



HALAL COMPLIANCE ISSUES ON TRENDING FOODS AMONG CHILDREN: SHAFI'I SCHOOL OF ISLAMIC JURISPRUDENCE APPROACH AND HALALAN THAYYIBAN EDUCATION IN BRUNEI

Nabilah Johari^{1*}, Norkhairiah Hashim², Hamzah Mohd Salleh³

¹Faculty of Halal Science and Sustainable Tourism, Universiti Islam Sultan Sharif Ali (UNISSA), Brunei
 23PO2601@unissa.bn  <https://orcid.org/0009-0007-4810-2347>

² Faculty of Halal Science and Sustainable Tourism, Universiti Islam Sultan Sharif Ali (UNISSA), Brunei
 norkhairiah.hashim@unissa.edu.bn  <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9631-3789>

³ Faculty of Halal Science and Sustainable Tourism, Universiti Islam Sultan Sharif Ali (UNISSA), Brunei
 hamzah.salleh@unissa.edu.bn  <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4627-8019>

*Corresponding Author

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Abstract:

Trending foods promoted through social media increasingly shape children's food choices in Brunei Darussalam, often prioritising visual appeal and popularity over halal compliance and health. Although often discussed in nutritional and behavioural terms, this issue remains underexamined as a halal compliance and educational problem, particularly within Brunei's *Shafi'i*-based Islamic governance context. This study examines the halal compliance implications of trending foods through the *Shafi'i* school of Islamic jurisprudence (the dominant Sunni legal school in Brunei Darussalam) and explores how *halalan thayyiban* (the Islamic principle of lawful and wholesome consumption) education can strengthen children's halal awareness through curriculum-based learning. A qualitative design was employed using a semi-structured elite key informant interview with the Head of the Science Curriculum Unit, Ministry of Education, Brunei Darussalam, supported by document analysis of curriculum framework, policy, and halal guidance materials, with data analysed thematically. The findings show fragmented curriculum integration across subjects, limited explicit guidance for evaluating trending foods, insufficient classroom-based assessment tools for pupils' halal and *thayyib* (wholesome) reasoning, and a need for stronger teacher support. The study further shows that the *Shafi'i* school provides the jurisprudential basis for halal assessment, *maqasid al-shariah* (the higher objectives of Islamic law) provides the higher ethical objectives of food-related decision making,

and *halalan thayyiban* functions as the educational bridge linking both dimensions in children's everyday food choices, with policy implications for curriculum standards, teacher training, and classroom-based assessment in Brunei's primary education system.

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Brunei Children, Halal Fiqh, *Halalan Thayyiban* Education, *Shafi'i* School of Islamic Jurisprudence, Trending Foods



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Introduction

The rapid expansion of digital media has accelerated the rise of trending food culture among children, particularly through visually driven social media platforms and peer influenced online content. In this environment, children's food choices are increasingly shaped by novelty, appearance, and popularity rather than by informed judgement about halal compliance and health implications. In Muslim contexts, this development is not only a nutritional concern, but also a religious and educational concern, because children may consume foods that appear attractive without the knowledge and critical capacity to evaluate whether such foods are halal and wholesome.

In Brunei Darussalam, this issue is particularly significant. Children's food preferences are increasingly influenced by taste, packaging, and digital exposure, often leading to the consumption of energy dense and nutrient poor foods (Talip et al., 2017). Such patterns raise concern not only from a public health perspective, but also from the perspective of halal awareness and ethical food literacy. Although halal awareness is generally strong in Brunei due to its Islamic governance environment, children's understanding of *halalan thayyiban* as an integrated concept of lawful permissibility and wholesomeness remains limited, especially when food choices are shaped by social media trends and peer influence (Sulaiman et al., 2023).

