



Halal Food and Inclusivity in Children's Literature: A Case Study of Halal Exploration from Cultural and Religious Perspectives in Kindergartens in Indonesia

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Abstract

Halal food holds profound cultural and religious significance in Indonesian society. In the Early Childhood Education (ECE) context, understanding halal food becomes pivotal in ensuring genuine inclusivity for all children. This paper examines how halal food is integrated into children's literature in kindergarten and how the integration impacts the inclusivity of children from diverse cultural and religious backgrounds. This paper adopts a case study approach to comprehend how cultural and religious perspectives influence the understanding and implementation of halal food in children's literature in kindergarten. The findings provide deep insights into how halal food can serve as a crucial tool in promoting inclusivity in kindergarten while respecting Indonesia's cultural and religious diversity. This paper also offers practical recommendations for educators and policymakers in the field of ECE to ensure that halal food and inclusive children's literature become integral components of children's learning experiences in kindergarten. This paper explores the importance of halal food within the context of inclusivity in ECE settings, specifically in Indonesian kindergarten through children's literature. This paper contributes to enhancing a more inclusive education system aligned with Indonesia's cultural and religious values.

Keywords *Halal Food, Inclusivity, Children's Literature, Cultural Diversity, Religious Diversity, Early Childhood Education, Kindergarten, Indonesia*

INTRODUCTION

Halal food plays a crucial role in both culture and religion in Indonesia. Understanding and integrating the concept of halal food in early childhood education is essential for promoting inclusivity among children from diverse cultural and religious backgrounds (Batubara et al., 2023). In Indonesian culture, halal food is not only a culinary aspect but also carries profound religious significance (Fothriani & Annisa, 2019; Lipoeto et al., 2001). Halal food is rooted in Islamic teachings, the majority religion in Indonesia. Foods deemed halal must meet specific criteria according to Islamic principles (Rusli, 2020). Therefore, understanding and respecting halal food is crucial in Indonesian culture and religion.

In the context of early childhood education, understanding halal food becomes a supportive element for inclusivity among children with diverse cultural and religious backgrounds. Integrating the concept of halal food into early childhood education is akin to creating an environment where all children feel accepted and respected, regardless of their cultural or religious background. This also helps children understand their school's cultural and religious diversity, fostering inclusive attitudes and appreciation for differences. Thus, understanding and integrating the concept of halal food in early childhood education is not only important for food safety but also for building the

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foundation of inclusivity and appreciation for cultural and religious diversity among Indonesian children.

This paper aimed to investigate the integration of halal food in children's literature in Indonesia and its impact on promoting inclusivity in early childhood education. In this context, integrating the concept of halal food into children's literature is an effort to better understand halal food among children from an early age (Yusof & Shutto, 2014). By incorporating this concept into children's literature, teachers can introduce cultural and religious values related to halal food to children from an early age. This helps raise awareness of the importance of halal food and respect for cultural and religious diversity in Indonesian society.

Previous research on halal food in early childhood education, such as studies by Batubara et al. (2023), Simanjuntak and Nasiha (2019), Yusoff et al. (2016), to Yusoff and Adzharuddin (2017), revealed that integrating the concept of halal food into children's literature can contribute to building an inclusive educational environment. Children from various cultural and religious backgrounds feel accepted and respected in their early childhood education environment. It also promotes appreciation for differences and helps create a supportive environment for diversity.

This research will assist teachers in understanding the extent to which the integration of the concept of halal food in children's literature in early childhood education contributes to inclusivity in Indonesia. Thus, this paper will provide valuable insights into how this approach can enrich children's learning experiences and promote inclusivity in a culturally and religiously diverse society.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Halal Food in Indonesian Culture and Religion

As a country with a majority Muslim population, halal food is an integral part of daily life and holds deep cultural significance in Indonesian society. Halal food is not just a culinary category; it also reflects strong cultural values. In Indonesia, halal food is understood as food that adheres to Islamic teachings. This encompasses aspects such as the type of meat used, the method of slaughter, and the use of ingredients considered halal according to Islamic Sharia. Therefore, halal food is not only about food safety but also about preserving the integrity of religion and culture.

Halal food has its roots in Islamic teachings, which view food as a crucial aspect of living a life in accordance with religious guidance. In Islam, halal food is considered blessed by Allah and permissible for Muslims. Adherence to halal food rules is a manifestation of respect for religious teachings and reflects a commitment to Islamic values.

