



Introducing Halal Snacks to Children: A Phenomenological Study in Indonesian Kindergartens

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Abstract

In Indonesia's diverse society, teaching young children about halal snacks is crucial for religious aspects and public health, particularly in early childhood education. This study examines how kindergarten teachers introduce the concept of halal snacks to young children within the country's diverse cultural and religious backgrounds. Halal food holds great importance in Indonesia, both due to religious beliefs and public health policies, making it a complex subject to teach in early childhood education. Using a phenomenological approach, the research explores teachers' experiences teaching young children about halal snacks. The findings reveal the challenges these teachers face and the opportunities they seize to simplify the concept for their students. Teachers actively engage with children, using examples and practical demonstrations to convey the importance of halal food. They also navigate cultural and religious factors, significantly influencing policies and practices within kindergartens. This study highlights the crucial role of teachers in shaping children's understanding of halal snacks during early education. It uncovers the challenges and provides practical solutions, emphasizing the importance of incorporating halal values into children's learning experiences.

Keywords *Halal, Education, Childhood Education, Teacher, Indonesia, Religion, Islamic Studies*

INTRODUCTION

Halal awareness is the level of knowledge Muslim consumers possess in seeking and consuming halal products in accordance with Islamic law (Setyaningsih & Marwansyah, 2019). As a predominantly Muslim country, Indonesia places significant importance on halal food, driven by both religious considerations and public health concerns. Educational institutions such as schools are responsible for fostering awareness about Islamic law (Wahyudin et al., 2018). Integrating the education of halal principles as one of the Islamic laws for young children within the kindergarten setting is essential for fostering an early understanding and appreciation of Islamic dietary guidelines because optimal health is achieved through the consumption of vegetables, fruits, and proteins sourced from various Halal outlets (Riaz & Ghayyas, 2023). However, educators encounter significant challenges when imparting this knowledge to young children.

Teaching young children about halal snacks in this complex society is very important, especially in early childhood education. Teaching halal snacks in kindergartens is crucial because it deeply connects with the area's culture and religion. Halal food is not just about what people eat; it is also linked to religious beliefs and public health rules. This is because Muslims' food choices should be healthy and Halal (Ramli et al., 2021). That is why it is crucial to conduct a study on children's comprehension of the concepts and practices associated with Halal (Parhan & Ismail,

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2015). This educational approach should align with the broader goals of holistic development, emphasizing academic skills and social and cultural competencies essential for navigating an increasingly interconnected world.

Therefore, this study explores how kindergarten teachers teach halal snacks. It shows how teachers play a big role in helping children understand halal food, promoting tolerance, understanding, and respect. This study aims to understand teachers' experiences using a special research method, exploring the difficulties they face and how they creatively explain halal food to their students. Specifically, the research seeks to answer the following questions: (1) What do teachers encounter difficulties conveying about halal food? (2) What strategies are employed by teachers in teaching about halal food? (3) How does the teaching approach impact students' understanding of halal values? Lastly, (4) what recommendations can be made for institutions to enhance the inclusion of halal values in early education?

It emphasizes teachers' crucial role in facilitating early learning about halal snacks, highlighting the importance of incorporating halal values in education. This research aims to improve children's learning and foster peaceful coexistence among Indonesia's diverse cultures and religions in kindergarten settings. It also aims to address the gaps left by previous studies, which were limited to examining deficient teaching content and focused solely on research participants who were older students.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Importance of Halal Food in Indonesian Culture and Religion

As a follower of Islam, having a thorough awareness and vigilance regarding the concepts of halal and haram is crucial. We cannot solely rely on actions and external authorities (Yusoff and Adzharuddin, 2017). Muslims should understand these concepts, highlighting the importance of personal awareness rather than mindlessly following external authorities. The importance of halal (permissible) and haram (forbidden) in Indonesian culture and religion goes beyond religious obligations for Muslims; it is a vital aspect of their cultural identity. In Indonesia, the world's most populous Muslim-majority nation (Muheramtohad & Fataron, 2022), the significance of halal food is deeply ingrained in the country's culture and societal norms, extending beyond religious practices.

