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Enhancing Halal Literacy Through Interactive School-Based Education among Muslim Students in Southern Thailand

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Abstrak

Latar belakang: Literasi halal pada remaja tidak cukup hanya dengan mengenali halal dan haram; siswa juga perlu mampu menafsirkan sertifikasi, komposisi bahan, produk syubhat, dan pilihan konsumsi sehari-hari dalam lingkungan pasar yang plural. Di Phatnawitya School, guru menyampaikan keterbatasan sumber belajar halal, sedangkan asesmen awal menunjukkan pemahaman dan praktik yang belum merata. **Tujuan:** Program pengabdian kepada masyarakat ini bertujuan memperkuat literasi halal siswa pada dimensi pemahaman konseptual, sikap dan kesadaran, serta praktik dalam kehidupan sehari-hari. **Metode:** Kegiatan dilaksanakan di Phatnawitya School, Yala, Thailand Selatan, dengan intervensi edukasi utama berlangsung selama satu hari pembelajaran. Sebanyak 17 siswa Muslim tingkat menengah menyelesaikan pre-test dan post-test 15 butir yang mencakup tiga dimensi literasi halal. Kegiatan memadukan penjelasan interaktif mengenai halalan thayyiban, analisis label halal dan komposisi bahan, diskusi kasus, tanya jawab, serta refleksi yang dikaitkan dengan budaya lokal. Hasil dibandingkan secara deskriptif dan diperkuat oleh refleksi siswa. **Hasil:** Capaian indikator pemahaman konseptual meningkat dari rentang 52,9–94,1% menjadi 82,4–100%; sikap dan kesadaran meningkat dari 47,1–94,1% menjadi 94,1–100%; dan seluruh indikator praktik mencapai 100% pada post-test langsung, dibandingkan 58,8–94,1% pada kondisi awal. Kesadaran terhadap pentingnya sertifikasi halal meningkat dari 52,9% menjadi 94,1%, sedangkan tanggung jawab untuk mengingatkan orang lain tentang halal meningkat dari 47,1% menjadi 100%. **Kesimpulan:** Edukasi berbasis sekolah yang interaktif, kontekstual, dan reflektif memperkuat literasi halal secara langsung serta membantu siswa menghubungkan prinsip keagamaan dengan keputusan konsumsi praktis. Penguatan berkala dan evaluasi lanjutan diperlukan untuk menilai keberlanjutan capaian tersebut.

Kata kunci: edukasi Islam, konsumsi etis, literasi halal, pembelajaran eksperiensial, siswa Muslim minoritas

Abstract

Background: Halal literacy among adolescents extends beyond the ability to distinguish between halal and haram products. It also encompasses the ability to interpret halal certification, assess product ingredients, identify doubtful products, and make informed consumption decisions in an increasingly diverse marketplace. At Phatnawitya School, teachers identified a lack of adequate resources for halal education, while preliminary assessments revealed variations in students' understanding and daily practices related to halal consumption. **Objective**: This community service program aimed to strengthen students' halal literacy in three domains: conceptual understanding, attitudes and awareness, and practical application in daily life. **Method**: The program was conducted at Phatnawitya School in Yala, Southern Thailand, with the main educational intervention delivered over one instructional day. Seventeen Muslim secondary school students completed a 15-item pretest and posttest designed to assess three dimensions of halal literacy. The activities included interactive sessions on the concept of *halalan thayyiban*, examination of halal labels and ingredient lists, case-based discussions, question-and-answer sessions, and reflective activities contextualized to the local culture. Pretest and posttest results were compared descriptively and complemented by an analysis of students' reflections. **Result**: The achievement rates across indicators of conceptual understanding increased from a pretest

range of 52.9–94.1% to 82.4–100%. Similarly, attitudes and awareness improved from 47.1–94.1% to 94.1–100%. All practice-related indicators reached 100% in the immediate posttest, compared with baseline values ranging from 58.8% to 94.1%. Specifically, awareness of halal certification increased from 52.9% to 94.1%, while the proportion of students expressing a sense of responsibility to remind others about halal consumption increased from 47.1% to 100%. **Conclusion**: Interactive, context-based, and reflective school education can strengthen students' immediate halal literacy and facilitate the application of Islamic principles to everyday consumption decisions. Sustained educational reinforcement and follow-up assessments are needed to determine the long-term retention and practical application of the acquired knowledge and attitudes.

