

HALAL AWARENESS: A STUDY AMONG HAJJAH AMINAH FOOD INDUSTRIES WORKERS

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Abstract: *Halal consciousness is the perception among Muslims of what 'halal' means, halal practices, and the need to consume or use products that are certified as halal. This research aims to determine how much knowledge, attitudes, and consciousness of halal certification among the employees of Hajjah Aminah Food Industries. These aims being examined based on demographic such as age group, gender, and workplace area. Data were obtained from the online survey conducted through WhatsApp using Google Form and processed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) Version 27. The findings show that the employees in general have high consciousness of halal, with strong knowledge and good attitudes toward halal certification. Nevertheless, there was a misunderstanding among the respondents of what 'pork-free' means, showing that there is need for better public education. There are no statistically significant differences in halal consciousness based on gender, age, or workplace area.*

Keywords: *Halal Compliance, Halal Awareness, Halal Certification and Halal Food*

Introduction

Halal consciousness has become an increasingly important issues within the global food industry, particularly in countries with expanding of Muslim populations. It refers to the awareness and understanding among Muslims regarding what constitutes halal permissible according to Islamic law halal practices, and the importance of consuming or using products that are certified halal. This consciousness not only influences consumer behavior but also shapes the operational standards within halal food production companies.

The halal food industry is a rapidly growing sector driven by rising demand for halal-certified products worldwide. Ensuring halal compliance involves strict adherence to specific dietary laws and certification processes that guarantee the products meet Islamic requirements. Employees working within halal food industries play a important role in maintaining these standards, as their knowledge, attitudes, and overall halal consciousness directly impact product integrity and consumer confidence.

Despite the critical role of employees in upholding halal standards, there is limited research focusing on their level of halal awareness, especially within the Malaysian food manufacturing sector. This study aims to fill this gap by investigating the knowledge, attitudes, and consciousness of halal certification among employees of Hajjah Aminah Food Industries Sdn Bhd, a company engaged in halal food production. Additionally, this research examines whether halal consciousness varies according to demographic factors such as age, gender, and workplace area.

By understanding the current state of halal awareness among employees, this study seeks to identify strengths and areas for improvement, particularly in addressing misconceptions such as the common misunderstanding that “pork-free” alone is sufficient for halal compliance. The findings are intended to inform targeted educational initiatives that can enhance halal literacy and ensure the company’s continued commitment to halal integrity.

Literature Review

The Arabic phrase halal denotes "permitted" or "lawful." It denotes anything permitted under Islamic law, with no legally enforceable evidence to the contrary. It is a requirement of Islamic law. The phrase haram, denoting forbidden or unlawful, stands in opposition to it (A. Siti Mashitoh, A. R., 2019). The concepts of halal and haram encompass a broad spectrum of human behaviors, rendering them widely applicable and universally relevant. In economic and trading contexts, particularly with food, the phrase "halal" signifies the utilization of permissible goods, beverages, or food items. Any item that is deemed permissible for consumption or usage according to Islamic law is referred to as halal. Nonetheless, this statement should clearly indicate that neither of these goods contains any components prohibited by Shari'ah from animals. Furthermore, if it pertains to livestock, it must be explicitly stated that it was slaughtered in conformity with Islamic law. Alternatively, from a Shari'ah perspective, halal is characterized by the absence of impure substances (Hayatullah Laluddin, 2019). Sharia, or Islamic law, allows Muslims to adhere to specific dietary and preparation regulations for halal food. The Al-Quran addresses halal matters and specifies each component that is haram (forbidden) and halal (permissible) in food for a Muslim diet. The term "halal" is being utilized more widely, with an increasing number of countries acknowledging halal practices in the food industry and other relevant areas. Islam strongly emphasizes the concept of halalan toyyiban (Azmi, 2022).