In Indonesia, authorities, such as the Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI), are responsible for issuing halal food certifications. This certification guarantees consumers that the food they consume aligns with halal principles. This has led to an increased demand for halal food in Indonesia and has nurtured the halal food industry. Indonesian society, especially the Muslim community, considers halal food an essential part of daily life. Halal food is present in various aspects, including religious celebrations, family events, and daily life (Jaelani, 2017). The consumption of halal food serves as a symbol of religious and cultural identity for the Indonesian people. Halal food plays an integral role in the daily lives of the Indonesian population, and a profound understanding of this concept is highly relevant in integrating halal food into early childhood education and promoting inclusivity in Indonesia.

Inclusivity in Early Childhood Education

Inclusivity is a crucial concept in Early Childhood Education (ECE). It refers to an educational approach that ensures all children, including those with special needs or different cultural and religious backgrounds, receive the same education and feel accepted (Christensen &

Gast, 2015; Piller & Takahashi, 2011). Inclusivity is not just about equal education but also about creating an environment that supports the growth and development of children from diverse backgrounds.

Inclusivity in ECE plays a significant role in supporting children with different cultural and religious backgrounds. It provides opportunities for children to learn about cultural and religious diversity in their classrooms. In a multicultural society like Indonesia, inclusivity is key to ensuring that all children feel accepted and respected, regardless of their backgrounds (Lestari & Yulindrasari, 2021).

Furthermore, inclusivity in ECE helps foster an appreciation for differences. Children growing up in inclusive environments learn to respect and value their peers from different cultural and religious backgrounds. This creates a strong foundation for future intercultural cooperation and understanding. An inclusive environment in ECE has a positive impact on children's learning. Children growing up in inclusive environments have better opportunities for healthy social, emotional, and cognitive development. They also learn valuable skills such as cooperation and tolerance. Inclusivity has become a crucial concept in early childhood education that supports children from various cultural and religious backgrounds. It creates an environment that promotes respect for differences, helps children thrive, and positively impacts their learning. Inclusivity is the key to creating a fair and supportive education for all children in a diverse Indonesian society.

Integration of Halal Food in Children's Literature

Integrating the halal food concept in children's literature is a topic garnering increasing attention, particularly in the context of cultural and religious inclusivity. This is crucial because children's literature significantly shapes children's understanding of their values, norms, and identity. Integrating the halal food concept in children's literature helps create a better understanding of the importance of halal food, especially in predominantly Muslim societies like Indonesia.

Children's literature is not just a source of entertainment but also a powerful educational medium. Children learn a lot through stories, illustrations, and characters in children's books (Lestari, 2020; Lestari & Yulindrasari, 2021). Therefore, children's literature has great potential in educating children about cultural and religious values, including halal food. The concept of halal food in children's literature focuses on how to narrate stories that illustrate the importance of halal food and how it affects the lives of the characters in the story. Children's books incorporating the halal food concept have the potential to enhance children's understanding of the religious and cultural values associated with halal food.

The concept of halal food in children's literature also promotes inclusivity in early childhood education. It helps children from different cultural and religious backgrounds feel accepted and respected in the educational environment (Yusoff et al., 2016). It also helps address stereotypes and prejudices concerning food and religious beliefs. Children's literature has significant potential in educating children about halal food and related cultural and religious values. Further research and development in this area can provide valuable insights into how children's literature can effectively educate children about halal food and promote inclusivity among the younger generation in Indonesia.

RESEARCH METHOD

This research investigates how cultural and religious perspectives influence the understanding and implementation of the halal food concept in children's literature in Indonesian kindergartens. The study adopts a case study approach, allowing researchers to delve into this issue meticulously and comprehend the cultural and religious contexts influencing the understanding

and implementation of halal food in children's literature.

Research subjects include those involved in implementing the halal food concept in children's literature, such as kindergarten teachers, children's book authors, and publishers of children's books. Parents and children may also be the research subjects to understand their perspectives (Creswell, 2012, 2013). Data will be collected through various methods, including in-depth interviews with implementers, analysis of children's literature texts, direct observation of kindergarten practices, and review of relevant documents. Data will be analyzed using content analysis methods to identify critical elements in children's literature related to halal food. Furthermore, interview data will be analyzed using a qualitative approach to understand cultural and religious perspectives and influences.

