

The Practice of Halal Concept among Food Premises in Perlis: The Hygiene Perspective

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Abstract - The term halal is well known in Malaysia, especially in Muslim society. However, the practice of halal concept among Muslim food operators is questionable and doubtful. The cleanliness aspect of hygiene is one of the main aspects that contributed to the concept of halal in Islam, besides the aspect of pure, safety and quality. There are many issues and cases reported in the media regarding the cleanliness of the food premises in Malaysia. Many cases of food poisoning originated from poor food preparation and improper cleaning by the food premise operators themselves. These practices could lead to serious contamination and food poisoning to customers. Thus, this study is conducted to examine the practice of halal concept in the aspect of hygiene among food premises. The study is qualitative based research by adopting a phenomenology approach. Data was collected through an in-depth interview with six food premise operators in Perlis. Data are analyzed using the inductive analysis approach by using Creswell analysis. Results showed that only one of the informants did not apply the hygiene practice very well. Overall, all of the informants have good understanding and awareness in practicing the halal concept at their food premises. Thus, high awareness and commitment about the practice of hygiene in the halal concept are needed especially to food premise operators. The municipal authority and health department should enhance their monitoring enforcement towards the operations of food premises to make sure all food premises apply good hygiene practices in their daily operation.

Keywords - Hygiene, Halal Concept, Practice, Food Premise.

1. Introduction

The development of the halal industry has brought Malaysia as the main hub halal destination in the world. This is one of the efforts to transform the whole human lifestyle to the Islamic principle and jurisprudence that can give a great impact on the economic system in this country.

The majority takes things for granted, that if a Muslim vendor or seller provides the food then it must be halal. That might be true in the case of a completely self-sufficient Muslim country that produces its very own foods and drinks as well as the ingredients and the raw material, and such that go into it. Should Muslim consumers be aware and concerned about what they eat and how their daily food and drinks are processed and handled.

Hence, the food premise operators need to understand and apply the halal concept in their daily business operations. For food premise operators to be able to follow

the halal compliance, a system such as Manual Procedure for Malaysia Halal Certification (Third Revision) 2014 is recommended. Manual Procedure for Malaysia Halal Certification guarantees that the food operators will not be going to have a possibility of making mistakes or omission during their daily business practices because it has provided clear and easy halal guidelines to follow.

2. Problem Statement

Although Malaysia is very well known in halal products and being referred by other countries in the world for its Manual Procedure for Malaysia Halal Certification, not all food premises in Malaysia apply and adopt this halal certification for their products and premises. As the application of halal certification is optional, the premise's willingness to apply is very recommended. Instead, there is no way to punish those who do not apply the halal certification as it is based on volunteerism.

There is no doubt regarding halal on the food premise with halal certification or halal logo presented in their premises as they are compulsory to follow strictly the Manual Procedure for Malaysia Halal Certification. Otherwise, their certification could be suspended or terminated in the case of non-compliance with the Manual Procedure for Malaysia Halal Certification. However, it is questionable and doubtful if the food premises are not the holder of Malaysia Halal Certification. This issue raises many concerns as [1] found that most of the restaurant managers viewed that it seems hard tasks for them to comply with the halal concept and its standard. If the food operators are hard to follow Manual Procedure for Malaysia Halal Certification, the halal concept being practice could not be guaranteed. Specifically, the aspect of hygiene as part of the halal concept could be questionable.

There are cases whereby the cleanliness of food premises was argued and doubtful. For example, Perlis Health Department has commanded more than 27 food premises in Perlis to temporarily shut down due to disobeying Section 11, Food Act 1983 which is dirty food premises. According to Dr. Zaini Hussin (Board Director of Perlis Health Department), those 27 food premises were among the 2,250 food premises including food stalls and restaurants that have been examined since January until October in 2016. He then adds that even though only a few of it but they were taken seriously about this matter because it is related to human health that can lead to diseases like diarrhea and food poisoning [2]. The audit operation that was done by the Perlis Health Department was related to the hygienic problems, and it is related to the concept of halal.