Understanding of Halal

In a broad sense, "halal" signifies something that is allowed, authorized, approved, sanctioned, lawful, legal, legitimate, or licit (Wahab, 2004). This statement should convey that the mentioned item does not include any component or substance from an animal that is forbidden for consumption according to Shariah law (Ambali & Bakar, 2014). These terms show halal goes beyond legality, encompassing ethical and religious considerations. In Indonesia, where diverse culinary traditions intersect with Islamic values, the definition of halal guides the daily lives of millions, influencing their food choices, social interactions, and cultural practices.

In summary, this literature review underscores the vital role of halal food in Indonesian culture and religion. It emphasizes the need for personal understanding among Muslims, the comprehensive nature of halal definitions, and the careful considerations involved in halal food consumption.

Difficulties in Teaching Halal Concepts to Young Children

One of the challenges in teaching about halal is the limited availability of instructional content on the subject in schools. Direct instruction on halal content is lacking, with only brief discussions on manners-related topics (Jais, 2014). Closing this gap by integrating more detailed and dedicated

lessons on halal can lead to better-informed individuals who appreciate halal practices' cultural and religious aspects. Improving the educational framework requires collaboration between educators and recommendations for curriculum developers to ensure a more thorough and nuanced approach to teaching halal in educational settings.

On the other hand, the significance of nutritious and halal food cannot be overstated for elementary school students as these elements play a crucial role in supporting their development. This is particularly noteworthy given that they are in the second phase of human brain intelligence following the toddler age (Kurniawati et al., 2019). This stage represents a significant period for brain intelligence, making it essential for children to receive proper nutrition, including healthy and halal food.

Previous Studies on Teaching Halal Food in Early Childhood Education

Teaching children about halal concepts during their early years holds significant importance, especially during the critical transition from elementary school to adolescence. However, the representation of the halal lifestyle concept in Islamic Religious Education textbooks has been inadequate (Handayani et al., 2023). This gap reveals a crucial deficiency in educational materials designed to impart essential values to young learners. As children navigate the complexities of adolescence, it becomes essential to instil the fundamental concepts of a halal lifestyle, not just in their food choices but also in shaping their character and identity.

Early education about halal is essential to equip individuals for the evolving requirements of the dynamic economy (Jais et al., 2014). This phase marks formative years where they begin to shape their identity, influenced by the values they encounter. Introducing the concept of a halal lifestyle during this period is pivotal, serving as the foundation for their character and moral compass. Early childhood education plays a key role in shaping attitudes and behaviours, making it an opportune time to instil the significance of halal food choices and broader halal living.

In summary, teaching young children about halal comes with its challenges, primarily linked to their cognitive readiness to grasp such a complex theme. On the other hand, research on teaching halal in early childhood is currently insufficient. A notable abundance of studies focuses on older students, such as those in primary school, high school, and adults. Consequently, there is a pressing need for investigations specifically addressing the teaching of halal in early education. Therefore, this research aims to explore the difficulties educators face in this regard and suggests strategies to enhance the effectiveness of teaching activities.

RESEARCH METHOD

In this study, researchers used a special method called phenomenology to understand how kindergarten teachers teach halal snacks in Indonesia. Phenomenology is a research approach that aims to understand the essence of a phenomenon by examining it through the eyes of those who have lived it (Neubauer et al., 2019).

The subject of the study was 23 teachers from 3 different kindergartens. The researchers utilized standardized open-ended interviews to inquire of the teachers a series of questions, providing them the opportunity to articulate thoroughly their thoughts and opinions concerning their experiences in teaching about halal practices (Turner, 2010). The questions were about the challenges encountered, the strategies employed, the outcomes observed, and potential improvement in the educational activity to improve the knowledge about halal practices

The researchers carefully analyzed the responses to identify common patterns and organized them into categories (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The information was analyzed by considering the most prominent findings and elaborated through a qualitative approach. This process aimed to highlight teachers' challenges and the inventive approaches they employ to overcome these issues.