Keywords: ethical consumption, experiential learning, halal literacy, Islamic education, Muslim minority students

INTRODUCTION

Halal literacy is increasingly important as Muslim consumers face complex food systems, imported products, digital purchasing channels, and certification claims. It can be understood as the capacity to distinguish permissible and prohibited products and to apply Islamic principles when evaluating consumption choices [1]. Halal awareness is influenced not only by religious belief but also by exposure, certification information, health considerations, trust, and the ability to interpret product cues [2,3]. For adolescents, these competencies are educationally relevant because consumption habits and halal involvement can shape later decision-making [4].

Formal religious learning does not automatically guarantee comprehensive halal understanding. A cross-cultural study among students receiving Islamic theology education found variation in halal-food perceptions across different social settings, suggesting that contextual factors remain important even among learners with religious knowledge [5]. From a broader literacy perspective, practical competence involves the ability to access, understand, evaluate, and use information in everyday decisions rather than merely recalling concepts [6,7]. This orientation supports positioning halal literacy as an applied educational competence that connects knowledge, moral awareness, and action.

The need for contextual learning is particularly relevant in Southern Thailand. Muslims are locally concentrated in the southern provinces but remain a national minority within Thailand. Research on Muslim-minority educational institutions in Thailand and neighboring countries shows that Islamic education operates within plural social environments and must remain responsive to local conditions while sustaining religious identity and ethical formation [8]. Islamic education in minority settings is therefore strengthened when learning is meaningful, dialogic, and connected with students' lived experiences [9].

Halal and food-safety education among school students has produced measurable gains in knowledge [10], while halal assistance for community groups has shown that practical guidance can improve understanding and implementation [11]. Recent school-based literacy programs in nutrition, environmental health, and religious practice further illustrate the value of interactive, context-sensitive learning [12–15].

At Phatnawitya School, teachers indicated that halal-learning resources were limited, while initial responses from students showed that basic halal knowledge was stronger than understanding of certification, doubtful products, and socially responsible consumption. Students also described situations in which people may know that a product is haram or doubtful but continue consuming it because of habit or social normalization. These conditions indicated a practical knowledge–practice gap that could not be addressed through doctrinal explanation alone.

Accordingly, this community service program was designed to strengthen halal literacy through interactive school-based education. The program integrated Islamic principles of halalan thayyiban with label-reading practice, ingredient analysis, case discussion, and reflection on everyday consumption and local culture. The activity aimed to improve students' conceptual understanding, attitudes and awareness, and reported daily-life practice while providing the partner school with a practical model for contextual halal education.

METHOD

Program Design, Setting, and Participants

This community service program employed an educational, participatory, and practice-oriented approach with a one-group pre-test–post-test evaluation. The program was implemented at Phatnawitya School in Yala Province, Southern Thailand, on 21–23 July 2025. The overall visit included institutional coordination and school activities, while the core halal-literacy intervention was delivered during one full instructional day.

Seventeen Muslim secondary-school students completed both the pre-test and post-test and were included in the program evaluation. Participation in the educational activities was coordinated with school authorities. Responses used for evaluation were anonymized and used for academic reporting. Demographic variables such as age and sex were not used in the present analysis because the program dataset focused on learning outcomes.

Educational Intervention

The intervention integrated Islamic teachings on halalan thayyiban with contemporary consumption challenges. The learning sequence consisted of: (1) an interactive explanation of halal, haram, and shubhat; (2) introduction to halal certification and international halal logos; (3) guided reading of ingredient lists and product labels; (4) analysis of everyday cases involving packaged foods, cosmetics, fast food, and imported products; (5) question-and-answer and dialogic reflection; and (6) a creative reflection activity titled 'Halal and My Culture,' in which students connected halal principles with Malay-Patani food traditions and family consumption practices.

The program emphasized active participation rather than one-way lecturing. Students were asked to identify risk cues, explain why a product required further verification, compare alternative choices, and articulate the moral reasons behind halal-compliant consumption. This approach was chosen to move learning from doctrinal recognition toward practical interpretation and decision-making.

Outcome Measurement and Data Analysis

Program outcomes were measured using a 15-item Halal Literacy Questionnaire administered immediately before and after the intervention. The instrument covered three dimensions: (1) understanding of halal concepts, certification, and critical ingredients (items 1–5); (2) attitudes and awareness related to moral responsibility and halal assurance (items 6–10); and (3) reported practice in daily consumption (items 11–15). The same core items were used in the pre-test and post-test.

