FOOD SAFETY, SANITATION AND PERSONAL HYGIENE IN FOOD HANDLING: AN OVERVIEW FROM ISLAMIC PERSPECTIVE

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ABSTRACT

Food safety has become a major worldwide problem. Almost one-fifth of the world’s population is Muslim. Consequently, food security management in Islam should be well thought out, institutionalized, checked for implementation, and fully implemented and maintained. 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. Therefore, this conceptual paper gives an overview of food safety, sanitation and personal hygiene in food handling from overview of Islamic perspective. This study is conducted by method of library research as well as doctrinal research

Keywords: Food Safety, Sanitation, Personal Hygiene, Food Handling

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1. INTRODUCTION
Sanitation and personal hygiene are very important in our life. Islam emphasizes on personal hygiene and cleanliness to make sure Muslims can perform their worship properly. Allah SWT mentioned in the Quran in surah al-Baqarah verse 222,

“Indeed, Allah SWT loves those who are constantly repentant and loves those who purify themselves”

Thus, hygiene, sanitation and safety are important pre-requisites and good manufacturing (GMP) or good hygienic practice (GHP) is a compulsory requirement in preparing Halal food (M. Mufizur et.al, 2017). In Arabic the word ‘halal’ means permissible or allowed Halal food refers to food that is allowed which is prepared based on Islamic Shariah. For Muslims, it is important for them to ensure that their diet conforms to the guidelines laid down by Islam. The halalness of a food is generally determined by two factors – internal and external. Internal factor refers to the constituents or ingredients of the food, whilst external factor refers to the manner at which the food is being handled and processed. A food is deemed Halal if the ingredients used are from Halal sources. In this case, the source of the ingredients, as well as the manner at which the ingredients were processed and handled plays a vital role in determining the halalan tayyiba of the product. With regards to the external factor, it is extremely crucial that halal food is completely segregated from any non-halal food or najs items. A food will change its status from being halal to non-Halal should it encounter any known non-halal and/or najs substances. Hence, extra effort must be taken to ensure that halal food is always labelled as such and kept in a secure place to prevent possible chances of contamination.

The concept of Halal food is incomplete without coupling it with aspects of hygiene and nutrition. From a holistic perspective, food must be halal, safe for human consumption and carries a high nutritional value. Allah SWT mentioned in Surah Al-Baqarah verse 168:

“O mankind, eat from whatever is on earth [that is] lawful and good and do not follow the footsteps of Satan. Indeed, he is to you a clear enemy”

Prophet Muhammad SAW also mentioned in Hadis:

God is good, loves good, clean, loves cleanliness, cream, loves generosity, loves the good, and cleanse you. (Narrated by al-Tirmidhi, 2723)

According to the Quran and Hadis above, it is clear that places great emphasis on Allah SWT viewed about the cleanliness in everything including the quality of handling food from raw material until it is ready to be consumed.

2. THE CONCEPT OF FOOD SAFETY
Food safety does not only protect the food production process, but it can also improve health and provide nutrition. It is consistent with the principles of halalan tayyiba food which can be described as clean, safe and nutritious. Two organizations involved in the formulation of food safety standards are International Commission on Microbiological Specification for Foods (ICMSF) and CODEX Alimentarius Commission (CAC). (Mohamad et al., 2015). Based on the definition of food safety given, food safety includes:

1. Response to the hazard separating aspects food safety from food quality aspects others that cause food not suitable for human consumption, although not harmful to health. This refers to the suitability of the food (food suitability).
2. The concept of food safety and management is based on the standards provided to guarantee that the food is safe. Terms for ensuring the safety and relevance of a food refers to food hygiene.

3. The preparation process and / or the use of food products should consider food security and vice versa. Food products are considered safe if they are provided and / or used in accordance with the policy measures of food safety. These are necessary steps emphasized by producers, manufacturers, vendors and buyers (Mohamad et al., 2015).

