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“FROM REACTION TO RESULTS”: MEASURING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF HALAL TRAINING PROGRAMS USING KIRKPATRICK’S MODEL

Abstract

The rapid expansion of the halal industry has intensified the need for competent human capital capable of safeguarding halal integrity across diverse sectors. While halal training programmes are widely implemented, systematic evaluations of their effectiveness—particularly from a governance and management perspective—remain limited. This study evaluates the effectiveness of halal training programmes using Kirkpatrick’s Four-Level Training Evaluation Model (reaction, learning, behaviour, and results). Adopting a qualitative case study approach, data were collected through semi-structured interviews with three certified trainers from two halal training providers in Perak, Malaysia, supported by document analysis and observation. The findings indicate that halal training programmes generally generate positive participant reactions and enhance foundational knowledge of halal requirements, especially related to the Halal Assurance System. However, behavioural change and organisational outcomes are strongly influenced by management commitment, organisational culture, and post-training governance mechanisms. This study contributes to the halal governance and Islamic management literature by demonstrating the applicability of Kirkpatrick’s model within a values-driven and compliance-based industry context. Practical and policy implications are discussed to support the institutionalisation of effective halal training evaluation.

Keywords: halal training; training effectiveness; halal governance; Islamic management; Kirkpatrick’s model

1. Introduction

The halal industry has emerged as a significant driver of economic growth, both in Muslim-majority countries and globally (Azam, 2020; Wilson & Liu, 2011). Recent scholarship further highlights the growing importance of structured halal governance frameworks in

sustaining global competitiveness and regulatory credibility (Ali et al., 2023; Khan & Haleem, 2021). In Malaysia, the halal sector encompasses not only food and beverages but also cosmetics, pharmaceuticals, logistics, tourism, and related services, supported by a comprehensive regulatory and institutional ecosystem (Talib & Hamid, 2014; Zailani et al., 2019). Halal compliance is closely tied to Islamic principles, ethical governance, consumer trust, and quality assurance, positioning halal as both a religious obligation and a strategic governance mechanism (Ab Talib et al., 2021).

To support Malaysia's aspiration to remain ² a global halal hub, various initiatives have been undertaken, including the development of structured halal training programmes by government agencies, higher learning institutions, and private training providers (HDC, 2022). These programmes aim to equip industry players with the knowledge, skills, and attitudes required to comply with halal standards and certification requirements issued by JAKIM. Nevertheless, prior studies indicate that the effectiveness of such training initiatives is often evaluated superficially, focusing ¹ primarily on participant satisfaction rather than deeper learning outcomes, behavioural change, and organisational impact (Salas et al., 2012; Kirkpatrick & Kirkpatrick, 2006).

Training evaluation models provide a systematic framework for assessing whether training investments translate into meaningful outcomes. Among these, Kirkpatrick's Four-Level Training Evaluation Model remains one of the most widely applied frameworks across sectors due to its simplicity and holistic orientation (Bates, 2004). Despite its extensive use in corporate and public-sector training, its application within the context of halal training and Islamic governance remains underexplored. This study addresses this gap by evaluating halal training effectiveness using Kirkpatrick's model through a qualitative case study of halal training providers in Perak, Malaysia, with particular emphasis on governance, compliance, and Islamic management perspectives.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Training and Human Capital Development

Training is a core component of human capital development, aimed at enhancing

knowledge, skills, attitudes, and performance (Noe, 2020). In organisational contexts, effective training contributes to improved productivity, compliance, service quality, and employee engagement (Salas et al., 2012). Contemporary human capital theory emphasises training not merely as skill acquisition, but as a strategic investment that shapes organisational capability and governance outcomes.

From an Islamic management perspective, training embodies the values of amanah (trust), ihsan (excellence), and itqan (professionalism), which are central to ethical organisational conduct (Beekun & Badawi, 2005). In values-driven industries, training also serves as a moral and ethical reinforcement mechanism that aligns individual behaviour with organisational and societal expectations. This perspective is particularly relevant **2** in the **halal industry**, where compliance is simultaneously regulatory, ethical, and religious in nature.

