RECONCEPTUALISING HALAL READINESS AS AN ORGANISATIONAL CHANGE CAPABILITY: EVIDENCE FROM A FOCUSED SYSTEMATIC REVIEW

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Abstract. Organisational readiness is widely recognised as a prerequisite for effective halal standard compliance, particularly among small and micro food enterprises (SMEs). However, existing literature conceptualises halal readiness inconsistently, viewing it as technical compliance, behavioural willingness, organisational capability, or stage-based preparedness, with limited explanation of how these perspectives collectively shape readiness. This conceptual study addresses this gap by synthesising previous literature through a focused systematic review (FSR) from an organisational change perspective. This FSR identifies four dominant conceptualisations of halal readiness and demonstrates that previous studies primarily emphasise organisational conditions and enabling factors while providing a limited explanation of the mechanisms through which these conditions are translated into implementation capability. Guided by Organisational Readiness for Change (ORC), this study proposes an ORC-informed conceptual framework that reconceptualises halal readiness as an organisational change capability (OCC). The framework explains that readiness is formed through the interaction of change valence, informational assessment, perceived compatibility, and communication effectiveness, while training functions as an organisational capability-building mechanism that enables organisations to develop and sustain halal readiness as OCC. This reconceptualisation extends the theoretical understanding of halal readiness and provides a conceptual foundation for future empirical research on halal standard implementation among SMEs.

Keywords: *organisational readiness for change, halal standard compliance, organisational capability, training intervention, small and micro food enterprises*

Introduction

Over the past five decades (1974 – 2026), Malaysia has developed one of the most structured halal certification systems in the world (DinarStandard, 2022; Asa, 2019). Through standards such as MS1500, the country has established a comprehensive halal governance framework that regulates food preparation, production processes, and certification procedures. Beyond its regulatory role, halal certification has increasingly been positioned as a strategic instrument for strengthening consumer trust, ethical production practices, and the broader development of the halal economy (Amir and Fajar, 2024; Kementerian Ekonomi, 2021). Despite this strong institutional foundation, halal certification remains voluntary for industry players. The flexibility of halal certification in Malaysia also created several challenges for maintaining the integrity of the halal ecosystem. Previous studies consistently report that small and micro enterprises (SMEs) encounter resource constraints, limited technical knowledge, and procedural complexities in halal certification implementation (Astuti et al., 2023; Abd Rahman et al., 2017). Consequently, halal compliance has frequently been discussed as

a willingness or behavioural intention, with less attention given to the organisational processes required to sustain. Yet, achieving and maintaining halal compliance over time ultimately depends on the organisation's capability to mobilise its internal resources, routines, and collective efforts for the consistent implementation of halal standards.

From a broader organisational perspective, readiness for change has long been recognised as a critical condition for the successful implementation of organisational initiatives (Grimolizzi-Jensen, 2018; Holt and Vardaman, 2013). However, the concept of readiness has been interpreted and operationalised in different ways across research domains and theories, including innovation diffusion, change management and system implementation. Within the halal literature, readiness is often conceptualised as a static organisational condition associated with technical compliance or initial willingness to pursue certification. Such interpretations provide useful insights but offer limited explanation of how organisations develop the capability to translate halal awareness into sustained compliance practices. Against this backdrop, this paper revisits how organisational readiness has been conceptualised in the recent halal compliance literature. Organisational Readiness for Change (ORC) is adopted as the principal theoretical lens because it conceptualises readiness as a collective organisational state that explains how organisations develop the capability to implement and sustain halal implementation. Although ORC originated from the Western organisational change literature, its emphasis on collective organisational readiness remains applicable to halal implementation, which similarly requires organisations to mobilise resources and coordinate internal processes within a value-driven regulatory environment shaped by syariah principles. This theoretical foundation is deemed appropriate for understanding halal readiness as an organisational capability. Therefore, this article synthesises conceptualisations of halal readiness through a focused systematic review (FSR) and proposes an ORC-informed conceptual framework as an organisational change capability (OCC).