Despite growing concern about children's food behaviour, academic literature still shows a clear scholarly gap. First, much of the existing literature examines children's food trends in terms of nutrition, consumer behaviour, or media influence, while limited attention is given to trending foods as a halal compliance issue. Second, studies on halal awareness in Muslim contexts often focus on certification systems, consumer confidence, or adult purchasing behaviour, but rarely examine how halal literacy can be cultivated systematically at the primary school level through formal education (Sulaiman et al., 2023). Third, the literature has not sufficiently connected children's everyday food choices with a jurisprudential framework grounded in the *Shafi'i* school, even in contexts where *Shafi'i* jurisprudence shapes religious

practice and halal governance (Al-Shafi'i, 1980). As a result, an important conceptual and pedagogical gap remains in understanding how fiqh based halal reasoning can be translated into age-appropriate educational strategies for children in contemporary food environments.

Brunei Darussalam is theoretically important for this inquiry because it represents a distinctive setting in which strong Islamic governance coexists with intense exposure to transnational digital food culture. On one hand, Brunei maintains a strong halal regulatory and religious environment, while on the other hand children are increasingly influenced by globalised social media content that promotes novelty driven and visually attractive foods (Talip et al., 2017; Sulaiman et al., 2023). This creates a meaningful context for examining the tension between formal halal governance and informal digital food influence, and for analysing how education can function as a mechanism of mediating between the two. In this sense, Brunei is not only a local case study, but also a conceptually important site for understanding halal literacy formation in contemporary Muslim childhood.

Conceptually, this study is grounded in a causal chain that connects food influence, Islamic jurisprudential evaluation, and educational intervention. Social media exposure and peer driven food trends shape children's food preferences and consumption behaviour. In this environment, trending foods may create tension with halal compliance and *thayyib* considerations when children prioritise visual appeal, novelty, and popularity over informed judgement. The *Shafi'i* jurisprudential framework is therefore used in this study to assess the permissibility status of such foods, while the concept of *halalan thayyiban* extends the assessment to wholesomeness, safety, and ethical suitability. Based on this integrated understanding, curriculum based *halalan thayyiban* education is positioned as the intervention mechanism through which children can develop critical food awareness and make more responsible halal related decisions.

In this study, the *Shafi'i* school of Islamic jurisprudence (the dominant Sunni legal school in Brunei Darussalam), *maqasid al-shariah* (the higher objectives of Islamic law) and the concept of *halalan thayyiban* (the Islamic principle of lawful and wholesome consumption) are integrated as a complementary analytical framework rather than treated as separate references. The *Shafi'i* school provides the jurisprudential foundation for determining the legal status of food, including distinctions between permissible, prohibited, and doubtful matters based on established fiqh principles (Al-Shafi'i, 1980). *Maqasid al-shariah* extends this legal foundation by clarifying the higher ethical objectives of food related decision making, particularly the protection of religion, life, intellect, lineage, and wealth (Al-Shatibi, 1997; Kamali, 2008). Within this framework, *halalan thayyiban* functions as the educational and practical bridge that translates fiqh based legal reasoning and *maqasid* oriented values into age-appropriate food awareness, critical judgement, and responsible behaviour. Accordingly, the analysis of trending foods in this study is not limited to formal halal permissibility alone but also considers whether such foods fulfil the broader *thayyib* dimension of wholesomeness, safety, nutritional suitability, and ethical wellbeing.

This integrated framing is especially relevant in educational settings. Islamic education anchored in *maqasid al-shariah* provides a holistic basis for strengthening halal awareness beyond technical compliance, allowing children's food choices to be understood in relation to ethical responsibility, health consciousness, and social wellbeing (Kamali, 2008). In the context of trending foods, the issue is not only whether a product is legally permissible, but also whether children are equipped to evaluate it critically within a saturated environment.

Therefore, curriculum based *halalan thayyiban* education becomes essential for developing value based reasoning and responsible food behaviour from an early age.

Accordingly, this study examines the halal compliance implications of trending foods among children in Brunei Darussalam through the *Shafi'i* school of Islamic jurisprudence and explores how *halalan thayyiban* education can strengthen children's halal awareness through curriculum-based learning. In line with this aim, the study addresses the following research question: How can *halalan thayyiban* education, informed by *Shafi'i* jurisprudential principles and *maqasid al-shariah*, be integrated into the primary curriculum to strengthen children's halal awareness in the context of trending foods?