Muslim cuisine must be cooked using hygienic, law-compliant materials that adhere to Shariah, or Islamic law, and must exclude any hazardous components. Moreover, Shariah compliance is mandated for all facets of handling, packaging, storage, preparation, and transportation (Zakiah Samori, 2014). Furthermore, Muslims are prohibited from consuming pork, blood, alcohol, predatory animals, or any meat products not cooked in accordance with Islamic slaughter methods. Moreover, "shubha" is a term employed to signify whether a food item may be halal or haram (Zakiah Samori, 2014). Food labeled "shubha" should be disregarded due to the uncertainty of its halal certification. In Malaysia, the notion of halal cuisine encompasses both food safety and hygiene as well as religious factors. JAKIM's excellent manufacturing practices must be adhered to, and all non-halal substances must be entirely eliminated from halal food production.

Awareness is characterized by cognizance and knowledge; it denotes a perpetual state of alertness and understanding. An individual's consciousness is influenced by their faith and convictions, as most faiths dictate or forbid particular behaviors, including dietary practices. Halal consciousness is shaped by multiple elements, such as exposure to Islamic teachings, attitudes, knowledge, experience, and understanding (Abdul Raufu, 2013). Awareness refers to the knowledge or understanding of a particular issue or situation. In the context of halal, awareness denotes a profound interest in or acquaintance with the subject, together with an understanding of contemporary developments related to halal food, beverages, and products. Awareness pertains to individuals' perception and processing of information on their dietary, hydration, and usage practices (Wahyuddin Albra, 2023).

Regarding the halal elements permitted by Allah S.W.T, an individual may possess complete consciousness, partial awareness, or acute awareness of them. Awareness is a relative concept. Through sensory perception, one may focus on external occurrences or issues, or on an internal state, such as a visceral sensation (Syamimi Salim, 2023). Consequently, a fundamental part of human existence is awareness. Primarily, there exists self-awareness. Self-awareness is possessing own perspectives regarding matters related to halal. Consequently, acquiring knowledge to enhance awareness regarding what is permissible for Muslims to consume, utilize, and ingest is integral to the process of understanding halal (Malaysia Investment Development Authority, 2020).

Muslims who observe halal are cognizant of the allowances and prohibitions established by Islamic law, or Shariah. They recognize their obligation to be informed about the ingredients in the food, beverages, and other products they utilize. Their understanding of Islamic permissibility influences their purchasing intentions (Nurul Atikah Poniran, 2024). This will enhance awareness and understanding of what Islamic teachings permit and prohibit. Halal awareness succinctly denotes a Muslim's understanding of the concept of halal, their knowledge of the halal process, and their viewpoint on the importance of consuming halal food or products. A significant level of halal awareness among Muslims can be ascribed to these factors, which encompass knowledge, a favorable perspective, and an understanding of the significance of halal certification (A. Siti Mashitoh, 2013).

Islam emphasizes cleanliness in all facets of halal, encompassing bodily hygiene, clothes, utensils, and the environment where food and beverages are made or produced. The objective is to ensure that food, in all its forms and variety, is safe for consumption, hygienic, and poses no risk to human health. The World Health Organization defines hygiene as the environments and activities that promote health and prevent disease transmission (Hayatullah Laluddin,

2019). Consequently, clean food, beverages, and products can be characterized as free from any inherently impure substances or devoid of contamination by harmful pathogens within the framework of halal (Hayatullah Laluddin, 2019).

The principal regulatory body overseeing Malaysia's Halal Certification for Halal products, encompassing the evaluation, issuance, and administration of Halal Certification, is the Department of Islamic Development Malaysia, or JAKIM. JAKIM's Halal Certification involves the examination of food preparation, slaughtering, ingredient utilization, sanitation, handling, processing, and extends to distribution and transportation (Mohd Imran Khan, 2016). According to JAKIM, Halal Certification is an official certification that signifies the standardization of products and services in compliance with the Malaysian Halal Certification Scheme, awarded by the relevant authority (Azmi, 2022). The JAKIM certification is the sole acknowledged Halal certification in Malaysia. In Malaysia, halal certification offers consumer quality assurance and a competitive advantage to the food business (Mohd Imran Khan, 2016).