This study employed triangulation to enhance research by providing diverse datasets from quantitative and qualitative to elucidate various facets of a phenomenon under investigation (Noble & Heale, 2019). The researcher can validate qualitative findings, explore relationships, and statistically represent results. It helped this study to grasp the context of findings and comprehend challenging issues that emerged from quantitative data results.

In Indonesia, the findings can be applied to improve teaching practices across diverse educational institutions, given that schools often include religious subjects in their curriculum. This is particularly relevant for Islamic background schools, which can serve as key contributors to the development of the halal industry (Djakfar et al., 2023). Given the significant and swift expansion of the halal food industry in Europe (Aniqoh & Hanastiana, 2020), it could potentially serve as a recommendation for the country to incorporate halal teachings. As for the United States, there has been a growing call for the availability of Halal products (Dahlan & Sani, 2017). These findings could also serve as a suggestion to establish Halal education in the country.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Findings from the study are categorized into four themes, including (1) challenges faced by teachers, (2) strategies employed by the teachers, (3) impact on children's understanding, and (4) recommendations from the teachers. These four themes are further elaborated upon through detailed subcategories based on the discussion topics.

Challenges Faced by Teachers

In introducing the concept of halal snacks to young children, teachers encounter several significant challenges rooted in the unique nature of early childhood education. These challenges are mostly related to the distinctive characteristics of children in their learning process. The challenges are as follows:

Limited Understanding of the Halal Concept

Teachers face a big challenge because young children do not fully understand the complicated idea of halal. Since they are very young, they cannot understand complex religious and health concepts. It is hard for teachers to explain halal and haram in a way that these young kids can understand, and the explanation needs to be correct and easy for them to grasp. Some highlighted teachers' answers are as follows.

"The primary challenge lies in the limited understanding of early childhood children regarding the concept of halal, considering that they are still toddlers, an age characterized by playfulness and where their logical thinking is not yet fully organized." - Teacher DM

"Explaining the concept of halal to young children is not easy. It requires clever techniques and well-structured material so that the child can understand what we convey. At this tender age, children are still in their playful phase, and their logical thinking is not yet fully developed." - Teacher NH

"Communicating and applying the concept of halal itself." - Teacher DS

"It is challenging to explain to children about foods that are permissible or impermissible based on religion and health." - Teacher NL

"The main challenge is the lack of understanding among early childhood children about the

concept of halal, considering they are still toddlers, an age characterized by play and their logical thinking is not yet organized.” - Teacher DM

Selection of Age-Appropriate Language

Selecting the right words for young kids is a big challenge for teachers. They have to choose words that are easy to understand, friendly, and not scary. It is important to find words that match childhood innocence but also explain the seriousness of halal and haram. This can be difficult and needs careful thought. Some of the highlighted responses are as follows:

“It is challenging to explain to childrens which foods they can eat and which they cannot using very simple language that they can understand.” - Teacher NL

“Choosing the right words to explain the concept of halal and haram without using negative terms that children may find unsettling.” - Teacher TN

The rest of the responses highlighted that challenges in teaching about halal arise not only from the lack of awareness among parents regarding available halal content in the market but also from external influences. In addition, a teacher emphasized that in the current internet era, children are exposed to abundant information and knowledge, some of which may be inaccurate. This influx of information can lead to misinformation, making it difficult for children to discern what is correct or incorrect, including distinguishing between halal and forbidden items. As one the teacher suggests:

“Children often witness adults engaging in or consuming something that is considered forbidden or not halal, whether observed through social media or within their immediate environment, and it appears to be perfectly fine.” – Teacher ARN