Therefore, this paper is intended to examine the practice of halal concept in the aspect of hygiene among food premises.

3. Literature Review

3.1 Hygiene in Halal Concept

Hygiene is a part of the halal concept in Islam. Al-Qaradawi [4], discussed hygiene and cleanliness in his famous writing of *al-Halal wa al-Haram in Islam*. He emphasis that Islam addressed itself in considerable depth to the question of cleanliness, for cleanliness is the essence of good appearance and the beauty of every adornment. It is reported that the Prophet (peace be upon him) said:

*“Cleanse yourself, for Islam is
cleanliness.” (Reported by Ibn Hayyan)
“Cleanliness invites toward faith, and faith leads
its possessor to the Garden”
(Reported by al-Tabarani)*

The Prophet placed a great emphasis on keeping the body, clothing, houses and streets clean, and he laid special stress on cleaning the teeth, hands and hair. This emphasis on cleanliness is not to be wondered at in a religion which makes cleanliness the key to its principle form of worship, *salat*, for the Muslim's *salat* is not acceptable unless his body, clothing and the place where he performs his *salat* are all clean.

Islam allows everything clean and wholesome. This was the state of the world concerning the eating of food at the advent of Islam. At one extreme every kind of meat was permitted and at the other, all meat was prohibited. Then Allah addressed all human beings saying:

*‘O mankind! Eat of what is permissible
and good on eat, and do not follow the
footsteps of Satan; truly he is an open
adversary to you.’
(Surah al-Baqarah 2:168)*

Hygiene and cleanliness are strongly emphasized in Islam and it includes every aspect of personal hygiene, dress, equipment and premise where food is processed or prepared. In fact, the basis of halal itself is hygiene and health (Halal and *Toyyiba*). The objective is to ensure that the food produced is clean and not harmful to human health. Hygiene can be defined as being free from filth, dirt, materials prohibited by Islam and not clean according to Islamic Laws.

From the above explanation, the halal concept strictly protecting the cleanliness and the hygiene on what we consume everyday which can be seen clearly in the consuming what is halal and good. Thus, one of the halal concept aspects is hygiene. Hygiene is the aspect that can be found in the halal concept especially in food preparation.

3.2 Hygiene Practices

There are a few definitions of food hygiene in current use. According to the [3] food hygiene is the conditions and measures necessary to ensure the safety of food from production to consumption (farm to fork). During slaughtering or harvesting, processing, storage, distribution, transportation and preparation, food can become

contaminated at any point. It can lead to foodborne diseases and the death of the consumer if food operators are lack of adequate food hygiene. While according to [5] food hygiene is all conditions and measures necessary to ensure the safety and suitability of food at all stages of the food chain.

The most important hygiene practice is in the production areas where the food operators should ensure that a regular cleaning system is implemented to prevent dirt from gathering on windows ledges or around table legs and other inaccessible places. All floors and drains should be washed down daily. During production, any spillage of food should be cleared straight away, and wastes should not be allowed to accumulate on floors, in drains or on work surfaces. They should be placed in covered bins and emptied at regular intervals, and should be disposed of properly away from the processing site [6].

All food premise surfaces and equipment must be washed with hot water and detergents before, during and after production. If surfaces, chopping boards or utensils (such as knives) are used for different foods they should be washed between each use. Cloths and sponges used to wipe down surfaces and towels used for hand drying should be washed and sterilized regularly by boiling in water for at least 10 minutes. Equipment and utensils should be stored where they can be kept clean when not in use, and brushes and cloths should be hung up after use, and never left on equipment or foods to dry. Cleaning equipment, chemical and detergents should be stored in a separate cupboard from foods and processing equipment. All the equipment should be kept in good condition and properly repaired, to prevent accidents as well as contamination. Only food-grade plastic, ceramic, stainless steel or enameled metals are suitable materials for use in contact with foods. Copper, iron, brass or pewter should not be used. Galvanized iron or aluminum is only appropriate to use for some foods and wooden utensils or surfaces are difficult to clean [6].