2.2 Halal Industry, Governance, and Human Capital

The halal industry operates within a unique governance environment that integrates religious principles, statutory regulations, industry standards, and consumer expectations (Zailani et al., 2019). Halal governance extends beyond certification to encompass organisational structures, internal control systems, documentation practices, and accountability mechanisms designed to preserve halal integrity throughout the value chain (Ab Talib et al., 2021). Recent studies emphasize that halal governance maturity depends significantly on internal competency development and continuous professional training (Ali et al., 2023). Empirical evidence also suggests that firms integrating structured halal training into their governance architecture demonstrate stronger compliance resilience and audit performance (Khan & Haleem, 2021).

Human capital plays a critical role in sustaining halal governance. Employees are expected not only to understand halal requirements, but also to internalise ethical values and apply them consistently in daily operations. Previous studies indicate that weaknesses in halal compliance often stem from inadequate training, poor understanding of standards, and lack of organisational commitment rather than intentional non-compliance (Rahman et al.,

2022). Consequently, halal training functions as a governance tool that mitigates compliance risk and strengthens institutional credibility.

2.3 Halal Training in Malaysia: Issues and Challenges

Malaysia has invested significantly in halal training initiatives to support its position as a **global halal hub**. These initiatives are delivered by government agencies, higher learning institutions, and private training providers, and target diverse audiences ranging from senior management to operational staff. Common training modules include halal awareness, Halal Assurance System implementation, internal halal auditing, and sector-specific compliance requirements. Despite these efforts, empirical research highlights persistent challenges. These include heterogeneity in training quality, limited standardisation across providers, insufficient post-training follow-up, and difficulties translating knowledge into sustained workplace behaviour (Ab Talib et al., 2021). Language barriers among foreign workers, high staff turnover, and competing operational priorities further undermine training effectiveness, particularly in small and medium-sized enterprises.

2.4 Training Evaluation Models and Governance-Oriented Assessment

Training evaluation provides a mechanism to assess whether training investments generate intended outcomes. Traditional evaluation approaches often focus on immediate participant reactions, overlooking behavioural and organisational dimensions that reflect governance impact. Kirkpatrick's Four-Level Training Evaluation Model addresses this limitation by conceptualising training effectiveness across reaction, learning, behaviour, and results (Kirkpatrick & Kirkpatrick, 2006). From a governance perspective, the higher levels of the model—behaviour and results—are particularly significant, as they reflect the extent to which training influences organisational practices, compliance systems, and performance outcomes. Scholars have argued that integrating training evaluation with governance frameworks enhances accountability and supports evidence-based policy and management decisions (OECD, 2021). Recent developments in training evaluation research advocate for integrating governance indicators and risk-based metrics into

traditional evaluation models to enhance accountability in regulated industries (Al-Mamun et al., 2022; Saks & Burke-Smalley, 2023).

2.5 Conceptual Framework of the Study

Guided by the literature, this study conceptualises halal training effectiveness as a multi-level and multi-actor process that links individual learning outcomes to organisational governance performance. Kirkpatrick's Four-Level Training ¹ Evaluation Model provides the evaluative backbone of the study, while halal governance principles and Islamic management values offer the contextual and normative lens. At the individual level, training is expected to shape participants' awareness, knowledge, and ethical orientation towards halal compliance. At the organisational level, these individual outcomes must be supported by leadership commitment, internal control systems, and standard operating procedures to generate sustained behavioural change. At the institutional level, training effectiveness contributes to broader governance outcomes such as audit readiness, regulatory compliance, and stakeholder trust.

This integrated framework positions halal training as a governance mechanism that connects human capital development with institutional accountability. It recognises that training outcomes are contingent upon interaction between individual capability, organisational structures, and policy environments.