Literature Review

This literature review discusses five interconnected areas that form the theoretical and contextual foundation of this study. First, it examines the relevance of *Shafi'i* jurisprudence and *maqasid al-shariah* in guiding Muslim food consumption beyond legal permissibility toward holistic wellbeing. Second, it highlights the emergence of trending foods and the educational need to address children's food choices at an early stage, particularly under the influence of digital culture. Third, it reviews curriculum-based halal education initiatives in Malaysia as a structured national example of halal literacy embedded within formal education systems. Fourth, it explores the Indonesian approach to halal assurance education, shaped by legislative reform and community-based initiatives. Finally, the review synthesises these regional insights to propose the direction of an integrated *halalan thayyiban* curriculum in Brunei Darussalam that bridges religious doctrine, scientific literacy, and ethical reasoning within the primary school context.

Shafi'i Jurisprudence and Maqasid al-shariah in Food Consumption

In this study, the *Shafi'i* school, *maqasid al-shariah*, and the concept of *halalan thayyiban* are integrated as a complementary analytical framework rather than treated as separate references. The *Shafi'i* school provides the jurisprudential foundation for determining the legal status of food, including the distinction between permissible, prohibited, and doubtful matters based on established fiqh principles, as well as the precautionary approach toward *shubhah* in food consumption (Al-Shafi'i, 1980). *Maqasid al-shariah* extends this jurisprudential foundation by clarifying the higher ethical and social objectives of food related decision making, particularly the protection of religion (*hifz al-din*), life (*hifz al-nafs*), intellect (*hifz al-'aql*), lineage (*hifz al-nasl*) and wealth (*hifz al-mal*) (Al-Shatibi, 1997; Kamali, 2008). Within this integrated framework, *halalan thayyiban* functions as the educational and practical bridge that translates fiqh based legal reasoning and *maqasid* oriented values into age-appropriate food awareness, critical judgement, and responsible behaviour. Accordingly, the analysis of trending foods in this study is not limited to formal halal permissibility alone but also examines whether such foods fulfil the broader *thayyib* dimension of wholesomeness, safety, nutritional suitability, and ethical wellbeing, especially in the context of children's food choices and curriculum-based halal education.

Conceptually, this framework also provides the causal and pedagogical logic of the study. Social media and peer driven food trends shape children's food preferences and consumption behaviour, often through visual appeal and popularity. These influences may create tension with halal and *thayyib* considerations when children make food choices without adequate

guidance. The *Shafi'i* framework is therefore used to assess permissibility, while *maqasid al-shariah* provides the ethical objectives that justify protective and educative intervention. Within this chain, curriculum based *halalan thayyiban* education functions as the intervention mechanism that translates jurisprudential and ethical principles into structured learning, classroom practice, and children's everyday food decision making.

Trending Foods and The Need for Early Educational Intervention

Trending foods frequently conflict with *halalan thayyiban* ideals, as they tend to prioritise visual appeal, sensory stimulation, and marketability over nutritional value and halal assurance. Products high in artificial additives, excessive sugars, or non-certified ingredients may therefore entail both physical and spiritual risks (Ab Talib, 2021). In the context of children, such risks are amplified by developmental factors, peer influence, and digital media exposure, which can shape preferences before critical judgement is fully developed. This underscores the importance of early educational intervention that does not merely provide information but cultivates the capacity to evaluate food choices through halal, *thayyib*, and health related criteria.

Curriculum-Based Halal Education in Malaysia

Malaysia has implemented curriculum-based initiatives that embed halal education across different educational levels. Halal Science modules introduced in selected schools and higher education institutions integrate halal related topics into science, biology, and consumer studies curricula. Universities such as Universiti Putra Malaysia and the International Islamic University Malaysia have further advanced halal literacy through interdisciplinary research and community engagement, often in collaboration with JAKIM and the Halal Development Corporation (HDC) (Zain et al., 2017). These initiatives demonstrate how halal literacy can be institutionalised through formal curriculum structures, teacher support, and cross sector collaboration, offering a relevant policy and pedagogical reference point for Brunei Darussalam.