Materials and Methods

This review adopts a Focused Systematic Review (FSR) to synthesise literature on organisational readiness for halal compliance. Consistent with the typology of literature reviews proposed by Grant and Booth (2009), FSR enables a systematic yet focused synthesis of studies that directly inform conceptual development (Snyder, 2019; Grant and Booth, 2009; Tranfield et al., 2003). Accordingly, this review examines how organisational readiness has been defined and applied in halal-related studies rather than providing an exhaustive mapping of the broader halal literature (Snyder, 2019). As the objective of this review was conceptual synthesis, Google Scholar was considered appropriate due to its broad interdisciplinary coverage, including journal articles, conference proceedings, theses, and other grey literature relevant to organisational readiness in the halal context (Gusenbauer and Haddaway, 2020; Martín-Martín et al., 2018; Haddaway et al., 2015).

Search strategy

The Google Scholar Advanced Search function was used by combining the key terms "halal" and "readiness" within article titles and, where relevant, abstracts to identify studies in which organisational readiness for halal compliance constituted the primary

focus. Additional manual screening was subsequently undertaken to ensure conceptual relevance to the objectives of the FSR. The initial search covered publications between 2008 and 2025 and identified 72 journal articles, proceedings and theses published in both English and Malay. The search period was selected to capture the development of organisational readiness within the contemporary halal certification literature. These studies were subsequently screened based on their research focus, unit of analysis, and the extent to which they discussed readiness in relation to halal compliance.

Screening results

During the screening stage, 14 duplicate records, including repeated and authors' publications, were removed. A further 29 studies were excluded due to limited relevance, particularly those focusing on individual-level readiness (e.g., employee attitudes or behavioural intentions) and consumer perspectives rather than industry and organisational levels for halal compliance. Following the screening process, 29 studies were retained for analysis, comprising 16 core studies and 13 supporting studies. Core studies explicitly examined organisational-level readiness for halal compliance, particularly organisational conditions, systems, and implementation processes, and therefore informed the conceptual synthesis. Supporting studies addressed related concepts, such as awareness, behavioural intention, and pre-certification conditions, providing contextual and comparative insights without contributing directly to the proposed conceptual framework. Thus, the distinction between core and supporting studies reflects the objective of the FSR rather than study quality, with all 29 studies retained in the review. The overall process of literature identification, screening, and classification is illustrated in *Figure 1*.

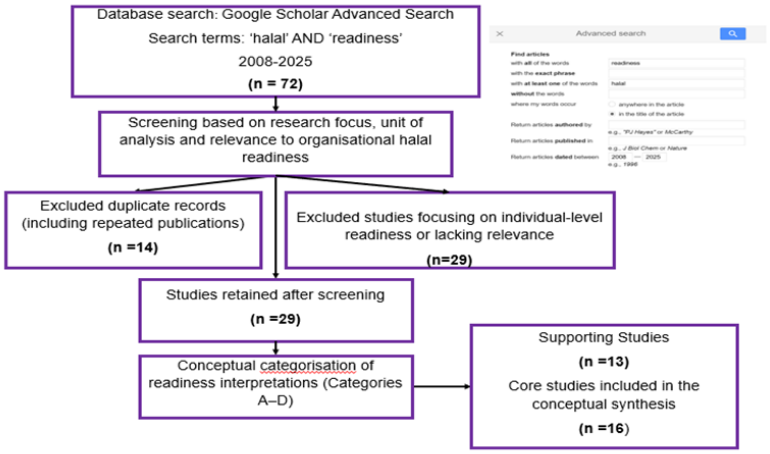


Figure 1. *Focused systematic review screening process.*

Results and Discussion

The synthesis identified four dominant conceptual patterns through which organisational readiness for halal compliance has been conceptualised in the literature: (i) Early Awareness and Intention (Pattern A), (ii) Technical and Compliance Capacity (Pattern B), (iii) Organisational Condition and Capacity (Pattern C), and (iv) Stage-Based Readiness (Pattern D). Although these patterns were identified across the broader

body of literature, the core studies primarily conceptualise readiness as an organisational condition and capacity, often in combination with technical and compliance capacity. Early awareness and intention are mainly evident in studies examining organisations at the pre-certification stage.