2.6 Comparative Review of Training Evaluation Studies

Previous studies on training evaluation have largely focused on corporate performance, professional development, and public-sector capacity building. In non-halal contexts, Kirkpatrick's model has been widely applied to evaluate leadership training, healthcare education, and compliance programmes, with mixed findings regarding its effectiveness at higher evaluation levels (Bates, 2004; Salas et al., 2012). Comparatively, studies within halal and Islamic contexts remain limited and fragmented. Existing research tends to emphasise halal awareness, certification challenges, and consumer trust, rather than systematic evaluation of training outcomes. Where training is examined, evaluation is often

restricted to participant satisfaction or self-reported learning gains, with minimal attention to behavioural change or organisational impact.

This study addresses this gap by providing an in-depth qualitative evaluation of halal training using a recognised evaluation framework. By comparing findings with broader training evaluation literature, the study highlights both the applicability and limitations of Kirkpatrick's model in a values-driven and compliance-oriented industry.

2.7 Halal Training as a Governance and Risk Management Instrument

Beyond its pedagogical function, halal training may be conceptualized as a governance and risk management instrument within compliance-based industries. Governance literature emphasizes that effective regulatory systems depend not only on formal rules and standards, but also on the capacity of organizational actors to understand, interpret, and implement those rules consistently (OECD, 2021). ² In the halal industry, where compliance failures may result in reputational damage, legal consequences, and loss of consumer trust, training plays a preventative role by mitigating operational and ethical risks.

Halal training equips organizational actors with the ability to identify halal critical points, implement internal controls, and respond appropriately to non-compliance incidents. From a risk management perspective, training reduces reliance on individual discretion by standardizing knowledge and practices across the organization. This function is particularly important in organizations with high staff turnover or a diverse workforce, where inconsistency in understanding halal requirements may undermine governance effectiveness. From an Islamic management standpoint, training also functions as a moral governance mechanism. It reinforces ethical accountability (*amanah*) and collective responsibility (*mas'uliyah*), ensuring that halal compliance is not treated as a procedural formality but as a shared organizational obligation. Conceptualizing halal training through a governance and risk management lens therefore broadens its significance beyond skill development, positioning it as a strategic component of institutional integrity.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Design

This study adopts a qualitative case study design to examine the effectiveness of halal training programmes through the lens of Kirkpatrick's Four-Level Training Evaluation Model. A qualitative approach is appropriate given the exploratory nature of the study and the need to capture in-depth insights into trainers' experiences, perceptions, and evaluative practices within their real-life organisational contexts.

3.2 Research Context

The study was conducted in Perak, Malaysia, involving two halal training providers recognised by relevant authorities. Perak provides a suitable context due to its diverse industrial base, presence of small and medium-sized enterprises, and active participation in halal certification initiatives. The selected training providers offer structured halal training programmes to participants from various sectors, including food manufacturing, food service, and related industries.

3.3 Participants and Sampling

Purposive sampling was employed to select participants with direct involvement in halal training delivery and evaluation. Three certified trainers with substantial experience in conducting halal training programmes participated in the study. All participants possessed recognised qualifications endorsed by relevant regulatory or training bodies. Their professional roles enabled them to provide informed perspectives on training design, delivery, and outcomes.

3.4 Data Collection Methods

Data were collected using multiple sources to enhance credibility and triangulation. Semi-structured interviews constituted the primary data source, guided by questions aligned with each level of Kirkpatrick's model. In addition, document analysis was conducted on training modules, participant evaluation forms, and supporting materials. Where possible, non-participant observation of training sessions was undertaken to assess instructional methods, participant engagement, and learning environments.

3.5 Data Analysis

Thematic analysis was employed following the six-phase approach proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006). Interview transcripts and documentary data were coded inductively and deductively, with themes organised according to the four evaluation levels. This analytic strategy facilitated systematic comparison across cases and enabled the identification of patterns related to training effectiveness and governance outcomes.

3.6 Trustworthiness and Ethical Considerations

To ensure trustworthiness, the study applied strategies including data triangulation, member checking, and thick description. Ethical considerations were observed by obtaining informed consent from participants, ensuring confidentiality, and anonymising organisational identities. These measures align with qualitative research ethics and enhance the credibility of the findings.