The introduction and implementation of this certification enhances Muslims' understanding of Islamic compliance and food consumption in Malaysia. The selection of Halal food products by consumers might be affected by the certification (Norazah Mohd Suki, 2018). It verifies that the food is safe, hygienic, and adheres to Sharia law, as well as being marketed or cooked in compliance with it. As participants in the global market, it facilitates the development of Muslim nations (Yusuf, 2023). The halal sector serves as a global emblem of lifestyle selection and quality assurance, influencing both Muslim and non-Muslim consumers.

Research Methodology

This study employed a mixed method approach, combining both quantitative and qualitative methods to explore halal awareness among workers at Hajjah Aminah Food Industries Sdn Bhd, a small-medium enterprise in Malaysia. Quantitative data were gathered using a questionnaire distributed to all 25 Muslim employees, aiming to measure their level of halal awareness and purchase behaviors. The data were analyzed using descriptive statistics via SPSS and presented in frequencies and percentages. Meanwhile, the qualitative method, involving literature review and document analysis, was used to support the understanding of halal premises. The study applied purposive sampling to ensure that only relevant respondents Muslim factory workers were selected to provide reliable data aligned with the research objective.

Hajjah Aminah Food Industries

Hajjah Aminah Food Industries Sdn Bhd (HAFI) is a prominent halal food producer based in Malaysia, with its main production kitchen strategically located in Seremban, Negeri Sembilan. The facility benefits from its convenient proximity to key transport hubs, being approximately forty minutes from Kuala Lumpur International Airport 2 (KLIA2), Malaysia's primary airport terminal for low-cost and domestic flights. Additionally, it is situated about two hours by car from Kuala Lumpur, the nation's capital and economic center. This advantageous location supports efficient logistics and distribution, enabling HAFI to serve a wide range of customers both domestically and internationally with timely delivery and consistent product quality.

HAFI specializes in mass manufacturing, focusing on producing halal food products with uniformity and consistent quality to meet the demands of diverse clientele. Its customers include hotels, franchised food chains, caterers, airlines, and large-scale events such as the annual Hajj pilgrimage season in Saudi Arabia. The company's commitment to halal integrity is reinforced by certification from the Department of Islamic Development Malaysia (JAKIM), which

guarantees that every product meets stringent halal standards. This certification not only assures consumers of the halal status of the food but also strengthens the company's reputation as a trusted supplier in the halal food industry.

The company's product range is extensive, covering a variety of halal foods from frozen items to ready-to-eat meals, catering to different consumer needs and preferences. By leveraging the latest advancements in food production technology, HAFI ensures that its products are free from additives and preservatives, maintaining cleanliness, wholesomeness, and high nutritional value. This dedication to quality and innovation allows HAFI to consistently deliver safe, healthy, and delicious halal food products that comply with religious and cultural requirements, meeting the expectations of both local and international markets (Hajjah Aminah Food Industris, n.d).

Data Analysis, Findings And Discussion

Data Collection Instrument

The quantitative data for this study were collected via a standardized questionnaire survey distributed to all workers of Hajjah Aminah Food Industries Sdn Bhd. The questionnaire comprised four sections: Part A, B, C, and D. Part A consisted of three items intended to gather demographic information, including age, gender, and place of employment. Part B comprised seven measures designed to evaluate the respondents' understanding of halal, whilst Part C consisted of six items pertaining to their attitudes towards halal procedures. Part D had seven items assessing respondents' awareness of the importance of halal certification. Sections B, C, and D utilized a five-point Likert scale to assess the respondents' degree of agreement or disagreement with each statement, as outlined in Table 1.