The hygiene aspect also includes a good sanitation system at the food premise. Sanitation is a term for the hygienic disposal or recycling of waste materials. In consequence, sanitation is an important public health measure that is essential for the prevention of disease. In the USA, there is a particular focus on the concept of food sanitation, which may be defined as ‘the hygienic practices designed to maintain a clean and wholesome environment for food production, preparation and storage’ [7]. This definition links it to hygiene but more specifically with maintaining a clean working environment for food processing. Even here hygienic requirements extend beyond the practice of cleaning itself to incorporate those elements that make effective cleaning possible and allow control of insects and other pests. In the microbiological sense, sanitation is defined as ‘a cleaning and disinfection process that results in a 99-99.9% reduction in the number of vegetative bacteria present’ [8].

Based on the explanation above, hygiene in food premises is consists of the premise areas, environment, tools and equipment. The food premise operators should practice a good hygiene system in their production of foods at their food premises.

4. Methodology

The researcher will be using a phenomenology study in this research. Phenomenology study is undertaken when little is known about the situation at hand, or when no information is available on how similar problems or research issues have been resolved in the past. This research will be collecting data through in-depth interviews.

This study focus on qualitative research due to the aforementioned advantages of qualitative research to investigate the concept of halal practice among the food premise in Perlis is done. The population interests of this study will be involving the food premise that did not apply the halal certification and operated by Muslim owners in Perlis.

In this study, the informants come from a specific group. Purposive sampling technique will be used as a sampling technique. According to [9], the purposive sampling technique is confined to specific types of people who can provide the desired information, either because they are the only ones who possess it, or because they conform to some criteria set by the researcher.

The researcher chooses the informants based on purposive sampling technique. Thus, the researcher will review the background of the informants based on their business experienced on food operation of more than five years. The food premises that were chosen are operated by Muslim owners and workers in Perlis but did not apply for halal certification for their food premises. This is important to see whether their practice is in-line with the halal concept or not. This population technique fulfilled the sampling technique which all of the six informants are Muslim food operators in Perlis who have experienced in food operation of more than five years.

In analyzing data, the researcher uses the Creswell research design. There are five steps in analyzing data. First reading the Transcripts, then Read and Label the Code. It then followed by Labeling Categories and decides the Theme. Finally, is drawing a Conclusion. This is the final analytical activity in the process of qualitative data analysis. It is the essence of data analysis where at this point the researcher answers the research questions by determining what identified themes stands for, by thinking about the explanations for observed patterns and relationships, or by making contrast and comparison.

5. Results

Table 1.0 below showed the background of the informants where it involved six food premise operators around Perlis. The types of food premises involved in this study were restaurant and school canteen. All of the informants have more than five years of experience in operating food premise businesses.

Table 1.0: Background of the informants

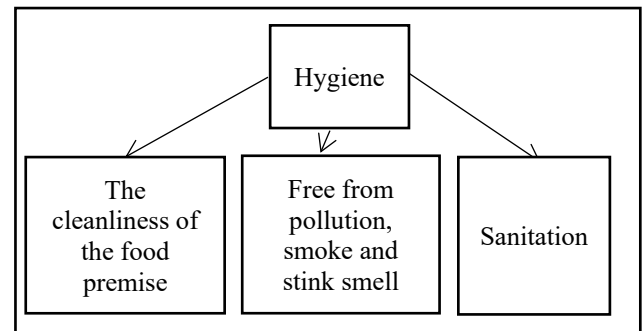
Informants	Gender	Age	Education	Experience (Years)	Worker	Location (Perlis)	Type of Business
P.1	Female	24	Degree	9	7	Beseri	Canteen
P.2	Male	48	SPM	19	5	Beseri	Restaurant
P.3	Male	34	Degree	5	8	Arau	Restaurant
P.4	Male	48	Degree	20	10	Arau	Restaurant
P.5	Female	41	SPM	15	8	Arau	Canteen
P.6	Female	44	SPM	10	7	Arau	Restaurant