Because the available program dataset consisted of indicator-level achievement percentages, quantitative results were analyzed descriptively by comparing pre-test and post-test percentages within each dimension. The analysis focused on the range of indicator achievement and on indicators showing the clearest change. Student open-ended reflections and discussion notes were reviewed thematically to identify recurring issues concerning awareness, habit, social normalization, and practical decision-making.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Program Implementation and Student Engagement

The program was implemented with support from school leaders and teachers. The educational session combined short lectures with direct product analysis, discussion, and simulation. Students were invited to recognize halal logos, examine ingredient lists, and discuss ambiguous products that are commonly encountered in daily life. Questions raised by participants included the status of cosmetics without halal labels and the selection of popular fast-food products, showing that the topic was closely connected to their everyday experiences.

The interactive format encouraged students to move beyond binary halal–haram recognition. Instead of simply receiving an answer, participants were guided to identify what information should be checked, which product cues could be trusted, and when caution was required. This approach is consistent with applied literacy models in which understanding becomes meaningful when learners can use information to make practical decisions [6,7].



Figure 1. Interactive halal-literacy workshop and product-analysis activities with students

The question-and-answer session also revealed a practical ethical problem. One student noted that people may already know that something is haram or doubtful but still choose to ignore it. This observation points to a knowledge–practice dissonance in which awareness can be overridden by habit, convenience, or social normalization. Similar patterns have been reported in halal-consumption research, where habit, moral obligation, trust, and halal involvement influence whether knowledge is translated into action [3,4,16].

Teachers reported that limited halal-learning resources made the program useful not only for students but also as a source of ideas for future classroom activities. The dialogic format was important because it allowed real situations from the local environment to become learning material rather than treating halal solely as an abstract legal category.

Integration of Local Values

Students were also encouraged to relate halal literacy to local culture through the theme 'Halal and My Culture.' Reflections highlighted halal traditional foods, family practices, and pride in Muslim identity within the Malay-Patani cultural environment. This activity positioned local culture as a bridge for ethical learning rather than as a separate topic. Such context-sensitive learning is especially important in minority settings because religious

education must support both identity formation and practical engagement with the wider social environment [8,9].

The local-value component also helped students recognize that halal literacy is not only a market or certification issue. It is part of everyday moral reasoning expressed through family habits, community expectations, and culturally familiar food practices. This broader framing supports the development of halal literacy as a lived competence rather than a checklist of labels.

Changes in Halal Literacy Outcomes

The pre-test–post-test comparison showed improvement across all three dimensions of halal literacy. Before the intervention, the largest weaknesses appeared in indicators requiring interpretation or social responsibility rather than basic doctrinal recognition. After the intervention, the lowest indicator score within every dimension increased substantially, and practice-related items reached 100% positive achievement in the immediate post-test (Table 1).

Table 1. Summary of pre-test and post-test halal-literacy outcomes by dimension

Halal literacy dimension	Items	Pre-test range (%)	Post-test range (%)	Observed pattern of change
Understanding of halal concepts	1–5	52.9–94.1	82.4–100	Stronger conceptual understanding, especially certification and product evaluation
Attitudes and awareness	6–10	47.1–94.1	94.1–100	Greater moral awareness and social responsibility
Practice and daily life	11–15	58.8–94.1	100 (all items)	Immediate consistency in reported halal-oriented practice

Conceptual Understanding

Students entered the program with relatively strong familiarity with basic halal concepts, but their understanding was less consistent when the questions concerned certification and contemporary product evaluation. The clearest example was awareness of the importance of halal certification, which increased from 52.9% in the pre-test to 94.1% in the post-test. This pattern suggests that direct exposure to certification logos, ingredients, and real product examples helped convert general religious knowledge into a more operational understanding.

