Lower middle-class community awareness of halal food and the factors that influence it

Diki Candra Mayadis, Ranti Wiliasih, Mohammad Iqbal Irfany[*]

Faculty of Economics and Management, IPB University, Jl. Agatis. Dramaga Campus IPB, Bogor, West Java, 16680, Indonesia

A B S T R A C T

The middle class forms a substantial segment of the population of Indonesia. However, it is important to recognize that individuals in the lower middle-class, due to their limited income, may have caring levels of concern about the halal status of the food they consume. Therefore, this study aimed to evaluate the awareness of the lower middle-class community regarding halal food and to identify the factors influencing this awareness. In order to achieve the stated objective, the investigation was based on primary data collected from 100 respondents in Tebet, one of the poorest districts in South Jakarta. Using descriptive statistics and logistic regression for analysis, the obtained results showed that the lower middle-class had a high level of awareness regarding halal food. fFactors such as religiosity, halal labeling, price sensitivity, gender, and income were found to significantly influence this awareness.

ARTICLE INFO

1 Introduction

Indonesia is recognized as the nation with the largest Muslim population in the world. This is evidenced by the report from the Ministry of Religious Affairs of Indonesia, where it was documented that approximately 236.53 million Indonesians, or around 86.88% of the total population of 272.23 million, identified as Muslims. A key religious obligation for Muslims is the consumption of halal food, as commanded in the Qur'an (2:168):

"O humanity! Eat from what is lawful and good on the earth and do not follow Satan's footsteps. He is truly your sworn enemy."

The term "halal," linguistically, refers to what is permissible, and in the context of food and nutrition, it signifies foods that are permissible under Islamic law. Halal food and beverages are widely recognized among Muslim communities globally, as shown by the growing halal industry, with halal food consistently ranked as the most significant sector.

In order to protect the Muslim community in fulfilling the religious obligation of solely consuming halal foods, the Indonesian government has mandated the inclusion of halal labels on food products. This policy is in line with the Constitution of 1945, Article 29, Paragraph 2, where it was documented that the state guarantees the freedom of each citizen to profess respective religion and practice worship according to inherent beliefs.

Following the enacted constitution, the government issued Law Number 33 of 2014 on the Guarantee of Halal Products to protect the public in line with the mandate of Article 29 of the 1945 Constitution, which ensures the freedom of religion and worship according to individual beliefs. Under this law, the government mandated that all food products in circulation must carry a halal label, facilitating easier identification for consumers seeking halal food. Furthermore, Government Regulation (PP 2021) No. 39 of 2021 on the Implementation of Halal Product Assurance, Article 2, stipulates that all products entering, circulating, and traded within Indonesian territory must be halal certified. The regulation sets a phased timeline for implementing halal certification for food and beverages, which began on October 17, 2019, and was extended to October 17, 2024.

Despite the phased timeline given, a significant number of food and beverages, particularly those available to the lower middle-class, have been observed to remain uncertified. This situation raises questions about the level of concern within the lower middle-class community regarding the halal status of the food being purchased and consumed by the demographic. In addition to being the country with the largest Muslim population, Indonesia is a developing nation with a considerable poverty rate. A significant portion of the population belongs to the lower middle economic class, which plays a central role in the economy of the country.

Table 1: Per capita income of the state of Indonesia in 2018 – 2020

Per capita	2018	2019	2020
Income	55,992,136.3	59,060,096.6	56,938,722.7

Source: BPS 2020

As shown in Table 1, per capita income in Indonesia decreased in 2020 compared to 2019 (BPS 2021a), leading to the reclassification of Indonesia as a lower-middle-income country. According to World Bank data, 37.7% of the population of the country belonged to the middle-income group, a figure that rose to 56.5%, or 134 million individuals, by 2010. However, in 2021, Indonesia was downgraded to a lower-middle-income country. The Ministry of Finance defines residents in lower economic groups as those earning less than Rp. 2.6 million per month and this group was observed to constitute a significant proportion of the population.