Conceptualisation of organisational readiness in halal compliance literature

The four conceptual patterns provide an analytical lens for understanding how organisational readiness has been interpreted and operationalised across halal compliance studies. Rather than representing a hierarchy of conceptual quality, they illustrate the diverse and fragmented ways in which readiness has been conceptualised in the existing literature.

Pattern A: Readiness as early awareness and intention

The first pattern conceptualises organisational readiness as an early-stage condition characterised by awareness, willingness and openness towards halal certification. Within this perspective, readiness reflects an organisation's initial response to external requirements and policy initiatives rather than its capability to implement halal practices. In the reviewed studies, readiness is commonly operationalised through attitudinal constructs such as organisational awareness, willingness and intention. For example, Nugraha et al. (2025) describe readiness as the willingness and openness of MSMEs to support halal initiatives, whereas Hidayat (2020) conceptualises readiness as the current condition of adoption influenced by organisational awareness, market demand and implementation costs.

Pattern B: Readiness as technical and compliance capacity

A second pattern conceptualises readiness as a technical and compliance capacity, where organisational readiness is assessed based on the extent to which firms fulfil established halal certification requirements. Within this perspective, readiness is operationalised through compliance with standards such as the Halal Assurance System (HAS), including dimensions related to technology, human resources, documentation, and operational procedures. In many studies adopting this approach, readiness is evaluated through standards-based checklists or audit instruments, which classify organisations as either “ready” or “not ready” based on their halal requirements conformity and documentation completeness as key indicators of readiness. For instance, Wahyuni et al. (2021) conceptualise readiness as technical and implementation compliance based on HAS criteria, while Giyanti et al. (2020) operationalise readiness through multidimensional compliance indicators and classify the readiness level of firms. Similarly, Muttaqin et al. (2023) treat readiness as a measurable outcome reflecting the extent to which organisations fulfil operational and technical requirements across halal supply chain practices.

Pattern C: Readiness as organisational condition and capacity

A third pattern conceptualises readiness as an organisational condition shaped by internal organisational factors and implementation-related capabilities. From this perspective, readiness depends on an organisation’s ability to mobilise internal resources, establish operational systems, and create conditions that support halal

implementation. Across the reviewed frameworks, readiness is linked to enabling organisational conditions, including halal assurance systems, traceability mechanisms, leadership commitment, employee acceptance, and internal coordination. In addition, external pressures, such as regulatory requirements and stakeholder expectations, are incorporated primarily as contextual influences shaping organisational responses rather than direct determinants of readiness. Readiness is further associated with the organisation's ability to translate these conditions into operational practices through system implementation, process alignment, and organisational routines. For example, traceability, operational control, and process management are identified as key enablers of readiness (Najmi et al., 2023; Abd Rahman et al., 2017), while stakeholder pressures encourage the adoption of practices that reinforce readiness (Abd Mubin et al., 2022). Overall, the core studies conceptualise readiness as an outcome shaped by organisational and contextual conditions rather than as a fully developed organisational capability. For example, Fauzy et al. (2014) and Tarmizi et al. (2014) emphasise management support, organisational systems, environmental factors, and a shared vision for change, while Himawan et al. (2023) and Sapry et al. (2019) highlight the roles of leadership, operational structures, and institutional constraints in influencing readiness for halal implementation.

Pattern D: Readiness as a stage-based organisational condition

Finally, a fourth pattern conceptualises readiness as a stage-based organisational condition, recognising that organisations differ in their levels of preparedness for halal compliance. Rather than treating readiness as a binary state, this perspective views readiness can be positioned at different levels of preparedness based on the current organisation's condition. For example, Wannasupchue et al. (2020) identify progressive readiness stages such as pre-contemplation, contemplation, and implementation based on qualitative assessment, while Lita et al. (2023) classify firms into multiple readiness clusters using a TOE-based clustering approach. Similarly, Amir and Fajar (2024) and Bakar and Man (2023) assess readiness as an overall level of preparedness using aggregated indicators, while Giyanti et al. (2020) incorporate stage-based classification based on readiness scores. Overall, the synthesis identified four dominant conceptual patterns through which organisational readiness for halal compliance has been understood and operationalised. These patterns reflect the diverse perspectives adopted across the halal compliance literature and provide the basis for the proposed conceptual framework. *Figure 2* illustrates the four conceptual patterns, while *Table 1* summarises the core studies and their respective conceptualisations of organisational readiness for halal compliance. *Figure 2* summarises the conceptual fragmentation identified across the reviewed studies and provides the foundation for the following discussion.