Hygiene Practices in food premise

The most important part of the halal concept is the practice of good hygiene. If the premise is clean and not stinky, the

food preparation must be good and if the food premise is dirty, people will have some trouble in choosing to eat at that kind of place because the whole food preparation must be dirty as well. Food and premise hygiene required steps and procedures that control the operational conditions within the food establishment to produce safe and hygienic food for human consumption [1]. Below is figure 1.0 on the hygiene aspect. The researcher divided the hygiene aspect into three categories which are the cleanliness of the food premise, the premise should be free from pollution, smoke and stink smell and sanitation.

Figure 1.0: The Practice of halal concept based on the hygiene aspect



Cleanliness of the food premise

The researcher asked about the frequency of cleaning the food premise to all the informants to see how they manage the cleanliness at their food premises.

“As for mopping the floor canteen, we did it after recess and before 5 pm, while for the drain, we did it at least 2 times a week”. (P.1)

“I will make sure this place is clean including floor, table, and kitchen in the morning and after we close down this premise which is around 7 pm”. (P.2)

“Our routine is to clean up this place before we open and after we close down”. (P.3)

“Since we open at 5 pm-3 am, we only clean our premises in the morning at 7 am the next day”. (P.4)

“We can only mop the floor of this canteen only two times a day which is at 11 am and at 4.30 pm, it is not okay to mop the floor all the time because it will get even dirtier since this is one of the main passages in this school”. (P.5)

“Basically, we clean this place after we finished our business which is at midnight”. (P.6)

This could be concluded that all six informants have a good hygiene management system at their food premises. But as from the researcher’s observation, some food premises still need to improve their cleanliness especially at the important area like the sink, walls and floor. They must clean their premise effectively to avoid any kinds of contamination from the surrounding.

Free from pollution, smoke and stink smell

The researcher asked all the informants about the environment of their premises like the premise is free from pollution, smoke and stink smell.

“We are glad that our canteen is free from pollution, smoke and bad smell”. (P.1)

“Since our premise is near the main road, we do have some problems like dirt, and smoke from the car”. (P.2)

“Our premise is at a good location but we have several problems like flies, and insects here due to the hot weather in Perlis”. (P.3)

“We don't have trouble like pollution and smoke except for the insects since we open from 5 pm till 3 am”. (P.4)

“This canteen is free from pollution but we do have problems like pests and so on”. (P.5)

“Our place is quite good since it is around the main supermarket but we do have problems like flies, rats and so on”. (P.6)

This could be concluded that most of the food premises applied the halal concept but problems like pest should be controlled effectively to avoid diseases spread by those pests. The food premise should get good pest control. Pest control is the regulation or management of a species that defined as a pest like rats, birds, insects and other organisms that share the habitat with humans. Various methods can be used in an attempt to remove that pest like physical removal, chemical means, improving sanitation and garbage control and repulsion. These methods can be applied effectively by all of the food premises that faced the same problems.

Sanitation

Sanitation is one of the most important processes in every food premises. A sanitation system is vital in keeping each corner of the food premises clean, tidy and free from any pollutant and pest. Without care, it can endanger the customer's health. It is, in fact, a major source of contamination of food products and food preparation at the food premises. Effective measures are therefore needed for the hygiene and sanitation of food preparation and vending sites and raw material and ingredient storage areas to prevent the contamination of food and surroundings. Good waste management is required in the form of proper treatment and removal. Sanitation and disposal systems should prevent food contamination from waste and from workers handling that waste. All waste should be handled and removed in such a way as to prevent the contamination of food, water and environment. Special care should be taken to keep insects, rodents, dogs, cats and other animals away from food waste. Contamination of food, water and environment can be avoided by putting waste in waterproof covered bins. Care should be taken that the bins are not allowed to overflow and are emptied daily. To the extent possible, liquid waste, such as wastewater, should be separated from solid waste.

