligns with the notion of tacit knowledge in human capital theory, where competencies are not only formally acquired but also developed through experiential learning in the workplace (Sutarman, 2022).

3.4. Halal Competence and Wage Structure: An Emerging but Implicit Relationship

A halal auditor explained:
"In the halal audit process, we examine whether workers understand halal production procedures..." Based on this statement, halal competence is an important aspect in ensuring compliance with halal standards.

However, the findings also reveal a critical gap: while halal competence is recognized as essential for maintaining product integrity, its translation into formal wage structures remains indirect and largely unstandardized.

Another auditor stated:
"The halal certification process focuses more on production procedures..."

This indicates that institutional mechanisms such as halal certification primarily regulate production compliance rather than explicitly influencing wage determination, thereby creating a disconnect between competency recognition and economic reward.

From an interpretive perspective, this suggests that halal human capital is symbolically valued but not always formally monetized.

In line with Human Capital Theory Alam et al. (2020), skills and knowledge should

theoretically lead to higher wages; however, the empirical findings of this study suggest that in the halal MSME sector, wage determination is still influenced more by business scale, financial capacity, and informal labor arrangements than by standardized competency-based evaluation.

This finding highlights a structural limitation in the halal industry, where the absence of formalized competency-based wage systems leads to an under-recognition of halal-specific skills in economic terms.

3.5. The Role of Halal Human Capital in Supporting Industry Sustainability

The findings indicate that workers in the halal industry must possess an understanding of halal standards.

Beyond operational functions, halal human capital contributes to building consumer trust, ensuring regulatory compliance, and enhancing business credibility, which are critical factors for long-term industry sustainability (Voak et al,. 2023).

> Ihsan et al. (2022) emphasize the importance of combining professional skills with halal understanding.

Thus, halal human capital can be conceptualized as a strategic asset that not only improves productivity but also strengthens market legitimacy in the halal economy.

3.6. Discussion: Bridging Halal Human Capital and Wage Determination

The results of this study provide an empirical understanding of how actors interpret halal competencies.

Importantly, this study extends existing literature by demonstrating that although halal competencies are widely recognized as essential, their economic valuation in terms of wages remains ambiguous and context-dependent.

Alam et al. (2020) demonstrate that human capital is closely related to wage levels.

However, this study reveals that in the halal MSME context, the linkage between human capital and wages is mediated by structural and organizational factors, such as informality, limited financial capacity, and the absence of standardized HR practices.

From an Islamic economic perspective, this also raises critical questions regarding distributive justice (Yasmeen, 2023), as the principle of ujrah suggests that workers should receive fair compensation proportional to their contributions (Gojali et al., 2022), including their halal-specific competencies.

Therefore, the findings suggest the need for a more structured integration of halal human capital into wage determination systems, particularly through competency-based wage frameworks that align with both economic efficiency and Islamic ethical principles.

4. CLOSING

4.1. Conclusion

This study demonstrates that halal human capital is not merely understood as a complementary competence but constitutes a distinct and context-specific form of human capital that integrates technical skills with sharia-based knowledge within halal industry practices. These competencies are not limited to technical production skills but also include an understanding of halal standards, such as knowledge of raw materials, production procedures that comply with halal regulations, and the application of hygiene principles in the product processing process. Empirically, these competencies are primarily developed through informal, practice-based learning processes within the workplace, indicating the limited institutionalization of structured halal training systems. On the other hand, the wage system observed in halal businesses generally follows the wage patterns commonly applied in micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs), where wage determination is primarily based on work experience, type of work, and working hours. On the other hand, the wage system observed in halal businesses generally follows the wage patterns commonly applied in micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs), where wage determination is primarily based on work experience, type of work, and working hours. This study finds that although halal competence is recognized as essential for ensuring

compliance and product integrity, it is not systematically translated into formal wage determination mechanisms. Theoretically, this finding contributes to the extension of Human Capital Theory by introducing the concept of "halal-specific human capital," which highlights a gap between competency recognition and its economic valuation in labor markets, particularly within MSME-based halal industries. From a practical and policy perspective, the findings suggest the need for the development of competency-based wage frameworks and standardized halal training systems to ensure that halal-specific skills are formally recognized and fairly compensated in accordance with both market logic and Islamic principles of justice (ujrah). However, this study is subject to several limitations, including its focus on a single geographic context (Mataram) and the dominance of MSME-scale businesses, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to larger or more formalized halal industry sectors.

4.2. Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, several recommendations can be proposed for future research and the development of the halal industry. First, future studies are encouraged to expand the scope of research locations and sectors within the halal industry to gain a more comprehensive understanding of halal human capital practices. Second, subsequent research could employ different methodological approaches, such as quantitative or mixed methods, to examine the relationship between halal human capital, labor productivity, wage structures, and organizational performance. Third, future studies should also investigate the role of halal education and training in enhancing workforce competencies. By implementing these recommendations, research on halal human capital is expected to provide stronger contributions to the development of human resources within the halal industry.

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