Table 1. Challenges Faced by Teachers

Sub Categories	Teachers’ response
Limited Understanding of Halal Concept	15
Selection of Age-Appropriate Language	4
Other Answers	4

Strategies Employed by Teachers

This result shows that teachers use creative methods to teach kids about halal foods in schools. These methods show how much teachers care about ensuring kids understand why eating halal snacks is important. They do this in interesting, helpful ways and are respectful of different cultures. The methods are:

Integration into the Curriculum

Teachers smoothly include lessons about halal foods in their daily teaching. By doing this, they make sure kids regularly learn why eating permissible foods is important, following Islamic principles. This way, children get a consistent education that connects with their beliefs. It can be seen from the responses below:

“Incorporating the theme of thoyyibah (wholesome) and halal food into the curriculum of an institution.” - Teacher NH

"Usually combined with relevant themes such as "my favourite foods," "healthy and unhealthy foods." - Teacher NL

"In addition to the curriculum, there are also additional teaching materials aligned with the identity of the kindergarten, which focus on religious aspects." - Teacher PM

"Providing information about halal food and drinks during meal activities in the classroom." - Teacher TZ

"Teaching through lecture methods, incorporating religious elements into the instruction." - Teacher WA

"Perhaps by explaining and providing examples of foods that are permissible and those that are not, in line with the theme." - Teacher NL

Real-Life Experiences

Teachers use daily experiences to help kids understand better. They create nature tables with different halal and haram foods, letting kids touch and see them up close. Teachers also take students to supermarkets, looking for and buying foods with halal labels. These hands-on experiences give real examples, helping kids understand halal snacks daily. The teachers' answers are as follows:

"By providing concrete examples, we, as teachers, set up a nature table containing various types of halal and haram foods."- Teacher DS

"We involve the children in practical activities, such as going to the supermarket to search for and purchase halal-labeled foods." - Teacher DST

"We explain to the children what kind of foods are permissible by giving examples."- Teacher TZ

"I integrate the concept of halal through the nature table method, which includes various halal and haram foods, videos, and pictures."- Teacher IW

"To make it more realistic, we take the children to a large supermarket, show them places where halal and haram foods are located, and engage them in shopping for items with halal labels." - Teacher DSN

"I use the concept of halal conditionally."- Teacher NH

Interactive Learning Through Songs and Games

Teachers use fun ways of learning, like songs, games, and playful activities. They use catchy songs and exciting games, ensuring kids have fun while understanding halal and haram foods. These interesting methods help children pay attention and enjoy learning, making it effective. The teachers' responses can be seen below:

"Using movement and music, instilling the habit of using the term 'thoyyibah' (wholesome), reminding about what is permissible or not." - Teacher TN

"Yes, it can be through singing or engaging illustrations." - Teacher DS

"Through stories, songs, and various creative methods." - Teacher DR

"Usually, the concept of halal is incorporated into themes like "my favorite foods and my needs" and does not require additional resources." - Teacher ARN

Expert Guidance and Multimedia Utilization

Teachers ask for help from nutrition experts and use technology to improve their lessons. Nutrition experts come to class and share accurate information about the nutrition of halal foods. Teachers also use devices like projectors and laptops to show videos and pictures that explain the concepts clearly and interestingly. This method has been demonstrated to be effective in teaching Islamic religious subjects (Winarto et al., 2020). The teachers' responses can be seen as follows:

"We use specialized learning to teach this subject by bringing in a nutrition expert. We also utilize a projector, infocus, and a laptop to explain the lesson." - Teacher DS

"We bring in an external expert, a competent nutritionist, to explain about halal and haram foods, as well as the negative impacts of such foods." - Teacher IW

Even so, some teachers do not incorporate additional specific materials into their teaching content. They only rely on the existing teaching material and add some content about halal. As some teachers suggest:

"Currently, it is not specific, except for every Friday when we focus on religious themes and always incorporate concepts of halal and haram for the children." - Teacher SH