Table 1: Division of Questionnaire

SECTION	CATEGORY	NUMBER OF QUESTIONS
A	Respondents Demographics	3
B	Knowledge Of Halal	7
C	Attitude Towards Halal	6
D	Knowledge, Awareness And Attitude Towards Halal Certification	7

Table 2: Shows Measurement of Agreement on Likert Scale

ANSWER	SCALE
Strongly Disagree	1
Disagree	2
Neutral	3
Agree	4
Strongly Agree	5

Section A – Respondent's Background (Demographic Profile)

Table 3: Question Category – Demographics Background

NO	DEMOGRAPHICS BACKGROUND
1	Age
2	Gender
3	Workplace

Section B – Knowledge of Halal

Table 4: Question Category – Knowledge of Halal

NO	KNOWLEDGE OF HALAL
1	I Understand What Is Halal
2	I understand Islamic teachings on halal food consumption
3	I know about halal food from people around me (friends, family, society)
4	I am capable enough to distinguish between forbidden foods and permitted foods in Islam
5	I think the government has provided sufficient information about halal and haram food products
6	I have enough information about halal food products
7	I often access or search for information about halal food products

Section C – Attitude Towards Halal

Table 5: Question Category – Attitude Towards Halal

NO	ATTITUDE TOWARDS HALAL
1	Buying the halal product has become priorities
2	When buying food products definitely in your mind is the food must be halal
3	I don't mind consuming food by non-Muslims as long as it is certified halal
4	I will only consume food that is prepared by Muslims
5	I think pork-free products are halal
6	I don't mind consuming food by non-Muslims even though you are not sure of the halal status

Section D – Knowledge, Awareness and Attitude Towards Halal Certification Halal Certification

Table 6: Question Category – Knowledge, Awareness and Attitude Towards Halal Certification

NO	KNOWLEDGE, AWARENESS AND ATTITUDE TOWARDS HALAL CERTIFICATION
1	I know that the JAKIM halal logo is from Malaysia
2	I acknowledge that JAKIM is an institution that issues halal certification in Malaysia
3	For me halal certification and logos are essential to ensure that the food is halal
4	I know there are some countries that also issue halal certification and logo for food products
5	The first priority when I buy a food product is the presence of a halal logo(not necessarily from JAKIM)
6	I will not buy food products that do not have a halal logo on the packaging
7	If I do not find a halal logo, I will check the ingredients to make sure they are from halal sources