Regardless of the fact that South Jakarta is considered part of the wealthiest province in Indonesia, poverty remains prevalent in districts such as Pasar Minggu and Tebet. Tebet District had the second-highest poverty rate in South Jakarta, following Pasar Minggu (BPS 2021b).

Regarding halal certification, by 2022, over 10,000 Micro and Small Enterprises (MSEs) were observed to have obtained the certification for respective products. However, not all food items in circulation, particularly those produced on a small scale by MSEs, are guaranteed to be halal. These uncertified products are most commonly found in lower middle-class communities, since the individuals in the communities may struggle to access halal foods due to limited incomes. This is because halal-labeled food products often have higher prices than similar non-halal products, which makes the products less affordable for the demographic.

Despite this understanding, studies are yet to fully explore the relationship between income and halal awareness among specific demographic groups. For instance, while household income significantly impacted halal product consumption among Muslim communities in Petir Village, Tangerang Regency (Hasyim et al. 2015), income did not appear

to significantly influence decisions to purchase MUI-certified products in Malang City. This was primarily because, in Malang, Muslim Millennials prioritize halal consumption as a religious obligation, regardless of financial considerations (Novianti 2021). Similarly, Zahro'i (2018) found that income had a negative and insignificant impact on consumer behavior concerning halal food and beverage consumption in Tulungagung.

The present study was conducted with a primary focus on the lower middle-class population due to the hypothesis that the limited income of the demographic reduces concern for the halal status of food, as halal products are often more expensive than non-halal alternatives. This demographic also tends to purchase food and beverages from local sources, such as small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs), which may have a limited understanding of halal certification. As a result, the present investigation aims to explore the level of awareness within the lower middle-class community about the halal status of food and to examine the factors influencing this awareness.

2 Literature Review

2.1 Halal and Halal Food

The term "halal" in Arabic means to release or to be free from restrictions. In the Big Indonesian Dictionary, halal is defined as something permitted or not forbidden under Islamic teachings. To further emphasize its importance, Zakaria et al. (2017) stated that halal served as a prerequisite for permissible actions, such as daily consumption or activities. In the context of food, halal refers to food that is allowed for consumption and not prohibited by Islamic law, as stated in the Quran and Sunnah. In Islam, all food is generally considered halal, except for those specifically prohibited by the Quran and Sunnah. According to the Quran, Surah Al-Baqarah, verse 173,

"Indeed, Allah only forbids to you dead animals, blood, the flesh of swine, and that which has been dedicated to other than Allah. But whoever is forced [by necessity], neither desiring it nor transgressing its limit, there is no sin upon him. Indeed, Allah is Forgiving and Merciful."

This verse emphasizes the command of Allah that Muslims must avoid consuming food that is not lawful. Based on the directive, Muslims are obligated to consume only halal food, adhering to religious guidelines.

2.2 Food Halal Status

The halal status of food refers to its guaranteed permissibility for consumption in accordance with Islamic law. This status is often signified by the presence of halal labels on food packaging, which serves as a certification that food is halal and safe for Muslim consumers.

According to Government Regulation (PP 2021) No. 39 of 2021 concerning the Implementation of Halal Product Assurance, both goods and services are required to obtain halal certification. According to Rajagopal et al. (2011), factors such as residence, age, gender, and nationality significantly influenced concern for halal certification, particularly among sellers in Arabia.

2.3 Awareness

Awareness refers to the inherent ability of an individual to exercise full control in decision-making. Accordingly, Hasibuan (2012) defined awareness as the voluntary adherence of an individual to all rules, accompanied by a sense of duty and responsibility. This awareness has been observed to typically manifest in behavior or attitudes that reflect attention to or disregard for halal food, which is a key consideration for Muslims when selecting food for consumption.

The Big Indonesian Dictionary (KBBI) defines awareness as the ability to recognize and understand the rights and responsibilities one must uphold. In this study, the term refers to making choices with a clear understanding of their importance. It is about hoe individuals behave or think when deciding whether to consider halal food, which is a key concern for Muslims in their dietary choices.