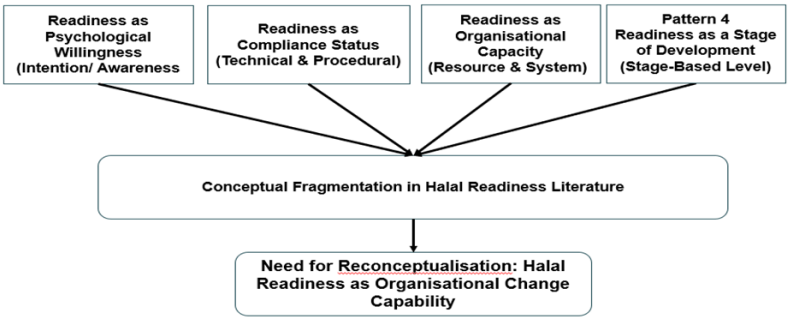


Figure 2. *Conceptual patterns of organisational readiness in the halal compliance literature.*

Table 1*. Summary of core studies on organisational readiness for halal compliance.*

No	Title and Author (Year)	Context	Readiness Conceptualisation	Pattern
1	Determinants of West Java MSMEs Readiness to Support Indonesia's Journey Towards a Global Halal Hub (Nugraha et al., 2025)	MSMEs, Indonesia	Awareness, willingness, openness	A, C
2	The Readiness of Certified Logistics Services Provider Company to Support Halal Industry in Indonesia (Hidayat, 2020)	Halal Logistics, Indonesia	Adoption condition & willingness	A
3	Factors Influencing Readiness towards Halal Logistics among Food and Beverages Industry in the Era of E-Commerce in Indonesia (Muttaqin et al., 2023)	Halal logistics Indonesia	Compliance with operational requirements	B, C
4	Analysis of Readiness toward Halal Certification in Sumatera Utara (A Case Study in Food Manufacturer) (Wahyuni et al., 2021)	Food SMEs	Technical compliance (HAS criteria), stage/level-based readiness	B, D
5	Measurement model of halal practice readiness among food manufacturing small and medium enterprises (Giyanti et al., 2020)	Halal Assurance System (HAS 23000) Food SMEs	Technical + stage-based readiness	B, D
6	Factors behind Third-Party Logistics Providers Readiness towards Halal Logistics (Tarmizi et al., 2014)	Logistics Malaysia	Organisational change capacity	C
7	Readiness Factors of Nusantara Fishery Ports in Implementing Halal Supply Chain (Himawan et al., 2023)	halal supply chain; Malaysia, Halal logistics	Organisational condition (systems & leadership)	C
8	Influence of Perceived Benefits and Traceability System on the Readiness for Halal Assurance System Implementation among Food Manufacturers (Abd Rahman et al., 2017)	Halal-certified SMEs; Halal Assurance System Malaysia	System-enabled readiness (traceability)	C
9	Firm's Readiness for Halal Food Standard Adoption: Assessing the Importance of Traceability System (Najmi et al., 2023)	Food manufacturer; Halal Assurance System; Pakistan	Adoption capability via systems	C
10	Readiness and Stakeholders Influence for Halal Logistics Practices Implementation towards Supply Chain Performance (Abd Mubin et al., 2022)	Halal-certified manufacturer; Halal logistics; Malaysia	Readiness embedded in implementation	C
11	An Exploratory Study on the Readiness of Non-Muslim Rice Manufacturer towards the Implementation of Halal Logistics (Sapry et al., 2019)	Non-Muslim firms; halal logistics supply chain	Constraint-based readiness	C