This research seeks to provide insights into the interplay between cultural and religious perspectives and the portrayal of halal food in children's literature, contributing to a deeper understanding of how these factors shape the educational environment in Indonesian kindergartens. Information is gathered through informal interviews conducted in Indonesian, each lasting 1 to 2 hours. A Focus Group Discussion will be held later to ensure Halal Food and Inclusivity comprehension. The collected data is transcribed and translated into English, with participants given the chance to review and amend their transcripts for accuracy. Using Constructivist Grounded Theory, analysis occurs in two phases: initial line-by-line coding followed by merging similar codes to identify three overarching themes. These are Integration of Halal Food in Children's Literature, Impact on Inclusivity, and Promoting Inclusivity.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Integration of Halal Food in Children's Literature

The findings of this research illustrate how halal food is integrated into children's literature in Indonesian kindergarten education. The findings indicate that integrating the concept of halal food in children's literature plays a crucial role in early education. Kindergarten teachers are aware of the importance of teaching children about halal food from an early age. This helps create an understanding of cultural and religious values related to halal food.

Inclusivity in Children's Literature: The integration of halal food in children's literature is also identified as an effort to create inclusivity in kindergarten learning. It allows children from various cultural and religious backgrounds to feel accepted and respected (Handayani et al., 2023; Malti et al., 2017). Children's literature incorporating halal food also helps overcome stereotypes and prejudices about food and religious beliefs.

Teachers are identified as key players in integrating the concept of halal food into children's literature. They actively seek children's books depicting halal food and ensure that children understand the importance of halal food. Additionally, children's book authors also play a significant role in creating inclusive literature and incorporating the concept of halal food. Integrating the halal food concept in children's literature is a positive step in supporting cultural and religious inclusivity in Indonesian kindergarten education. The following is an excerpt from an interview conducted with a teacher regarding the children's book used to introduce the concept of halal in their kindergarten class.

Table 1. Teacher's response regarding the children's book used to introduce the concept of halal

No	Teacher's Name	Response
1	Dewi Setianti	Displaying symbols, pictures, and children's books of what is considered permissible (halal).
2	Dila Raihanna	Teaching how to understand the creations of God, fostering love among

	Dwiyani	fellow humans, and not discriminating based on religion, race, or others.
3	Dwi Sutanti	The challenge is how teachers can introduce children to what constitutes permissible (halal) food and what does not, as well as teach them about the prohibitions mentioned in the Quran.
4	Nurlelasari	Difficulty in explaining to children, in a very simple language that they can understand, which foods can be eaten and which cannot.

The findings indicate that educators and children's book authors understand the importance of incorporating cultural and religious values, especially related to halal food, in children's literature. It is essential to acknowledge the role of teachers as the primary mediators between children's literature and children. Teachers are responsible for selecting and integrating children's books that reflect cultural and religious diversity, including halal food. Additionally, children's book authors must continue innovating in creating inclusive stories and understanding societal diversity.

Integrating halal food in children's literature also creates opportunities for children to learn about cultural and religious diversity in their classrooms. This is crucial in Indonesia's multicultural society. However, it should be noted that education and awareness about halal food still need improvement. Parents and communities also play a vital role in supporting this understanding. Furthermore, further development in this area can provide practical guidance for educators and children's book authors to continue promoting inclusivity and understanding of halal food in children's literature in Indonesia.

Impact on Inclusivity

The findings of this study illuminate a profound impact on inclusivity within kindergarten settings. By integrating the concept of halal food into children's literature, this study has widened the scope of inclusivity, fostering a more comprehensive understanding of cultural and religious diversity among young learners. Through this exploration, it is evident that such initiatives promote an environment where children not only grasp the significance of dietary practices but also embrace respect for differing beliefs, fostering an inclusive and harmonious classroom atmosphere.

Moreover, this research highlights the transformative potential of culturally sensitive educational materials. Incorporating halal exploration into children's literature extends beyond mere dietary awareness. It becomes a catalyst for embracing cultural nuances and religious diversity, amplifying inclusivity within kindergartens (Parlindungan et al., 2018; Weiss, 2006). Such initiatives encourage dialogue, understanding, and acceptance among children from various cultural backgrounds, ultimately contributing to a more tolerant and inclusive society.

The integration of the halal food concept in children's literature contributes to fostering an appreciation for differences. Children growing up with an understanding of halal food learn to respect and value their friends with different cultural and religious backgrounds. This creates an inclusive environment where children feel accepted and respected, regardless of their diverse backgrounds (Parham, 2013; Unsworth & Cléirigh, 2011).