Foods are required for nutrition, wellbeing and physical fitness and meals are a part of a culture, a society and a religion. (Aslan & Aslan, 2016) Furthermore, the healthy growth rate among Muslim population represents an increasing demand for halal products in the market. (Soong, 2007)

3. SANITATION AND PERSONAL HYGIENE

In Islam, cleanliness and purification are not only requirements for the performance of worship, or when embracing Islam, but are part of a Muslim’s faith. Allah says in surah al-Baqarah verse 222,

“Indeed, Allah SWT loves those who are constantly repentant and loves those who purify themselves”

Cleanliness in Islam is of three kinds:

1. Purification from impurity (i.e. to attain purity or cleanliness, by taking a bath ghusl or performing ablution wudu’ in states which a bath or ablution is necessary or desirable according to Islamic Law.

2. Cleansing one’s body, dress or place from impurity or filth.

3. Removing dirt or grime that collects in various parts of the body, such as cleaning the teeth and nostrils, the trimming of nails and the removing of armpit and pubic hair.

Ghusl. This is when all parts of the body are thoroughly washed. Ghusl is required of every Muslim after sexual intercourse, wet dreams, after child-birth, and post-partum bleeding (40-days flow of blood, and final yellowish discharge has completely stopped), and each month after menstruation and final yellowish discharge has stopped.

Wudu’. This simple ablution is necessary before prayer in the following cases: 1- after urinating or defecating; 2- if one breaks wind; 3- if one falls asleep lying down; 4- if one loses consciousness; 5- if one directly touches the genitals; 6- if one becomes excited, leading to a subsequent discharge.

Tayammum (Dry Ablution) This is performed by putting or striking lightly the hands over clean earth and then pass the palm of each on the back of the other, blow off the dust then pass them on the face. It is performed instead of wudu and ghusl (in case of ritual impurity, etc.).

Allah says in the Qur’an, surah Al-Ma’idah: 6,

"… But if you are ill or on a journey or one of you comes from answering the call of nature, or you have been in contact with women (i.e., sexual intercourse) and you find no water, then perform tayammum with clean earth and rub therewith your faces and hands. Allah does not want to place you in difficulty, but He wintends to purify you, and to complete His Favor on you that you may be thankful.”

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4. **FOOD HANDLING QUALITY ACCORDING TO ISLAM**

According to halal standard MS 1500:2009 Halal Food - Production, Preparation, Handling and Storage - General Guidelines (Second Revision),

All processed food is halal if it meets the following requirements:

**4.1. Product processing, handling and distribution**

1. The product and its ingredients do not contain any components or products of animals that are non-halal by Shariah law or products of animals that are not slaughtered according to Shariah law;
2. The product does not contain anything in any quantity that is decreed as najs by Shariah law;
3. The product and its ingredients are safe and not harmful;
4. The product is prepared, processed or manufactured using equipment and facilities that are free from contamination with najs; and
5. During its preparation, processing, packaging, storage or transportation, it is be physically separated from any other food that does not meet the requirements specified earlier or any other things that are decreed as najs by Shariah law.

**4.2. Devices, utensils, machines and processing aids**

Devices, utensils, machines and processing aids used for processing halal food should not be made of or contain any materials that are decreed as najs by Shariah law and shall only be used for halal food.

**4.3. Product storage, display and servings**

All halal food that are stored, displayed, sold or served shall be categorised and labelled halal and segregated at every stage to prevent them from being mixed or contaminated with things that are non-halal.

**4.4. Hygiene, sanitation and food safety**

Hygiene, sanitation and food safety are prerequisites in the preparation of halal food. It includes various aspects of personal hygiene, clothing, equipment and the working premises for processing or manufacturing of the food.

5. **METHODS OF HANDLING FOOD IN ISLAM**

Islam is a religion that emphasizes their believers about cleanliness. Other than self-hygiene, Islam is also very strict about the purity of foods especially in food handling. Foods are pure it is prepared in well-safe methods and surroundings. According to the Al-Quran surah Al-Mu'minun, Allah the Almighty has said:

“O messengers, eat from the good foods and work righteousness. Indeed, I, of what you do, am knowing”.