		perspective		
12	The Readiness Theme Development from a Case Study in Thailand Halal Restaurants (Wannasupchue et al., 2020)	Halal Certified and non-certified restaurants, Northeast Thailand	Stage-based readiness (multi-stage), organisational dimensions	C, D
13	The Readiness Evaluation on Food Industries to Implement Mandatory Malaysia Halal Certification Scheme (MHCS) (Bakar and Man, 2023)	Food industry, mandatory halal	Aggregate readiness level	D
14	Analysis of Halal Certification Readiness Level and Strategy to Increase Competitiveness of MSMEs in Bangkalan Regency: Porter Diamond Model (Amir and Fajar, 2024)	technical requirements (HAS), organisational assessment tools (MOQS)	Technical compliance, Stage-based readiness classification	D, B, C
15	The Readiness of Minang Weaving Towards Halal Fashion Adoption: A Clustering Analysis of TOE Framework (Lita et al., 2023)	Halal logistics implementation; supply chain perspective; MSMEs	Cluster-based readiness (TOE)	D
16	Factors Behind Third-Party Logistics Providers Readiness Towards Halal Logistics (Fauzy et al., 2014)	Halal logistics, Malaysia	Organisational Condition & Capacity	C

Results and Discussion

Fragmented conceptualisation of halal readiness

As illustrated in *Figure 2*, organisational readiness for halal compliance remains conceptually fragmented. Rather than representing a single, coherent construct, readiness has been variously conceptualised as organisational awareness and intention, technical compliance, organisational condition, or stage-based preparedness. Although these perspectives provide valuable insights into different aspects of halal implementation, they are grounded in different theoretical assumptions and operational definitions, resulting in inconsistent interpretations of what organisational readiness actually represents. Importantly, the four conceptual patterns should not be interpreted as a progression of methodological quality or empirical strength. Rather, they represent different conceptual perspectives through which organisational readiness has been understood within the halal compliance literature, irrespective of the methodological approaches adopted in individual studies. More importantly, the review indicates that existing studies predominantly conceptualise readiness as an observable organisational condition or implementation outcome. Consequently, the literature provides considerable evidence regarding factors associated with readiness, yet offers a limited theoretical explanation of the organisational processes through which readiness is formed. This conceptual fragmentation makes it difficult to establish a coherent theoretical understanding of organisational readiness and explains why halal readiness has yet to be conceptualised as an organisational change capability.

Critical appraisal of the existing conceptualisations

Each conceptual pattern contributes valuable insights into organisational readiness for halal compliance, yet each represents only a partial perspective of the construct. Pattern A focuses on organisational awareness and behavioural intention, Pattern B on

technical and compliance resources, Pattern C on enabling organisational conditions, and Pattern D on developmental readiness. Collectively, these fragmented perspectives enhance understanding of halal implementation, but they stop short of explaining how organisations integrate and mobilise these elements as a sustained organisational capability. This conceptual limitation provides the foundation for reconceptualising halal readiness as an organisational change capability.

From technical compliance to organisational capability

One of the key observations from this review is that halal readiness cannot be adequately explained through technical compliance alone. Studies classified under the Technical and Compliance Capacity perspective (Pattern B) primarily assess readiness through conformity with halal standards, documentation, operational procedures, and audit requirements. While these elements provide useful indicators of compliance, they describe what organisations possess rather than what they are capable of doing. By contrast, the Organisational Condition and Capacity perspective (Pattern C) emphasises organisational processes such as leadership, internal coordination, communication, learning, and system integration. These findings suggest that halal readiness reflects an organisation's capability to mobilise internal resources and collective efforts to sustain halal implementation over time. *Table 2* summarises the conceptual distinction between static operational resources and OCC.

***Table 2**. Conceptual distinction between static operational resources and OCC in halal readiness.*

Static Operational Resources	Organisational Change Capability (OCC)
Compliance documents	Institutionalising halal practices
Standard operating procedures	Coordinated implementation
Technical knowledge	Sustained organisational practices
Audit conformity	Maintaining continuous halal compliance through OCC

Note: Derived from the literature synthesis, the table illustrates the proposed shift from viewing halal readiness as a static compliance condition to an organisational change capability.