Analysis and Discussion

Demographic Analysis

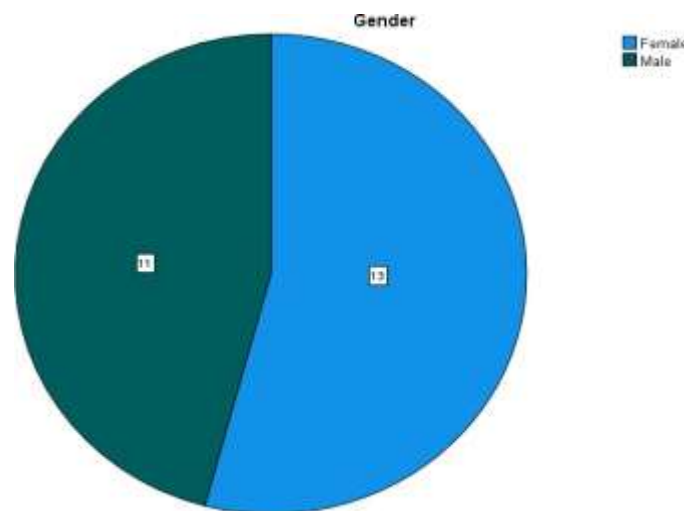


Figure 1: Respondent Gender Distribution Chart

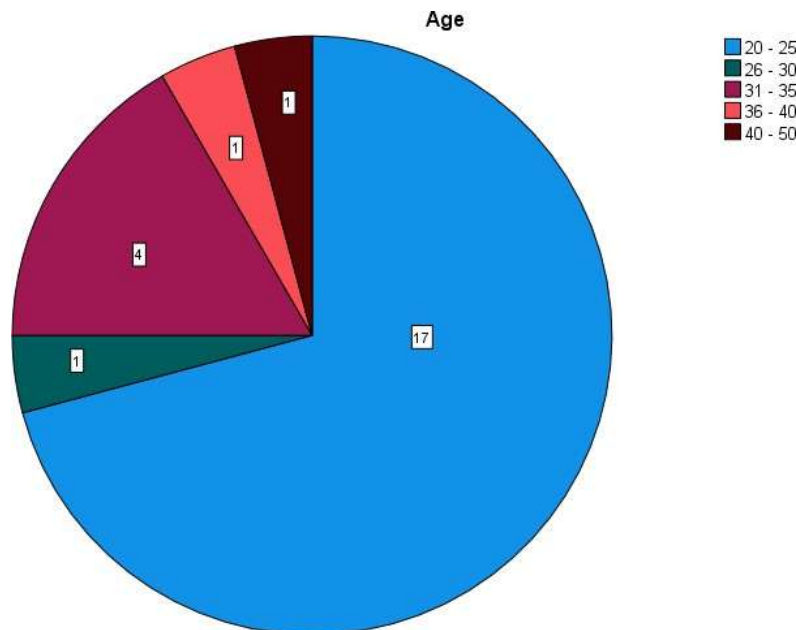


Figure 2: Respondent Age Distribution Chart

The demographics of the 24 respondents in this study are illustrated in figures 1 and 2, focusing on the examined characteristic of gender, categorized as male or female. The researcher analyzed characteristics utilizing frequency and percentage approaches. Figure 1 indicates that the proportion of female respondents exceeds that of male respondents. Consequently, the results indicated that 13 female respondents constituted 54.2% of the total. The total number of male replies is 11, representing 45.8%.

Figure 2 illustrates the age distribution of the respondents participating in the questionnaire of this study. Among the 24 participants in this study, 17 responses (70.8%) were aged 20 to 25 years. The responses aged 26 to 30 years comprise a total of 1 individual (4.2%). The responses aged 31 to 35 years comprise a total of 4 individuals, representing 16.7%. The responses aged 36 to 40 years comprise a total of 1 individual (4.2%). Finally, there is one respondent aged 40 to 50 years, constituting 4.2% of the total.

Analysis of Mean Score

Table 7: Mean Score Interpretation

MEAN SCORE	INTERPRETATION
1.00 – 1.80	Very Low
1.81 – 2.60	Low
2.61 – 3.20	Medium
3.21 – 4.20	High
4.21 – 5.00	Very High

The mean score is used to analyze the respondents' agreement or disagreement with the question. There are five levels of acceptance for the mean score, as shown in Table 7. At the first level, which is between 1.00 and 1.80, the respondents strongly disagree with the question. The second level, 1.81 - 2.61, is low, meaning that respondents are still selecting "disagree." Respondents who choose to remain neutral on the question fall between 2.61 and 3.20 at the medium level. In the range of 3.21 to 4.20, respondents who agreed with the question selected a mean score; in the highest range of 4.21 to 5.00, respondents who strongly agreed with the question selected a mean score.

Table 8: Mean Score

HALAL AWARENESS	MEAN
Knowledge Of Halal	4.4226
Attitude Toward Halal	3.5972
Knowledge, Awareness And Attitude Towards Halal Certification	4.3810
Total	4.1604

The overall mean for Knowledge of Halal is 4.4226, based on table 8 and it was classified at very high level. This indicates that the respondents have very high level of awareness about Knowledge of Halal. Next, the overall mean score for Attitude on Halal is 3.5972 and based on table 4.5 is at a high level. This shows that respondents have high level of awareness about Attitude on Halal. And then, the overall mean score for Halal Certification is 4.3810 and based on table 4.5 is at very high level. It means that the respondents have very high level of awareness about Halal Certification. Finally, the total means of Halal Awareness is 4.1604 which is at high level. This clearly shows that, the workers of Hajjah Aminah Food Industries Sdn Bhd have high level of Halal Awareness.