Waste (except oils and fats) should drain into a sewer through a device (e.g. filter) that retains any solids present. Fatty waters should be eliminated by appropriate means, such as grease tanks. Solid waste should be placed in

closed dustbins that are emptied at least once a day into the municipal refuse skip. The researcher asked the informants about the usage of the food filter in their food premise and all of the six informants mentioned that they do not use food filters at their food premises.

“We used to use food waste filter but now we don't use it anymore but the oil that we already used, we will sell it and the buyer will pick it up at our place”. (P.3)

Most food premises did not use food waste filters at their food premise. The food wastes were put in the garbage bag and they will dump it at the nearest garbage dumping area. Only one informant has mentioned about recycling the cooking oil. The cooking oil that already used will be packed in a big container and will sell it to the buyer that will pick up the recycle oil at the food premise.

Then, the researcher asked about the frequency of waste management to all the informants. It was found out that all of the informants manage their garbage at least two or three times on the same day but only one informant did not practice good waste management since they do the waste management the next morning.

“We throw the garbage at least two times a day, after recess and before we close our premise”. (P.1)

“...only after we finished with everything and the final thing is manage the waste”. (P.2)

“Whenever the garbage is almost full, we dump it two to three times a day”. (P.3)

“We only cook at night, tomorrow morning there will be two workers who were in charged with cleaning will do it and they will throw the garbage at the nearest garbage bin”. (P.4)

“We manage the garbage at least two times a day, after recess and before we close it”. (P.5)

“..two to three times a day”. (P.6)

All informants have their method in keeping their food premise clean but unfortunately for the use of food waste filters, none of them use it. Only one informant mentioned about selling the recycle cooking oil. For the frequency of waste management, it was found out that all of the informants manage their garbage at least two or three times on the same day but only one informant did not practice good waste management since they do the waste management the next morning which is not a good way of managing waste because it should be done on the same day to avoid all the pest like rats from coming to the food premise.

Based on the findings, it can be concluded that only a few food premise operators took the premise hygiene issues seriously with the help of portraying a good image of food premises of serving hygienic and safe food to the customers. Within this context, halal food emphasized that cleanliness and hygiene are vital in the halal concept.

6. Limitation

There were a few limitations in this research. The first limitation is the time limitations. The time limitation is very common for most research and this research also faced the

same limitation. After all, the researcher has very limited time to conduct an interview session with the food premise operators because the majority of the informants were busy operating their business.

The second limitation of this research is the informant. The informant in this research is limited to few food premises operators who did not apply the halal certification that conducted and operated by Muslim owners in Perlis only. These include food premises like school canteens and restaurants around Perlis. Other than that, the researcher also has reached more than 15 food premises around Perlis including in Kangar, Kuala Perlis, Arau and Beseri but to no avail due to no response from them. In the end, the researcher only conducted the interview sessions around Arau and Beseri only due to the fast response from the respective food premise owners.

7. Conclusion

For the hygiene aspect, it can be concluded that only a few food premise operators took the hygiene issue seriously with the help of portraying a good image of food premises of serving hygienic and safe food to the customers. The researcher found that informant P.4 did not practice good hygiene since he mentioned that he cleans his food premises the next morning. Thus, it allows pests to come to the food premise. The hygiene issue is very common for food premises. For instance, all food premise operators should manage the cleanliness of the food premises more effectively. For sanitation, all of the informants have their method in keeping their food premises clean but unfortunately for the use of food waste filters, none of them use it. Only one informant (P.3) mentioned about selling the recycle cooking oil. For the frequency of waste management, it was found out that all of the informants manage their garbage at least two or three times on the same day but only one informant (P.4) did not practice good waste management since they do the waste management the next morning which is not a good way of managing waste because it should be done on the same day to avoid all the pests like rats from coming down to the food premise. According to [10], the most important time for cleaning in the kitchen is immediately after food has been prepared. Thus, dragging the time for cleaning is not a good hygiene system at any food premises.

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