2.4 Lower Middle-Class Population

Azhari (2015) divided the economic status communities into three groups namely upper-class, middle-class, and lower-class households. This classification was based on three main factors, including family size, monthly income, and monthly expenses.

In Indonesia, the middle class makes up a large part of the population, and is further split into three subgroups namely lower-middle, middle-middle, and upper-middle classes. According to the Ministry of Finance, those in the lower middle-class earn less than Rp. 2.6 million per month.

2.5 Previous Studies

Various previous studies laid the groundwork for the present study, focusing on awareness, purchasing decisions, and the various factors influencing halal food choices. For instance, Dewi (2020) investigated halal food consumption awareness among junior high school students using qualitative methods and descriptive analysis. The results obtained from the examination showed a lack of awareness, as many students bought food without considering whether it had a halal logo.

Imanuddin (2017) examined the impact of halal labels and brand reliability on the purchasing decisions of students in IAIN Bukit Tinggi during the 2016/2017 academic year. Using a quantitative correlational approach, the study found that halal labels influenced purchasing decisions by 18.2%.

Harminingtyas (2021) also took a quantitative approach to explore how halal certification, awareness, and food ingredients affected interest in purchasing halal products in Semarang. Their results showed that all three factors positively impacted purchasing interest. Similarly, Puspamurti (2021) looked at how halal certification, awareness, and religious behavior influenced purchasing decisions for Swiss House products. This study concluded that these factors collectively shape purchasing choices. Accordingly, Satrie (2021) focused on the decisions made regarding halal-labeled food products ordered through online delivery services during the COVID-19 pandemic in Bogor. By adopting logistic regression analysis, the study found that food products, promotional activities, and social factors significantly affected the decision to purchase halal-labeled items. It is important to state that the primary difference between the present study and previous explorations lies in its focus on awareness among middle- to lower class community groups. The variables utilized include reliability, halal labels, halal knowledge, price, and demographic factors such as education and income.

3 Methodology

3.1 Types of Studies, Data, and Data Collection Techniques

The present quantitative study was carried out using primary data collected from 100 randomly selected respondents residing in Tebet District, South Jakarta. The criteria for inclusion include, respondents must be Muslim, at least 15 years old, and currently engaged in employment or a livelihood.

3.2 Measurement, Validity and Reliability

Data collection was conducted using a questionnaire, with measurements based on a Likert scale ranging from 1 to 4. The scale designations are as follows, Strongly Agree (SS) corresponds to 4 points, Agree (S) to 3 points, Disagree (TS) to 2 points, and Strongly Disagree (STS) to 1 point. The study indicators were first subjected to validity and reliability testing. Validity was assessed using the Pearson correlation method, where, according to its predefined standards, if the calculated r-value exceeded the critical r-value (r table), the questionnaire data would be considered valid and vice versa. Following validity, reliability was evaluated based on the alpha coefficient of the measuring instrument. A measuring instrument is considered reliable if the alpha value exceeds 0.6.

3.3 Data Analysis Methods

In this study, descriptive analysis was used to assess the awareness of the lower middle-class regarding the importance of halal food. Additionally, logistic regression analysis was utilized to identify the factors influencing the purchasing decisions of this demographic toward halal food. Logistic regression is a statistical method conventionally used to determine whether a relationship exists between the independent variable (X) and the dependent variable (Y). The evaluation of the logistic regression analysis includes the following components:

a. Classification table to assess false or incorrect estimation results;

b. The values of Cox and Snell's R Square and Nagelkerke's R-Square in the model summary to assess model fit;

c. The Hosmer and Lemeshow test examines empirical data that fits the model by testing the null hypothesis;

d. The odds ratio is defined as the ratio of the probability of an event occurring. In this study, the odds ratio is associated with the opportunity of middle to lower community awareness of the halal status of food.

The logistic regression model used is Equation 1:

$$Yi = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X1 + \beta_2 X2 + \beta_3 X3 + \beta_4 X4 + \beta_5 X5 + \beta_6 X6 + \epsilon \quad .... \quad (1)$$

Where Yi, is the chance for middle to lower-class members to have awareness of the halal status of food. If the members show awareness, then Y=1, and if not, Y=0. According, β represents the parameter of the X1-Xn modifier, with X1 denoting the variable religiosity, X2 halal label, X3 halal knowledge, X4 price, X5 Education, and X6 the income per month, and e: error.