Curriculum-Based Halal Education in Indonesia

Indonesia, which also follows the *Shafi'i* tradition, has institutionalised halal assurance through the Halal Product Assurance Law No. 33/2014. This legislation has stimulated the incorporation of halal topics into *madrasah* curricula and the development of halal literacy modules for youth, supported by bodies such as the Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI) and the National Shariah Council (Majelis Ulama Indonesia, 2020). Community based programmes further extend halal awareness to parents and local food vendors (Rahman et al., 2021). The Indonesian case is particularly relevant because it demonstrates that halal education can be strengthened not only through formal institutions, but also through community and family level reinforcement, which is important when addressing children's food behaviour in media saturated environments.

Towards An Integrated Halalan Thayyiban Curriculum in Brunei Darussalam

Brunei Darussalam, guided by the Melayu Islam Beraja (MIB) philosophy and supported by robust national halal governance, is well positioned to strengthen curriculum based *halalan thayyiban* education. Nevertheless, the systematic integration of *halalan thayyiban* into the

core curriculum, particularly at the primary level, requires further policy refinement and structured pedagogical implementation. Stronger coherence is needed across science, health, and Islamic studies to ensure that halal literacy is taught not as fragmented moral messaging, but as an integrated form of food reasoning grounded in fiqh, *maqasid al-shariah*, and everyday decision making.

By drawing on Malaysia's formalised halal curriculum initiatives and Indonesia's community-based halal literacy approaches, Brunei can develop an integrated and culturally resonant educational framework that bridges religious doctrine with scientific literacy and ethical reasoning. Embedding *halalan thayyiban* principles within primary science and Islamic studies curricula, supported by clear learning outcomes, teacher professional development, and age-appropriate assessment tools, would equip children not only with theological understanding but also with practical competencies to make ethical, *maqasid* aligned food choices. In doing so, Brunei can nurture a generation that is both spiritually conscious and nutritionally informed.

Materials and Methods

Materials

The study was conducted within the context of the Brunei Darussalam primary school system, with a specific focus on the integration of *halalan thayyiban* principles into the national science curriculum. The key materials for the study comprised participant expertise, documentary sources, interview instruments, and audio recording tools.

The principal source of primary data was one elite key informant, namely the Head of the Science Curriculum Unit at the Ministry of Education, Brunei Darussalam. The selection of this informant was intentional because the role carries direct institutional responsibility for curriculum design, policy translation, and implementation at the national level. In qualitative inquiry, elite informants are selected not for numerical representation but for their strategic access to policy level knowledge and decision-making processes (Marshall, 1996; Patton, 2015; Tremblay, 1957).

In addition, documentary materials were used as a contextual and analytical support, including primary science curriculum documents and relevant policy directions related to values-based education, food, and curriculum integration in Brunei. These documents informed the interview protocol and served as a form of contextual triangulation during interpretation of the interview findings (Bowen, 2009).

A semi structured interview guide was developed to explore three domains:

- (i) Challenges in embedding *halalan thayyiban* values in the science curriculum,
- (ii) The relationship between scientific and religious education in school practice,
- (iii) Implications for children's halal awareness and food choices, especially in relation to trending foods. A digital audio recorder was used to capture the interview in full, with prior informed consent from the participant.

Methods

This study employed a qualitative design to obtain an in depth and contextually grounded understanding of how *halalan thayyiban* principles can be integrated into the primary science

curriculum in Brunei Darussalam and how such integration relates to children's engagement with trending foods.

A purposive criterion-based sampling strategy was used to recruit the participant. The inclusion criterion was a senior curriculum authority with direct responsibility for national primary science curriculum development. Based on this criterion, the Head of the Science Curriculum Unit was selected as the most information rich case for addressing the study objective at the policy and curriculum design level (Patton, 2015). The use of a single elite informant was methodologically appropriate because the study sought institutional and policy level insight rather than broad population views.