3.7 Methodological Rigour and Evaluation Credibility

Ensuring methodological rigour is essential in qualitative research, particularly when findings are intended to inform governance and policy discourse. In this study, rigour was reinforced through systematic alignment between research objectives, data collection instruments, and analytical procedures. Interview questions were explicitly mapped to the four levels of Kirkpatrick's model, ensuring theoretical coherence throughout the evaluation process.

Evaluation credibility was further enhanced through cross-case comparison among trainers and triangulation with documentary and observational data. This approach reduced the risk of over-reliance on single-source perceptions and enabled more balanced interpretation of training effectiveness. Reflexivity was also practiced by acknowledging the researchers' positionality and potential assumptions related to halal governance and training practices. From an ERA perspective, the emphasis on rigour strengthens the study's contribution by demonstrating transparency, replicability, and analytical discipline. Although the study does not aim for statistical generalization, its methodological robustness supports analytical generalization to similar governance-oriented training contexts.

4. Findings and Discussion

4.1 Level 1: Reaction (Participant Engagement and Perceived Relevance)

At the reaction level, trainers consistently reported positive participant responses towards halal training programmes. Participants expressed satisfaction with the relevance of training content, clarity of explanations, and the overall learning environment. Trainers highlighted that interactive delivery methods such as case discussions, real-life audit examples, and question-and-answer sessions enhanced participant engagement and motivation.

From a governance perspective, positive reactions are significant because they establish the foundation for subsequent learning and behavioural change. Prior studies emphasise that learner satisfaction influences attention, motivation, and willingness to internalise compliance-oriented knowledge (Salas et al., 2012). In the halal context, trainers noted that positive engagement helped reduce resistance towards documentation requirements and audit procedures, which are often perceived as burdensome by industry players.

4.2 Level 2: Learning (Knowledge Acquisition and Conceptual Understanding)

At the learning level, trainers observed improvements in participants' understanding of halal concepts, regulatory requirements, and certification procedures. Participants demonstrated enhanced awareness of the Halal Assurance System, halal critical points, and the importance of documentation in safeguarding halal integrity. Trainers reported that participants were better able to distinguish between halal compliance as a religious obligation and as a governance mechanism.

However, learning outcomes varied considerably across participants. Differences in educational background, work experience, and language proficiency influenced comprehension levels. Trainers highlighted persistent misconceptions, including the belief that halal compliance applies only to ingredients rather than encompassing processes, logistics, hygiene, and governance systems. These findings suggest the need for tiered training modules that accommodate diverse learning needs and reinforce foundational concepts.

4.3 Level 3: Behaviour (Application and Organisational Practice)

Behavioural change following training was evident but uneven. Trainers reported that some participants actively applied knowledge gained by improving documentation practices, conducting internal halal checks, and communicating compliance requirements to colleagues. In organisations with supportive leadership, trained participants were more likely to initiate improvements and influence organisational practices.

Nevertheless, sustained behavioural change was often constrained by organisational factors. Trainers cited limited management commitment, time constraints, production pressures, and absence of formal follow-up mechanisms as major barriers. These findings reinforce governance literature emphasising that individual competence alone is insufficient without supportive institutional structures (OECD, 2021). These findings are consistent with recent compliance-training studies demonstrating that behavioural transfer is significantly influenced by organisational climate and leadership reinforcement mechanisms (Saks & Burke-Smalley, 2023).

4.4 Level 4: Results (Organisational and Governance Outcomes)

At the results level, trainers perceived halal training as contributing to enhanced organisational awareness, improved audit readiness, and stronger ethical orientation.

Organisations that embedded training outcomes into internal procedures demonstrated greater consistency in halal practices and improved confidence during certification audits. However, trainers emphasised that organisational outcomes were difficult to measure systematically due to the absence of standardised performance indicators. This limitation underscores the importance of integrating training evaluation into broader governance and monitoring frameworks to capture long-term organisational impact.