The integration of halal food in children's literature also helps address stereotypes and prejudices regarding food and religious beliefs. Children become more open to cultural and religious diversity, learning that differences are not negative but something that enriches life experiences (Lestari et al., 2021). The integration of halal food in children's literature helps shape cultural and religious inclusivity. Children grow with an understanding of respecting cultural and religious diversity in society (Rohita et al., 2017; Trousdale, 2005). This creates a strong foundation for intercultural cooperation and understanding in the future.

The impact of integrating the concept of halal food in children's literature on inclusivity is

highly positive. Appreciating differences is crucial to children's education, especially in diverse societies like Indonesia. The integration of halal food helps create an environment where all children feel accepted and respected. Additionally, efforts to eliminate stereotypes and prejudices are crucial steps in building inclusivity. Children growing up with an understanding of halal food become more open and tolerant of differences (Simanjuntak & Nasiha, 2019). They learn to see value in cultural and religious diversity.

Fostering cultural and religious inclusivity is a crucial goal in children's education. The integration of halal food in children's literature helps shape children's respect and appreciation for cultural and religious differences. This is a positive step towards a more inclusive society in the future. However, it should be noted that education and awareness about halal food still need improvement. Parents, educators, and communities play a vital role in supporting this understanding. With heightened awareness of inclusivity and appreciation for differences, communities can collaborate to create a more inclusive and respectful environment for cultural and religious diversity.

Promoting Inclusivity

The importance of inclusivity in kindergarten education is a profound and relevant topic, particularly in multicultural societies like Indonesia (Lestari et al., 2021). One way to promote inclusivity is by integrating the concept of halal food into kindergarten education. This discussion will explore the potential of halal food as a tool to promote inclusivity while respecting cultural and religious diversity. The integration of halal food in children's literature and daily life in kindergarten allows children to understand and respect cultural and religious differences. Children learn that diversity is enriching, not a threat. This helps reduce stereotypes and prejudices that may arise later on.

The concept of halal food also opens the door to educating children about its underlying religious values. Children can learn about the importance of cleanliness, integrity, and respecting religious beliefs (Hendriyani et al., 2016). This forms a strong foundation for tolerance and appreciation of religious values in society. The integration of halal food helps shape inclusive attitudes among children (Simanjuntak & Nasiha, 2019). They grow with an understanding that everyone, regardless of cultural and religious backgrounds, deserves respect and acceptance. This is a strong foundation for intercultural cooperation and understanding in the future.

Educators and parents play a crucial role in supporting the promotion of inclusivity through the concept of halal food. They should serve as positive examples and support efforts to integrate halal food into children's literature and daily life in kindergarten. They can also contribute to educating children about inclusive values and appreciating differences (Niklas & Schneider, 2017). In other words, collaboration between educators, parents, and the community is essential in promoting inclusivity (Miranda et al., 2017). The community must work together towards a more inclusive environment where all children feel accepted and respected.

Thus, the integration of the concept of halal food in kindergarten education has the potential to promote inclusivity while respecting cultural and religious diversity. It helps children understand the importance of appreciating differences and religious values in a multicultural society. With higher support and awareness from educators, parents, and the community, the integration of halal food can be a powerful tool for building inclusivity among the younger generation in Indonesia.

CONCLUSION

This research found that the introduction of halal food has significant potential to enhance inclusivity in early childhood education in Indonesia. These findings carry substantial implications

in alignment with Indonesia's cultural and religious values. The importance of halal food in the context of early childhood education reflects a desire to create a friendly and inclusive environment for all children. This discovery indicates that understanding and recognizing halal food can be a crucial step in establishing a classroom environment that reinforces Indonesian children's cultural and religious identity.

The implications of this research highlight the need for integrating the concept of halal food into education policies, including the development of curricula that accommodate cultural and religious values. Thus, it can create a more inclusive learning environment, respecting diversity and strengthening a sense of justice for every child. The potential of halal food to enhance inclusivity in early childhood education not only establishes a safer and more supportive space but also provides opportunities to enrich children's understanding of cultural and religious diversity in Indonesia. By incorporating the concept of halal food in education, we can build a solid foundation for shaping a society that is inclusive and mutually respectful, in line with Indonesia's values rich in diversity.

Recommendations

Educators and Kindergarten Practices

This research provides practical recommendations for educators aiming to integrate the concept of halal food into children's literature and create an inclusive learning environment. For instance, educators should choose literature that depicts halal food. Furthermore, teaching inclusive values is crucial. Educators can explain the concept of halal food when introducing food to daily activities at kindergarten. This helps children understand the significance of halal food in the context of culture and religion.