3.4 Operational Definition of Variables

The operational definitions of the variables are presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Operational definition of variables

Variable	Operational definition
Religiosity	The attitude or behavior of a person that reflects inherent religious beliefs (Ahmad 2015) can be measured by the respective level of faith in God, adherence to religious obligations, and obedience to religious teachings and commandments.
Halal label	The assurance that a product is halal and safe for consumption is determined by the presence of indicators such as halal certification, halal marks on product packaging, and official halal labels issued by the Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI).
Halal knowledge	An individual's understanding of the halal status of a food product is measured by several indicators, including knowledge level of the halal status of the product, the awareness of what constitutes halal food, and the ability of the person to recognize or sense the halalness of a product.
Price	The financial value of a product is measured in monetary units, with the following indicators, the amount of money exchanged to acquire food products and the expenses incurred when purchasing food.
Education	The duration of an individual's formal education is measured by the standard levels of education the person has completed, which include elementary, junior high, high school, diploma, undergraduate, and postgraduate levels.
Income	The outcomes of an individual's efforts to meet respective livelihood needs are measured in monetary units.

4   Result

4.1   Respondent Profile

The population in this study comprised 100 individuals, all of whom reside in Tebet District and are employed, earning a maximum income of Rp 2.6 million per month. Out of the 100 respondents, 40 were men and 60 were women, with ages ranging from 17 to over 50 years, and the highest level of education being high school. As observed, the age group of 17-25 years was more dominant compared to other age groups. The majority of respondents worked as traders, with most earning between Rp 2,000,000 and Rp 2,600,000. The characteristics of the respondents are presented in Table 3. The respondent profile, shows that the population belonged to the middle class in terms of both income and education level. The majority had already completed high school, with a few holding diplomas.

Table 3: Respondents characteristics of research

Characteristics	Classification	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	40
	Female	60
Age	17 – 25	40
	26 – 35	12
	36 – 55	22
	>50	26
Education	Not Attending school	2
	Elementary school/equivalent	15
	Junior high/equivalent	7
	High school/equivalent	69
	Diploma	5
	Bachelor	2
Occupation	Merchant	41
	Freelance	39
	Labor	2
	Entrepreneur	5
	Private employees	11
	Driver	2
Income per month	< IDR 1,000,000	22
	IDR 1,000,000 – IDR 1,500,000	29
	IDR 1,500,000 – IDR 2,000,000	17
	IDR 2,000,000 – IDR 2,600,000	32

Source: Primary data 2022, processed

Table 4: Awareness of food halal status

No	Question item	Response Yes	Response No	Total
1	Have you ever heard the word "Halal"?	99	1	100
2	Have you ever seen halal labels on food you buy?	96	4	100
3	Is the halal label a consideration when you are going to buy food?	83	17	100

Source: Primary data 2022, processed

4.2   Awareness of the Lower Middle-Class on the Halal Status of Food

The level of halal awareness among the lower middle-class community regarding the halal status of food was determined from the answers obtained from the respondents during the course of the study. The first question asked was whether the population had ever heard the term "halal", and out of the 100 respondents, 99 signified having heard the term (Table 4). The individual who had not heard the term "halal" belonged to the group with no formal education.

Among the 100 respondents, 4% reported to have never seen a halal label, while the remaining 96% had. This was attributed to the lack of concern possessed by the demographic for halal labels or the absence of halal certification on certain food products. The obtained data further showed that only 83% of the respondents considered the presence of halal labels when purchasing food. The reasons given by the 17% who did not consider halal labels were as follows, 7% were unaware of the existence of halal labels on purchased food items, 6% did not care about the presence of halal labels, and the remaining 4% felt that the presence or absence of halal labels was unnecessary.