4.5 Integrated Discussion: Halal Training, Governance, and Institutionalisation

Synthesising findings across the four levels reveals that halal training functions as a multi-layered governance mechanism. Positive reactions and learning outcomes create the necessary foundation for training effectiveness; however, governance-oriented outcomes depend on behavioural reinforcement and institutional support. This finding reinforces

governance theories that emphasise the interaction between human agency and structural constraints.

In organisations where halal training is supported by leadership commitment and integrated into governance systems, training outcomes are more likely to translate into sustained behavioural change. Conversely, in the absence of institutional support, training risks becoming symbolic compliance rather than substantive governance practice.

4.6 Cross-Level Analysis of Training Effectiveness

A cross-level analysis reveals important interdependencies between the four levels of Kirkpatrick's model. Positive reactions (Level 1) facilitate learning (Level 2) by enhancing motivation and engagement. Learning outcomes, in turn, enable behavioural change (Level 3) only when organisational conditions permit application. Finally, organisational results (Level 4) emerge when behavioural changes are institutionalised through governance mechanisms.

This analysis underscores the limitation of isolated training evaluations and highlights the need for holistic assessment approaches. Evaluating halal training effectiveness requires attention not only to individual learning outcomes but also to organisational readiness and policy alignment.

4.7 Halal Training, Organizational Culture, and Leadership Dynamics

The findings indicate that organizational culture and leadership play a decisive role in shaping the effectiveness of halal training programs. Trainers consistently observed that behavioral change following training was more evident in organizations where senior management actively supported halal initiatives. Leadership commitment manifested through resource allocation, enforcement of procedures, and symbolic actions that signalled the importance of halal compliance.

Organizational culture influenced whether training outcomes were internalized or marginalized. In compliance-oriented cultures, halal training was reinforced through routine practices such as internal audits, documentation reviews, and performance evaluations.

Conversely, in production-driven cultures where halal compliance was perceived as

secondary, training outcomes were often diluted by operational pressures.

These findings align with governance scholarship emphasizing leadership tone and organizational norms as critical determinants of compliance effectiveness. From an Islamic management perspective, leadership commitment reflects *qudwahhasanah* (ethical role modelling), reinforcing the moral legitimacy of halal governance

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5. Theoretical Contributions

This study makes several theoretical contributions to the literature on training evaluation, halal governance, and Islamic management. First, it extends the application of Kirkpatrick's Four-Level Training Evaluation Model to a values-driven and compliance-oriented industry. While Kirkpatrick's model has been widely applied in corporate and public-sector settings, its utilisation within halal governance contexts remains limited. This study demonstrates that the model is capable of capturing not only learning and performance outcomes, but also ethical and governance-related dimensions central to halal integrity.

Second, the study contributes to Islamic management scholarship by positioning halal training as a mechanism for operationalising Islamic values such as *amanah* (trustworthiness), *ihsan* (excellence), and *maslahah* (public interest) within organisational systems. Training is conceptualised not merely as a technical intervention, but as a governance instrument that aligns individual conduct with institutional accountability.

Third, the findings contribute to governance literature by illustrating how human capital development supports compliance systems in regulated industries. The study highlights the interdependence between individual learning outcomes and organisational structures, reinforcing the argument that governance effectiveness depends on both competent actors and supportive institutional frameworks.

6. Policy and Institutional Implications

The findings of this study have important implications for multiple stakeholder groups within the halal ecosystem.

6.1 Implications for Industry Practice

For industry players, particularly small and medium-sized enterprises, halal training should be viewed as a strategic investment rather than a compliance cost. Organisations should allocate adequate resources to post-training implementation, including internal audits, documentation systems, and continuous monitoring. Embedding training outcomes into daily operational practices enhances consistency and reduces reliance on individual discretion.

Training providers should design programmes that balance regulatory requirements with practical application. Sector-specific case studies, experiential learning, and continuous engagement with participants can improve knowledge transfer and behavioural change.

6.2 Implications for Regulators and Policymakers

For regulators and policymakers, the findings suggest the need to strengthen the linkage between halal training and governance frameworks. Regulatory bodies may consider incorporating training evaluation outcomes into certification renewal processes or compliance monitoring systems. Developing minimum competency benchmarks and evaluation standards for halal training providers can enhance consistency and quality across the industry.