Moreover, the research emphasizes the importance of collaboration with parents. Educators can collaborate with parents to enhance children's understanding of halal food. Involving parents in activities such as cooking or bringing halal food to kindergarten can be an educational experience. Educators can plan events that celebrate cultural and religious diversity during kindergarten activities. This creates an environment where children feel accepted and respected. Educators can incorporate inclusive material about halal food into their curriculum. This may include activities promoting understanding and appreciation of halal food. These recommendations aim to assist educators in creating an inclusive learning environment and respecting cultural and religious diversity in kindergarten. With careful approaches and proper education, educators can help children understand inclusive values and the concept of halal food from an early age.

Policy Implications

The policies and recommendations to ensure inclusivity, cultural awareness, and respect for religious diversity in kindergarten education are presented in the following Table 1:

Table 2. Policies and Recommendations

No	Policy Implication	Recommendations
1.	Inclusive Curriculum Development	Form a curriculum review board of educators, cultural experts, and religious leaders to ensure teaching materials represent and respect various cultural and religious perspectives.
2.	Teacher Training and Professional Development	Establish continuous professional development programs that equip educators with skills to create an

	inclusive classroom environment, including understanding and respecting religious diversity.
3. Allocation of Resources for Diverse Teaching Materials	Create guidelines for schools to prioritize using materials representing various cultures and religions, ensuring classrooms have diverse resources.
4. Engagement and Partnership with the Community	Form a public relations position within schools to facilitate partnerships and encourage the participation of parents, religious leaders, and community members in shaping an inclusive educational environment.
5. Flexible Assessment Methods	Create guidelines for teachers to use various assessment tools that consider cultural nuances, ensuring fair evaluations of students from different backgrounds.
6. Culturally Responsive Parental Involvement	Implement programs facilitating open communication between schools and parents, encouraging schools to accommodate cultural and religious celebrations in school activities and events.
7. Anti-Harassment and Inclusion Policies	Develop educational programs that promote understanding and tolerance, creating a safe and supportive environment for all students, regardless of their cultural or religious backgrounds.

By integrating these policy implications and recommendations, policymakers can contribute to the development of an inclusive kindergarten education system that respects and celebrates cultural diversity and religious pluralism.

LIMITATION AND FURTHER RESEARCH

Limitation

One limitation of the study could be the potential bias or limited scope due to the focus solely on kindergartens in Indonesia. This narrow geographical and institutional focus might restrict the generalizability of the findings to a broader context. Additionally, the study might not encompass Indonesia's diverse cultural and religious nuances, potentially overlooking regional variations in practices and perspectives towards halal food and inclusivity in children's literature.

Further Research

Based on this study's limitations and research process, this research found several suggestions for future research that can emphasize the understanding regarding this issue. Firstly, future studies can conduct a comparative study across different countries. A comparative analysis of how halal exploration and inclusivity in children's literature are approached in kindergartens across various countries with significant Muslim populations could provide a more comprehensive understanding. Exploring similarities, differences, and adaptations in educational approaches within varying cultural and religious contexts could enrich the discourse.

Second, this study also suggests a longitudinal study on this topic. A longitudinal study tracking children's development and attitudes towards halal food and inclusive literature over an extended period could offer insights into how these perspectives evolve as children grow. Understanding the long-term impact of early exposure to such concepts in kindergartens could inform educational strategies and curriculum development.

Doing an in-depth cultural analysis within Indonesia also can provide new insight into this issue. Investigating specific cultural and religious practices within different regions in Indonesia regarding halal exploration and inclusivity in children's literature could reveal nuanced approaches and variations. Exploring how these local practices intersect with broader national educational policies and curriculum guidelines would provide a deeper understanding.

Furthermore, specifically regarding halal teaching in the education sector, future research can delve deeper to understand the effectiveness of teaching methods by evaluating the effectiveness of various teaching methods used in kindergartens to introduce halal concepts and promote inclusivity in children's literature. Comparative studies on the outcomes of different pedagogical approaches could guide educators in selecting the most effective methods.

Lastly, this study also realized how halal understanding needs support from the parental and community involvement around the children – especially for this study, the kindergarten students. Investigating the role of parents and the community in supporting or influencing children's understanding of halal food and inclusivity in literature would be valuable. Understanding how these external factors interact with kindergarten education could provide insights into holistic approaches to promoting cultural and religious understanding among children. Expanding on these areas could contribute significantly to the knowledge base on halal exploration, inclusivity in children's literature, and cultural/religious perspectives in early childhood education.

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