5   Discussion

5.1   Profile of Respondents and Awareness of the Lower Middle-Class Community on the Status of Halal Food

To examine the relationship between the awareness of individuals in the lower middle-class category of the halal status of food and demographic variables, cross-tabulation was adopted. In this regard, four cross-tabulations were conducted, with a focus on the awareness of halal status in relation to age, education, and income.

5.1.1   Age

Regarding age, the respondents were divided into four distinct categories. The first category included respondents aged 17 to 25 years, the second comprised those aged 26 to 35 years, the third constituted respondents aged 36 to 50 years, and the final category consisted of individuals over 50 years. The majority of respondents, accounting for 40%, were in the 17 to 25 age range, while the minority, representing 12%, fell within the 26 to 35 age range. The complete results of the cross-tabulation between age and halal awareness are presented in Table 5.

Table 5: Age tabulation with awareness of food halal status

			Awareness of the halal status of food Yes	No	Total
Age	17 - 25	Results	9	31	40
		Percentage	22.5	77.5	100.0
	26 - 35	Results	0	12	12
		Percentage	0.0	100.0	100.0
	36 - 50	Results	3	19	22
		Percentage	13.6	86.4	100.0
	>50	Results	5	21	24
		Percentage	19.2	80.8	100.0

Source: Primary data 2022, processed

Based on the information presented in the table, it is evident that among respondents 17 to 25 years, 77.5% expressed concern about the halal status of food. In the 26 to 35 age group, 100% identified halal awareness, while 86.4% of respondents aged 36 to 50 years and 80.8% of those over 50 years had similar awareness. This data shows that both early adulthood and older age groups have relatively lower levels of halal awareness.

5.1.2   Education

The complete results of the cross-tabulation between education and halal awareness are presented in Table 6. As shown, among the group of respondents who did not attend school, 50% lacked halal awareness when purchasing food. This is followed by 40% of respondents with a diploma, 28.6% with junior high school education, 26.7% with elementary school education, and 11.6% of high school graduates.

Table 6: Education tabulation with awareness of the halal status of food

			Awareness of the halal status of food Yes	No	Total
Education	Elementary	Results	4	11	15
		Percentage	26.7	73.3	100.0
	Junior high	Results	2	5	7
		Percentage	28.6	71.4	100.0
	Senior high	Results	8	61	69
		Percentage	11.6	88.4	100.0
	Diploma	Results	2	3	5
		Percentage	40.0	60.0	100.0
	Bachelor	Results	0	2	2
		Percentage	0.0	100.0	100.0
	Not attending school	Results	1	1	2
		Percentage	50.0	50.0	100.0

Source: Primary data 2022, processed

The respondents with undergraduate education showed a high level of halal awareness, as both individuals in this group signified having a strong understanding of halal food status. This suggested that education may have a positive influence on halal awareness, though further testing was necessary to confirm the relationship.

5.1.3 Income Per Month

Regarding income, respondents were divided into four income categories including less than 1 million rupiah, 1–1.5 million rupiah, 1.5–2 million rupiah, and 2–2.6 million rupiah. Accordingly, the cross-tabulation between income and halal awareness showed that respondents in the lowest income group had the lowest level of awareness. This suggested the existence of a potential relationship between income levels and awareness of halal food, with those in lower income brackets being less aware of halal status compared to higher-income groups. The detailed results of this analysis are presented in Table 7.

Table 7: Income tabulation with awareness of the halal status of food

			Awareness of the halal status of food		Total
			Yes	No	
Income (IDR)	<1,000,000	Results	6	16	22
		Percentage	27.3	72.7	100.0
	1,000,000 – 1,500,000	Results	3	26	29
		Percentage	10.3	89.7	100.0
	1,500,000 – 2,000,00	Results	3	14	17
		Percentage	17.6	82.4	100.0
	2,000,000 – 2,600,000	Results	5	27	32
		Percentage	15.6	84.4	100.0

Source: Primary data 2022, processed

As presented in the table, income has a relationship with halal awareness. Therefore, it was suggested that this factor significantly influenced the level of halal awareness possessed by an individual.