Policy coordination between regulatory agencies, training institutions, and industry associations is essential to ensure that training initiatives support broader halal governance objectives. Such coordination can also facilitate data-driven policy decisions and continuous improvement of halal training ecosystems.

7. Implications for Halal Governance and Islamic Management

The findings highlight the strategic role of training evaluation within halal governance frameworks. Effective halal training supports not only regulatory compliance but also the broader objectives of Islamic management, including accountability (*amanah*), transparency, and public interest (*maslahah*). From a governance perspective, structured training evaluation mechanisms enhance institutional credibility, strengthen internal control systems, and mitigate halal integrity risks across the supply chain.

Furthermore, integrating Kirkpatrick's model into halal training evaluation enables stakeholders to align human capital development with maqasid al-shariah, particularly the protection of religion, life, and wealth. This alignment reinforces halal training as a governance instrument rather than a procedural requirement, thereby strengthening Malaysia's positioning as a reference point for halal governance in the Asian region.

8. Recommendations for Practice and Policy

Based on the findings and aligned with governance-oriented training literature, several recommendations are proposed:

1. Institutionalisation of training evaluation: Halal training providers and organisations should adopt structured evaluation mechanisms that extend beyond participant satisfaction to include behavioural and organisational outcomes.
2. Strengthening post-training governance: Organisations should integrate halal training outcomes into internal policies, standard operating procedures, and performance monitoring systems.
3. Leadership and management engagement: Senior management involvement is critical in reinforcing halal practices and sustaining behavioural change following training.
4. Inclusive and adaptive training design: The development of multilingual materials, visual learning aids, and sector-specific case studies can enhance comprehension and applicability, particularly among diverse workforces.
5. Policy-level coordination: Regulatory bodies and training institutions should collaborate to standardise core halal training competencies while allowing flexibility for sectoral adaptation.

8.1 Extended Discussion on Study Limitations

6. While this study provides valuable insights into halal training effectiveness, several limitations warrant further discussion. First, the reliance on trainers' perspectives may introduce interpretive bias, as trainers may emphasise pedagogical aspects over organisational constraints. Future studies incorporating trainee and managerial perspectives could offer a more comprehensive evaluation.

7. Second, the study focuses on a specific regional context within Malaysia. While this enables contextual depth, variations in regulatory enforcement, organisational maturity, and cultural practices across regions may influence training effectiveness. Comparative studies across states or countries would enhance external validity.

8. Third, organisational outcomes were assessed perceptually rather than through objective performance indicators. This reflects a broader limitation within training evaluation practice, where governance outcomes are difficult to quantify. Future research integrating audit performance data or compliance metrics would strengthen empirical assessment of results-level effectiveness

9. Conclusion and Future Research Agenda

This study examined the effectiveness of halal training programmes using Kirkpatrick's Four-Level Training Evaluation Model within the broader context of halal governance and Islamic management. Drawing on qualitative insights from certified trainers, the study demonstrates that halal training plays a critical role in developing competent human capital and reinforcing governance systems within compliance-based industries.

The findings reveal that while halal training programmes generally achieve positive outcomes at the reaction and learning levels, their effectiveness at behavioural and organisational levels is contingent upon leadership commitment, organisational culture, and structured governance mechanisms. Without institutional support, training outcomes risk remaining superficial and short-lived. This study contributes to multiple strands of scholarship. It extends training evaluation theory into a values-driven and compliance-oriented context, enriches halal governance literature by highlighting the governance function of training, and advances Islamic management discourse by operationalising ethical values through organisational systems.

Future research should adopt mixed-method and longitudinal designs to assess the long-term organisational impact of halal training. Comparative studies across countries and regulatory systems may provide further insights into contextual factors shaping training

effectiveness. Additionally, future research may explore the integration of digital learning technologies, data analytics, and competency-based assessment frameworks to enhance halal training evaluation and governance outcomes.

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