One in depth semi structured interview of approximately 60 minutes was conducted in a quiet and conducive setting to support open and reflective discussion. The interview session was audio recorded with prior consent. The interview protocol guided the discussion across three domains, namely existing and emerging challenges in embedding halalan thayyiban values within the science curriculum, the integration of scientific content with religious and ethical education in practice, and perceived implications for pupils' awareness, decision making, and behaviour regarding halal and trending foods.

In addition to the interview, document analysis was conducted to strengthen contextual interpretation and triangulation. The documents reviewed included relevant curriculum framework materials, primary science curriculum documents, and policy texts related to values-based education in Brunei Darussalam. To support the *Shafi'i* jurisprudential framing of halal compliance, relevant halal guidelines and fatwa related references were also reviewed as supplementary documentary sources. These documents were used to contextualise and corroborate the interview findings, particularly in relation to curriculum integration, halal principles, and the educational implications of trending food choices (Bowen, 2009).

The audio recording was transcribed verbatim and analysed using thematic analysis following the six-phase approach of Braun and Clarke (2006), namely familiarisation with the data, generation of initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and producing the report. Manual coding was used to identify patterns related to the *Shafi'i* school of Islamic jurisprudence, maqasid al-shariah, and the educational framing of trending food issues.

To strengthen trustworthiness, the study incorporated several strategies. First, documentary and policy sources were used to frame the interview questions and to support contextual triangulation during interpretation of themes, particularly in relation to curriculum priorities and values-based education in Brunei (Bowen, 2009). Second, an interview protocol and verbatim transcription were used to enhance dependability and procedural consistency. Third, the coding and theme development process was documented systematically to support transparency and confirmability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Accordingly, the methodological design should be understood as a focused qualitative inquiry using an elite key informant interview, supported by document analysis and thematic analysis, to generate policy relevant insight into curriculum based halalan thayyiban education in Brunei Darussalam.

Results and Discussion

Results

The thematic analysis of the interview with the Head of the Science Curriculum Unit yielded three major themes: (i) relevance of the *Shafi'i* school of Islamic jurisprudence in assessing trending foods, (ii) halal and thayyiban education as a preventive mechanism within the curriculum framework, and (iii) the role of curriculum and educational institutions in institutionalising halal and thayyiban values.

First, the informant reported that viral food trends circulating on social media have become a dominant driver of primary school children's food preferences in Brunei. These choices are frequently made without scrutiny of ingredients or halal status, despite the presence of synthetic colourants, flavour enhancers and preservatives of uncertain origin. This situation conflicts with the *Shafi'i* jurisprudential emphasis on avoiding shubhah (doubtful matters) in order to safeguard religious and ethical integrity. Within the broader maqāṣid al-sharī'ah framework, such practices risk compromising preservation of life (hifz al-nafs) and preservation of intellect (hifz al-'aql).

Second, the informant highlighted a structural gap in the current primary science curriculum. Although national policy documents, such as SPN21, promote holistic and values-based education, halal and thayyiban concepts are not yet explicitly operationalised in science teaching, especially in relation to consumer health and food safety. As a result, pupils are increasingly exposed to persuasive online food marketing without corresponding curricular guidance to evaluate halal status or health implications.

Third, the informant strongly emphasised the need to embed halal and thayyiban as a core value within the science curriculum, rather than confining it to religious education alone. Thematic analysis showed a clear stakeholder perception that an interdisciplinary approach is required, integrating *Shafi'i* fiqh, maqāṣid al-sharī'ah, nutrition science and critical media literacy. The proposed response includes cross-curricular modules, active learning activities (such as food labelling projects and critical analysis of viral foods), and school-wide initiatives to shape responsible food consumption habits.

These themes are synthesised in three conceptual frameworks. Fig. 1 depicts the relationships between modern food trends, *Shafi'i* jurisprudential principles and the educational gaps that emerge from the current curriculum. Fig. 2 illustrates halal and thayyiban education as a preventive mechanism operating along a pathway from media exposure, through curricular embedding, to ethical and informed dietary choices. Fig. 3 presents a multi-layered curriculum framework comprising knowledge, value and practical layers, supported by school-home-community collaboration.