"No, we use materials that are already part of the theme." - Teacher AW

Table 2. Strategies Employed by Teachers

Sub Categories	Teachers' response
Integration into the Curriculum	6
Real-Life Experiences	6
Interactive Learning Through Songs and Games	4
Expert Guidance and Multimedia Utilization	2
Other Answers	5

Impact on Children's Understanding

The research illuminates the transformative impact that teaching the concept of halal foods has on young children, significantly influencing their behaviour, awareness, and interpersonal interactions. Most teachers mentioned numerous positive impacts on children's behaviour. The impacts are:

Improved Behavior and Politeness

Children who learn about halal foods tend to behave better. They become more polite, showing respect by being gentle, considerate, and easy to guide. This positive behaviour change comes from their understanding of why eating halal snacks is important. Pure and hygienic food positively influences a child's behaviour by fostering increased vitality and improved concentration (Riaz & Ghayyas, 2023). Therefore, children need to understand the connection between their eating habits and overall health. It can be shown from the highlighted responses below:

"Usually, when children are taught the concept of halal, they tend to exhibit polite behaviour, gentleness, and are easily guided, according to my observations." - Teacher PM

"Children tend to act in a way that reflects well on them by inquiring whether the food they bring for lunch is halal."- Teacher ANZ

"I observe a change in behaviour after they are taught the concept of halal. Certainly, their behaviour is better than before." - Teacher DM

"Yes, the children gain new knowledge and understanding about halal food." - Teacher NZ

Increased Awareness and Curiosity

When children learn about halal foods, they start paying more attention to what they eat. They actively ask whether the food is halal, showing they are more aware and responsible about their dietary choices. The teachers' responses are demonstrated below:

"For example, when children bring lunch from home, they always check the packaging." - Teacher DS

"By understanding the concept of halal, children can provide good information to their families, friends, and neighbours." - Teacher AW

"After the children learn about the concept of halal, they are more cautious in choosing packaged foods." - Teacher IW

However, three teachers said they did not observe any significant impact on the children. One of them has not taught about halal and the other two haven't observed or seen any impact of children's behavior after the halal content has been introduced. The responses are:

"Have not taught before." – Teacher DS

"Have not observed before." – Teacher N

"Not yet." – Teacher LNF

Table 3. Impact on Children's Understanding

Sub Categories	Teachers' response
Improved Behavior and Politeness	16
Increased Awareness and Curiosity	4
Other Answers	3

Recommendations from the Teachers

Based on the responses provided, it is evident that there is a varying level of understanding and support regarding the importance of teaching the concept of halal in early childhood education. To bridge this gap and ensure a comprehensive understanding of halal concepts, it is recommended that schools and relevant institutions consider the following strategies:

Teacher Training and Awareness Programs

Most teachers support the idea of organizing regular training sessions and awareness programs for both teachers and staff members. These programs should emphasize the importance of teaching halal concepts and inclusively embracing cultural diversity within the classroom. Providing teachers with the necessary knowledge and resources will empower them to effectively communicate these concepts to young learners, ensuring a consistent and accurate understanding. It can be shown from the teachers' answers below:

"It is true that preschool teachers need additional guidance on this matter. This can be achieved by participating in specialized training sessions focusing on the concept of halal." - Teacher DM

"Budget allocation for workshops or seminars for educators on the concept of halal for early childhood. Engaging and creative learning approaches are essential." - Teacher NH

"Frequent organization of seminars on the development of early childhood is beneficial." - Teacher RK

"Workshops on how to implement lessons about the concept of halal for children should be conducted, inviting competent speakers in the field." - Teacher N

By implementing these recommendations, educational institutions can create a supportive and inclusive environment where the halal concept is understood and appreciated, fostering a generation that respects diverse beliefs while upholding the values of their own culture and religion.