Reliability Analysis

The Alpha Cronbach test is employed to determine the level of reliability of the research tool utilized by the researcher. Accuracy and software for the measurement level produced by a research instrument are referred to as reliability. A value of 0.60 and above is regarded as dependable and satisfactory, as stated by (Hair, 2010) in Chapter 3 (see Table 9). In summary, the reliability analysis test results for this study are excellent and go above and beyond the level of dependability that was employed.

Table 9: Reliability Statistics

RELIABILITY STATISTICS	
CRONBACH'S ALPHA	No OF ITEMS
0.694	20

The researcher's Cronbach's Alpha for the items in the questionnaire used in this study is presented in table 9. Values of 0.5 and higher are considered reliable. The results of the reliability test in Table 4.6 demonstrate that the questionnaire is reliable, with a Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.694. This is a result of the questionnaire's reliability being indicated by a Cronbach's Alpha value greater than 0.5.

Halal Knowledge

The mean score for knowledge of halal is 4.4226, as indicated by the collective data from respondents. This suggests that laborers possess a relatively high level of knowledge regarding the definition of halal products and practices. This suggests that the majority of respondents possess a comprehensive understanding of the standards that define the halal concept in its entirety. Consequently, both knowledge and attitude have an impact on awareness. As a result, respondents who possess a positive attitude and a high level of information tend to demonstrate a higher level of awareness.

Attitude toward Halal

The mean score for attitude on halal is 3.5972, suggesting a positive but slightly less strong attitude towards halal among the respondents. The result indicates that while there is generally favorable sentiment towards halal products, there may be some variation in how strongly individuals perceive the benefits and importance of consuming halal goods. Attitudes are complex psychological constructs that involve evaluative judgments about entities, often expressed as favor or disfavor (Eagly & Chaiken, 2007). They are learned, not inherited, and can be influenced by social factors (Shringley et al., 1988). Attitudes encompass cognitive, affective, and behavioral components shaping how individuals think, feel, and act towards various aspects of their world (Venter, 2015).

According to the questionnaire, respondents did not mind eating non-Muslim food, but they were concerned about its halal status. The majority of respondents said they would avoid eating at locations where it was unclear whether the food was halal. The respondents' positive attitudes about the halal diet and concepts reflect how aware they are of the importance of eating halal food. Such behavior displays a high level of awareness of the halal way of life. Individuals' attitudes about an action can reveal whether they find it enjoyable or unpleasant.

However, respondents misunderstood the term "pork-free" and were unaware that it is not considered halal. The term "pork-free" does not indicate that the food product is halal (Muriatul Khusmah Musa, 2022). Food that does not contain pig is not regarded as halal since it may still contain other non-halal ingredients, like alcohol or livestock that was not slaughtered in accordance with Shariah legislation, and it may not have been correctly processed properly. This shows how crucial it is to educate Muslims about the differences between halal and pork-free food to prevent misunderstandings, especially among younger Muslims.

Research on Muslim consumers' attitudes toward halal products reveals several key factors influencing purchasing behavior. Religious values, safety, and health considerations significantly impact attitudes toward halal food products (Masliya binti Amat et al., 2014; Teguh Widodo, 2013). For millennial Muslims, halal understanding, logo recognition, and religious beliefs positively affect attitudes towards halal food purchases (H. Rahim et al., 2021). Social media influencers also play a role in shaping millennial attitudes towards halal products (H. Rahim et al., 2021). Religiosity is found to be more influential than knowledge in determining behavior towards halal products (A. N. Ahmad et al., 2015; A. and consumers' attitudes differ between halal food and cosmetic products (A. N. Ahmad et al., 2015). Additionally, utilitarian and knowledge functions influence Muslim consumers' attitudes towards non-Muslim halal food operators (Shaizatulaqma KamalulAriffin et al., 2019).