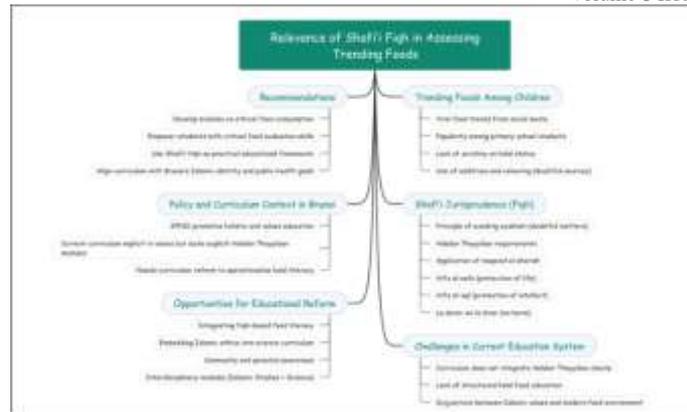


Figure 1: Thematic Framework Connecting Trending Foods, *Shafi'i* Islamic Jurisprudence and Educational Strategies

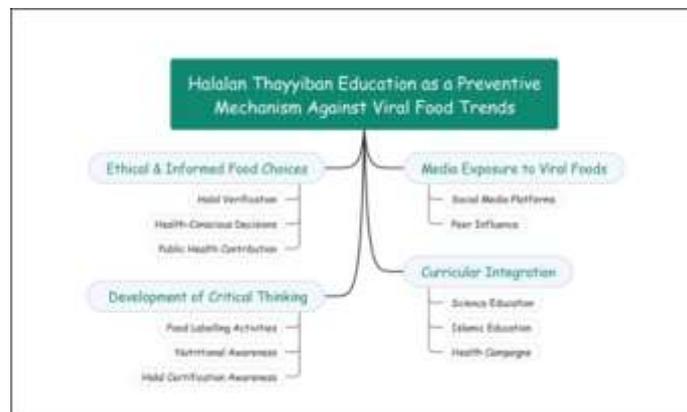


Figure 2: Thematic Framework of *Halalan Thayyiban* Education as A Preventive Mechanism Against Trending Foods



Figure 3: Multi-Layered Curriculum Framework Integrating *Halalan Thayyiban* Education

Discussion

The results indicate a clear causal tension between media-driven food influence and children's halal-related decision making in Brunei Darussalam. Social media and trend-oriented food exposure shape children's preferences through visual appeal and popularity, yet these influences may conflict with halal and *thayyib* considerations when food choices are made

without critical evaluation. In this study, this tension is interpreted through an integrated framework in which the *Shafi'i* school provides the fiqh basis for halal assessment, *maqasid al-shariah* provides the higher ethical objectives of food-related conduct, and *halalan thayyiban* functions as the educational bridge that operationalises both dimensions in curriculum and everyday food decision making. The findings therefore support curriculum integration not merely as a general recommendation, but as the central intervention mechanism for strengthening children's halal awareness in a media-saturated food environment.

More specifically, the findings suggest that the current educational response is constrained by fragmented integration, limited instructional specificity, and weak assessment practice. Fragmented integration refers to the tendency for halal and health-related values to be addressed indirectly or inconsistently across subjects, rather than through a coordinated curriculum approach linking science, health, and Islamic studies. Limited instructional specificity is evident in the absence of clear curriculum guidance on how pupils should evaluate trending foods using halal, *thayyib*, and safety-related criteria. In addition, weak assessment practice means that schools may transmit general value messages but lack structured tools or indicators to assess whether pupils can apply halal and *thayyib* reasoning in real food choice situations. These gaps help explain why children may recognise halal labels at a basic level yet remain vulnerable to media-driven food trends.