Why halal readiness qualifies as an OCC

As demonstrated in Pattern C, organisational conditions such as leadership, organisational systems, and internal coordination are recognised as important enablers of halal implementation. However, these studies continue to conceptualise readiness as the presence of favourable organisational conditions rather than the capability to mobilise and sustain them over time. Within the halal context, organisations are required not only to fulfil certification requirements but also to embed halal principles into organisational routines, decision-making, employee practices, and internal governance. This requires continuous organisational adaptation, learning, and capability development. Therefore, halal readiness is more appropriately understood as an OCC, reflecting an organisation's collective ability to mobilise, coordinate, and sustain the organisational processes required to implement, sustain, and continuously improve halal compliance.

Conceptualising halal readiness as an OCC

Building upon these findings, this study proposes an ORC-informed conceptual framework explaining how organisational readiness for halal compliance is developed

(*Figure 3*). The framework distinguishes organisational drivers that shape readiness from the capability-building mechanism that translates these drivers into implementation capability. Specifically, informational assessment, perceived compatibility, and communication effectiveness influence how organisations interpret halal requirements, while training intervention functions as an organisational capability-building mechanism that enables organisations to transform favourable organisational conditions into sustained implementation capability. Halal implementation operates within a value-driven regulatory environment shaped by Shariah principles. Consequently, organisations are required not only to comply with halal standards but also to embed halal values into organisational routines, internal coordination, and sustained implementation practices. Within this context, ORC provides an appropriate theoretical lens by explaining how organisations collectively develop the capability to implement and sustain organisational change. Within the proposed framework, informational assessment explains the cognitive basis for readiness formation through ORC, while perceived compatibility and communication effectiveness extend this explanation by capturing how organisations interpret and access halal-related information (DOI). Training intervention complements these organisational drivers by enabling their translation into implementation capability (RBV).

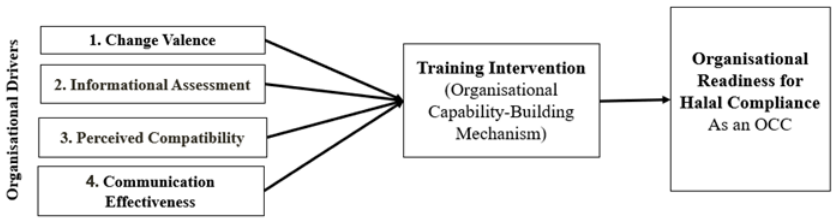


Figure 3. *ORC-informed conceptual framework of organisational readiness for halal compliance.*

Accordingly, the proposed framework explains halal readiness not as the possession of compliance-related resources or the completion of certification requirements, but as the organisation's collective capability to mobilise resources, coordinate organisational processes and sustain halal implementation over time. In this way, the framework distinguishes organisational change capability from static compliance conditions by emphasising readiness as an ongoing organisational process rather than a one-time compliance outcome. Overall, the proposed framework extends the existing halal readiness literature in three important ways. First, it integrates previously fragmented conceptualisations of readiness into a coherent organisational change perspective. Second, it explains readiness as a value-driven organisational capability. Third, it positions training intervention as an organisational capability-building mechanism that translates organisational drivers into sustained halal implementation capability. Collectively, these contributions provide a stronger theoretical foundation for future empirical research on organisational readiness for halal standard compliance.

Conclusion

This conceptual paper contributes to the evolving halal compliance literature by offering a coherent explanation of organisational readiness, an area that has previously been characterised by fragmented interpretations. Rather than viewing readiness as behavioural intention or technical compliance, the proposed framework conceptualises halal readiness as an OCC through which organisational drivers and training intervention enable the sustained implementation of halal practices. By reframing readiness as an organisational capability, this reconceptualisation offers both theoretical and practical contributions. It provides a clearer explanation of how organisations develop the capability to implement halal compliance, particularly among SMEs. The proposed framework may also serve as a conceptual foundation for future empirical studies to develop and validate actionable managerial approaches for strengthening organisational readiness in halal compliance, including its application within halal certification and auditing practices.

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Conflict of interest

The authors hereby declare that there are no conflicts of interest associated with this publication.

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