Knowledge, Attitude and Awareness Toward Halal Certification

The respondents have strong trust and confidence in halal certification, as indicated by their mean score of 4.3810. This research demonstrates that customers place a high value on products that have been legally recognized as halal, seeing certification as a crucial aspect in assuring compliance with Islamic dietary regulations and norms. Every respondent understood the significance of halal certification and was concerned about whether the products or food they were about to ingest respected Islamic law. It is apparent that these respondents believed that halal certification was the most significant factor when deciding what food or product to ingest. JAKIM is the major regulatory agency responsible for analysing, issuing, and monitoring Malaysia's Halal Certification for Halal items. JAKIM's Halal Certification entails a thorough examination of all food processing phases, including preparation, slaughtering, ingredient utilization, cleaning, handling, processing, and, lastly, transportation and distribution. According to the findings, JAKIM's adoption of the Halal logo and certification successfully raised Muslim awareness (Abdul Raufu 2013). Muslims are often more aware of the need of consuming Shariah-compliant goods.

Halal Awareness Among Hajjah Aminah Food Industries Workers

Finally, the total mean score of halal awareness among workers of Hajjah Aminah Food Industries Sdn Bhd is 4.1604, which reflects an overall positive level of halal awareness among the surveyed population. This comprehensive score combines knowledge, attitudes, and trust in certification, indicating a generally well-informed and positive perception of halal products and practices within the studied demographic. This result clearly shows that overall, Hajjah Aminah Food Industries Sdn Bhd workers have a high level of halal awareness.

Pork-free Issue

The “pork-free” label serves as a helpful initial guide for Muslim consumers seeking to avoid pork-based products, especially in multicultural environments where food options are diverse and complex. However, it represents only a small portion of the broader halal dietary laws. Halal food production encompasses a comprehensive system that ensures ethical and religious compliance from farm to fork. This includes proper animal husbandry, welfare considerations, and adherence to Islamic slaughter methods (Fazly Ann Zainal Abidin et al., 2019; Md Mahfujur Rahman et al., 2024). The concept of halalan tayyiban emphasizes both permissibility and wholesomeness, ensuring food is free from microbiological, physical, and chemical hazards (Syifa' Zainal Arifin et al., 2021). Halal certification plays a crucial role in maintaining integrity throughout the supply chain and building consumer trust (Nakyinsige et al., 2012). Simply avoiding pork does not make a product fully halal, as other factors such as the presence of alcohol or improper slaughtering methods may still render the food non-compliant.

While the pork-free label can provide assurance in specific contexts like grocery stores or restaurants, relying solely on this label may mislead consumers into believing the product is entirely halal. Full halal certification, conducted by accredited authorities, guarantees that all ingredients, preparation processes, and handling methods meet strict Islamic dietary requirements. These certifications involve regular audits to ensure compliance across the supply chain, offering greater reliability and peace of mind to Muslim consumers who are committed to observing halal principles.

Therefore, consumer education and transparent labeling are vital in helping people distinguish between pork-free and fully halal-certified products. Awareness campaigns and clear explanations on packaging can reduce misconceptions and encourage informed decision-

making. Ultimately, combining pork-free labeling with comprehensive halal certification and continuous education strengthens consumer trust, upholds religious standards, and promotes cultural sensitivity within diverse food markets.

Conclusion

In summary, despite the study's limitation in terms of sample size, the findings offer valuable insights into the halal awareness among employees of Hajjah Aminah Food Industries Sdn Bhd. The respondents demonstrated strong understanding of halal principles and expressed positive attitudes toward halal food consumption, reflecting not only compliance with dietary guidelines but also religious and cultural commitment.

In addition, the respondents showed awareness of the importance of halal certification, recognizing it as a key mechanism to ensure food products meet halal standards. This indicates a responsible and informed approach by employees in preserving halal integrity within the workplace and their daily practices.

However, the study also identified some misconceptions, particularly regarding the notion of "pork-free" being sufficient for halal compliance. This highlights the need for continuous education to correct misunderstandings and enhance comprehensive knowledge. Overall, the study emphasizes the importance of strengthening halal literacy to build a more informed and halal-conscious workforce.

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