Enhanced Islamic Education Integration

Most teachers suggest that schools should focus more on including Islamic teachings throughout the subjects. By embedding halal concepts within the educational framework, children can develop a profound understanding of their significance from an early age. This integration should extend beyond religious studies, incorporating halal principles into various subjects and fostering a holistic understanding. The highlighted responses can be seen as follows:

"If it is within the Islamic scope, definitely yes." - Teacher DS

"I believe this is not a problem for the institution because improvement is for the collective progress." - Teacher TN

"Yes, to increase the options for teaching Islamic concepts to preschool children." - Teacher DM

"Yes, as the school also provides reference books about halal and thoyyib food guidelines." - Teacher DST

However, four teachers do not recommend additional training or suggestions for teaching halal content. The teacher believes utilizing the existing materials and school programs is sufficient. One of the highlighted responses can be read below:

"No, it is sufficient to be done during meetings and reflection on learning activities." - Teacher ARN

Table 4. Recommendations from the Teachers

Sub Categories	Teachers' response
Teacher Training and Awareness Programs	13
Enhanced Islamic Education Integration	5
Other Answers	4

Considering these identified categories and the resulting insights, teachers can develop more relevant and effective teaching plans for their future educational activities. Analyzing challenges, strategies, outcomes, and areas for improvement provides valuable information that can guide educators in preparing their approaches to address specific obstacles related to teaching halal practices in kindergarten. By understanding the common patterns and innovative methods employed by their peers, teachers are equipped with a wealth of knowledge to enhance their pedagogical strategies.

CONCLUSIONS

This study highlights how teachers are crucial in teaching young children about halal snacks. They use creative methods to integrate halal concepts into the curriculum, making learning enjoyable and memorable for kids. Interactive activities like songs, games, and real-life experiences engage children and expand their understanding. However, there are still some challenges in teaching about halal snacks, primarily related to common issues with children's characteristics in learning. Nevertheless, in this particular teaching theme about halal, the distinctive challenge lies in addressing religious topics, which can sometimes become sensitive issues within the community. Therefore, teachers need to exercise caution and care in their approach to teaching.

Cultural and religious sensitivity is key in teaching halal concepts. Teachers respect diverse backgrounds, creating an inclusive environment that fosters understanding and respect among children from different cultures and beliefs. Learning about halal foods not only improves children's manners but also makes them conscious consumers, influencing their social interactions positively.

Moreover, the impact of teaching halal concepts extends to communities. Children share their knowledge, raising awareness and promoting understanding about halal dietary practices. This knowledge-sharing creates a sense of community solidarity, contributing positively to society. Overall, incorporating halal concepts in early education equips children with vital knowledge, nurturing culturally aware, responsible, and respectful individuals. Teachers' empathetic and inclusive approaches lay the foundation for a harmonious society where diverse cultures and beliefs are respected and celebrated.

For recommendations and suggestions, it is evident that teachers require more training and additional teaching materials, particularly those related to the halal theme. This could involve workshops, seminars, or professional development sessions focused on enhancing their understanding of halal practices and incorporating relevant content into their curriculum. Furthermore, the creation and availability of comprehensive teaching resources specific to halal snacks would greatly benefit educators in effectively conveying this information to their students.

LIMITATION & FURTHER RESEARCH

Limitations of the study include potential regional variations in the implementation of halal education, which the sample of kindergarten teachers may not fully capture. Additionally, the study primarily focuses on teachers' experiences, while the perspectives of parents, cultural leaders, or policymakers are not thoroughly explored. Further research could delve into these perspectives to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the challenges and opportunities in improving knowledge about halal snacks in early childhood education.

Recommendations for further research include exploring the effectiveness of various teaching methods in conveying the concept of halal snacks to young children. Moreover, investigating the role of technology in supporting halal education for young children could be a valuable avenue for future research. Understanding how digital resources and interactive tools can enhance the learning experience may contribute innovative strategies for educators in addressing the complexities of teaching halal values in diverse early childhood education settings.

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