Interpreted through this integrated framework, *halalan thayyiban* education functions as a proactive and protective approach that extends halal evaluation beyond legal permissibility alone. The *Shafi'i* jurisprudential perspective establishes the boundaries of what is permissible, prohibited, and doubtful, while *maqasid al-shariah* clarifies why food choices matter in relation to the protection of religion (*hifz al-din*), life (*hifz al-nafs*), intellect (*hifz al-'aql*), lineage (*hifz al-nasl*), and wealth (*hifz al-mal*). By linking these principles to concrete classroom activities and school-wide programmes, the curriculum can address not only the permissibility of food, but also its healthfulness, environmental impact, and socio-economic implications. The informant's call to make *halalan thayyiban* "a way of life" within the curriculum suggests a shift from rule-based instruction to value-driven, action-oriented pedagogy.

The proposed multi-layered curriculum model further clarifies how this shift can be operationalised. At the knowledge layer, interdisciplinary modules can introduce pupils to basic nutrition, food additives, halal certification processes, and *Shafi'i* legal reasoning related to food. At the value layer, *maqasid al-shariah* provides an ethical lens through which pupils can interpret food choices, linking cleanliness, social accountability, and sustainability to the notion of *thayyib*. At the practical layer, projects such as school food audits, nutrition campaigns, and critical analysis of viral food trends allow pupils to apply knowledge and values to real-life situations, thereby internalising *halalan thayyiban* norms. For this model to be effective, teacher support is critical, particularly to strengthen pedagogical confidence in integrating science-based food knowledge with Islamic ethical reasoning and to develop classroom-based assessment tools that capture pupils' decision making, not only factual recall.

Importantly, the findings also highlight that schools cannot act in isolation. Parental engagement, mosque-based education, and community-level awareness programmes are crucial to reinforcing messages transmitted in the classroom. A coherent ecosystem of influence is needed if children are to resist the powerful pull of social media food trends and instead make decisions aligned with both Islamic principles and public health recommendations.

Overall, the study suggests that integrating *halalan thayyiban* education across science, health, and Islamic studies is a viable and contextually appropriate strategy for Brunei Darussalam. Such an approach aligns with SPN21's aspiration for holistic, values-oriented education and with national objectives related to food security, public health, and moral development. At the policy level, the findings indicate the need to institutionalise this integration through explicit curriculum standards, cross-subject learning outcomes on halal and *thayyib* food literacy, teacher professional development, and classroom-based assessment tools that evaluate pupils' food-related reasoning and decision making. Rather than treating halal literacy as a niche topic, the results support its recognition as a core component of twenty-first century science education in an Islamic context.

Conclusion

Trending food choices continue to pose a considerable challenge to the observance of halal dietary practices, particularly among Muslim children in Brunei Darussalam. Although the *Shafi'i* school of Islamic jurisprudence offers a well-established framework for determining the halal status of food, the practical application of this framework in children's everyday lives requires a comprehensive and structured educational response.

This study highlights the value of embedding *halalan thayyiban* education within the broader school curriculum in alignment with the objectives of *maqasid al-shariah*. Such integration enables the curriculum to serve not only as a vehicle for scientific knowledge, but also as an ethical guide that nurtures informed, morally responsible, and health-conscious food decision making among learners. The adoption of *halalan thayyiban* principles in education could therefore contribute to the protection of religion (*hifz al-din*), life (*hifz al-nafs*), intellect (*hifz al-'aql*), lineage (*hifz al-nasl*), and wealth (*hifz al-mal*).

Practically, this study contributes a policy relevant direction for Brunei Darussalam by identifying the need for curriculum level guidance, teacher professional development, and assessment mechanisms to institutionalise *halalan thayyiban* food literacy in primary education.

Based on the findings, it is recommended that educational stakeholders incorporate explicit learning components on *halalan thayyiban* principles within primary science, health, and Islamic studies. In addition, extending halal awareness initiatives to families and local communities through structured activities such as workshops, seminars, and school community partnerships may strengthen intergenerational knowledge sharing and support the cultivation of a halal conscious culture in an increasingly complex food environment.

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