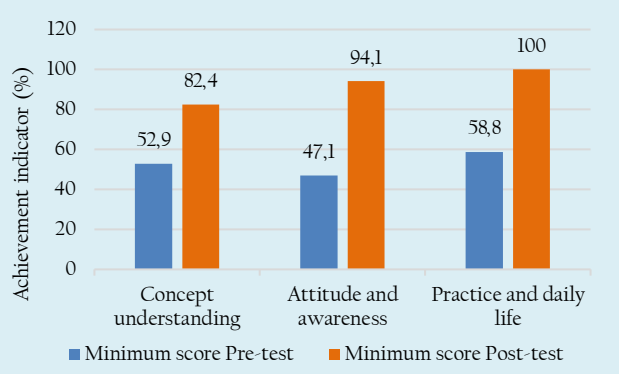


Figure 2. Minimum indicator achievement within each halal-literacy dimension before and after the program

These results are consistent with earlier school-based halal education reported in JIPMI, where structured socialization improved students' knowledge of safe and halal food [10]. They also align with evidence that halal awareness depends on multiple information sources rather than on the halal logo alone [2]. By teaching students how to examine labels and ingredients, the present activity broadened the basis on which they could assess product permissibility.

Attitudes, Awareness, and Social Responsibility

The attitudes-and-awareness dimension showed the largest shift in its weakest indicator. Responsibility to remind others about the importance of halal increased from 47.1% to 100%. This result indicates that the intervention encouraged students to view halal not only as a private consumption rule but also as a shared ethical concern. The discussion format gave participants space to articulate the social pressures that can normalize doubtful practices and to consider how peer and family environments can support better choices.

The finding is important because consumer behavior is not determined by knowledge alone. Studies of halal consumption show that moral obligation, religious self-identity, habit, and involvement influence intention and behavior [3,4,16]. School-based education can therefore contribute by making moral considerations more salient before consumption habits become more established.

Reported Practice and the Knowledge–Practice Gap

All five practice-related indicators reached 100% in the immediate post-test, compared with a pre-test range of 58.8–94.1%. This strong immediate response should be interpreted as improved self-reported practice orientation following the intervention, not as evidence that long-term behavior had already changed. The short interval between learning and post-test means that sustainability requires later observation or follow-up assessment.

Nevertheless, the immediate shift is educationally meaningful because the activity explicitly addressed situations in which students may know a rule but fail to apply it. Experiential tasks—such as checking labels, interpreting ingredients, and discussing realistic dilemmas—made the consequences of everyday choices more visible. Comparable school-based programs in JIPMI have also found that interactive, context-based education can improve literacy and knowledge outcomes among students [12,14,15].

The results also reinforce the broader concept of literacy as an applied competence. Food literacy emphasizes planning, selection, preparation, and use of information in daily food practices [6], while health-literacy theory distinguishes functional knowledge from more interactive and critical forms of literacy [7]. In the present program, halal literacy similarly developed through the interaction of knowledge, reflection, and practical decision-making.

Program Implications and Limitations

For the partner school, the program provides a practical model that can be incorporated into Islamic education, student activities, or periodic awareness sessions. Rather than adding a separate theoretical subject, teachers can integrate halal literacy through product-based assignments, label-reading exercises, case discussions, and culturally grounded reflection. This approach is compatible with contextual Islamic education in minority settings [8,9] and with previous practical religious-literacy activities at the same school [13].

The evaluation has several limitations. It involved only 17 students from one school, used an immediate post-test, and did not include a comparison group or long-term behavioral observation. The practice dimension was self-reported, so the 100% post-test result should not be interpreted as verified long-term compliance. Future community-service cycles should include a delayed post-test, broader participation across grade levels, and teacher-led follow-up activities to assess whether the gains are sustained.

CONCLUSION

Interactive school-based halal education strengthened students' immediate halal literacy by improving conceptual understanding, moral awareness, and reported consumption practice. The strongest contribution of the program was its ability to connect Islamic principles with concrete tasks such as reading certification marks, examining ingredients, discussing doubtful products, and reflecting on habits within the local cultural environment. The activity also exposed a knowledge–practice gap that requires continued reinforcement; therefore, the post-test gains should be viewed as evidence of immediate learning rather than proof of long-term behavioral change.

RECOMMENDATION

Phatnawitya School is encouraged to integrate short halal-literacy activities into Islamic education and student-development programs, particularly label-reading exercises, discussion of current consumption cases, and reflection on local food practices. Periodic follow-up assessment is recommended to determine whether students maintain the knowledge and behavioral commitments demonstrated immediately after the program. Future activities should involve a larger group of students and include teacher-developed learning resources so that halal literacy can be reinforced continuously.

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