5.2 *Factors That Influence Public Awareness of the Halal Status of Food*

Factors influencing public awareness of the halal status of food were assessed using logistic regression analysis. The adequacy of the analysis was evaluated through the Summary model and the Hosmer and Lemeshow test, which showed a significance value greater than the 10% threshold (0.202 > 0.10). Additionally, at the 10% level, the Chi-square value from the table exceeded the minimum required value (13.3616 > 10.995), implying that the model possessed a proper Goodness of Fit. Furthermore, the obtained Nagelkerke R Square value of 0.726 suggested that 72.6% of the awareness level of the lower middle-class community regarding the halal status of food could be explained by the model.

To determine the entire feasibility of the variables in the model, the omnibus test was conducted, which showed a significance value of less than 0.1. This suggested that the independent variables collectively had a significant effect, with at least one variable influencing the awareness of the lower middle-class community concerning the halal status of food. Based on this observation, the variables in the model were considered sufficient for forming a reliable model.

Partial tests were conducted to assess the impact of each independent variable on the awareness of the lower middle-class regarding the halal status of food items. As presented in Table 8, the presence of halal labels on food products was the most significant factor observed to have significantly influenced halal awareness within the demographic. Specifically, the presence of a halal label was found to increase awareness of halal status by 6.87 times compared to products lacking the labels. These findings are in line with the study by Ambali & Bakar (2013), where halal labels were identified as a critical factor in the selection of halal food.

Table 8: Partial test results

Variable	B	Sig.	Exp(B)
Religiosity	-0.375	0.061	0.678
Halal label	1.927	0.000	6.870
Halal knowledge	-0.238	0.355	0.788
Price	-0.432	0.055	0.649
Education	-0.286	0.575	0.751
Income	-0.562	0.185	0.570

Source: Primary data 2022, processed

The variable of religiosity showed an odds ratio value of 0.6 regarding halal awareness, implying the presence of a negative influence, which was significant at the 6.1% level. Following predefined standards, an odds ratio of less than 1 (0.678) suggests a minimal impact on the independent variable, which in this regard includes the awareness of halal food status.

This finding is dissimilar to the reports of Mutoharoh (2020), who stated that religiosity positively influenced halal product consumption.

Regarding price, the initial hypothesis proposed a positive effect, however, the partial test results showed a negative effect of 0.055 at a 10% significance level, leading to the acceptance of H0. It also showed an odds ratio of 0.649, implying that if product prices decrease, the probability of individuals caring about halal food status increases by 0.649 times. Therefore, the observed negative influence of price was attributed to the limited income of the lower middle-class, which may reduce the awareness level of the demographic regarding the halal status of foods consumed. This attribution is inconsistent with the findings of Lubis (2017), who reported that price positively influenced food purchasing decisions in Palembang City.

In summary, the analysis showed that halal awareness among the lower middle-class was largely shaped by external factors, such as halal labels and prices, rather than internal factors like religiosity, halal knowledge, education, and income. To increase halal awareness in these communities, government intervention and policies are essential fot improving the availability of halal food products across various socioeconomic groups.

6 Conclusion

In conclusion, this study found that the lower middle class demonstrated strong awareness of halal, with 99 percent of respondents familiar with the term "halal," 96 percent checking for halal labels on food, and 83 percent considering these labels before making a purchase. However, trends showed that individuals in early adulthood and older age groups exhibited lower awareness of halal food, and reduced awareness was linked to lower education levels and income, although these correlations were not definitively significant. Religiosity, halal labeling, and price were significant factors influencing the lower middle class's awareness, with halal labeling proving to be the most influential. Religiosity and price had a minimal negative influence, while other factors like halal knowledge, education, and income were found to be insignificant. The findings suggested that external factors, particularly the availability of halal labels, had a more substantial impact on halal awareness than internal factors like personal beliefs or economic status. Therefore, it is recommended that the halal certification program be intensified and made more affordable to improve awareness among this demographic. This study provides the government with a comprehensive understanding of the lower middle class's awareness of halal-labeled products, highlighting both their purchasing power and the affordability challenges they face in accessing these products.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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