As a Muslim we must consume a clean and pure food because Allah the Almighty said so. To achieve that, there are some methods that must be fulfilled according to the World Health Organization (WHO) during the food handling.

Firstly, food preparation must be made in a clean condition. A food handler must ensure that his or her hands are washed properly before handling the food and often during the food preparation to prevent the food from bacterial contamination. The food handler must wash his
or her hands with the anti-bacterial liquid soup especially after going to the toilet. To ensure the hand is washed properly, pay more attention to the finger tips, fingernails, thumbs, and wrist and in between fingers.

Many food handlers do not really concern to wash their hands properly after going to the toilet and this may cause the food to be contaminated by bacteria. When the contaminated food is consumed, consumer may have a risk to get food poisoning. Other than that, food handlers must ensure that all surfaces of the equipment and utensils used had been washed and sanitized. This step must be taken to prevent microorganisms from growing on the surfaces utensils. The utensils must be washed soon after they have been used. If the utensils were left too long in the sink, the microorganisms will grow fast because it grows fast in damp place.

Secondly, raw and cooked food must be separated. To avoid contact between raw prepared food and cooked food, foods must be stored in different containers. Food handlers must use different equipment utensils or washed them after been used. Raw foods, especially meat, poultry and seafood contain dangerous microorganisms. If these raw foods make a contact with cooked food, then the cooked foods will be contaminated with dangerous microorganisms that can cause diseases. To make the handling of food easier, tagging can be used to categorize between vegetables and raw meat such as fish, beef meat and poultry meat.

Lastly, the food must be prepared with safe water and raw materials. Safe water and raw materials must be used for the food preparation. “Safe” here means that the water and food is free from dangerous microorganisms and toxic chemicals at levels that could cause harm to a person’s human health. Vegetables and fruits must be washed properly especially if it’s eaten raw. By care in selection of raw materials, simple measures taken, such as washing, and peeling may reduce risk of illnesses and diseases to human health. Packaging materials must not be made of substances which are considered as najis by Islamic laws and harmful to one’s health. Halal logistics have been attracting considerable attention both by practitioners and academics. (Suhaiza et al., 2017).

5.1. Effects and Ignorance in Food Handling in Islam

One of the important aspects of Halal is the preparation and processing of meat for Muslims. The demand for processed meat and meat products are increasing. In 2018, the processed meat market is expected to be valued at nearly $800 billion USD ("Processed Meat & Meat Processing Equipment Market Report," 2013). From Halal market point of view, the estimation was supported by 2009-2014 market analysis that shows significant rise of fresh meat volume growth (increase by 30%) throughout the world except for Western Europe (decrease by 1%).

Foods and goods processes for the Muslim market in Malaysia need to understand and comply with specific requirements of the Muslim consumers before their products can be labelled as HALAL food in Malaysia. The use of the word “HALAL” (Permissible), ‘CERTIFIED HALAL’, ‘FOODS FOR MUSLIM’ and other similar labelling is controlled under the ‘Trade Description Act (Usage of HALAL/Permissible’ statement) 1975. (Wahab, 2004) There will be many effects if we ignore the food handling. One of them is degrading our own dignity, community and religion. Cleanliness is the most important thing in serving and preparing food.

If cleanliness issues are ignored, the food will not taste good and it can also harm consumers.

Rasulullah SAW said: "No one believer amongst you until he loves his brother’s (fellow Muslim) as he loves his own self".
This means that, we must ensure our actions do not give adverse effects to others. If the food server is a Muslim, Non-Muslims will have a bad perception to Muslims which may indirectly worse Muslim’s economy.

Raw materials and equipment that are unclean contain many pathogens. For example, putting raw material or cooking equipment on the floor. This can cause bacteria at floor to contaminate the raw food and food will be the medium for bacteria to survive. Consumers will easily get disease if take this unclean food rapidly. Bacteria are a small particle that we cannot see using our naked eyes. Because of that, we must ensure its cleanliness start from raw material. If this important issue is ignored, sick people will increase.

Besides cleanliness, discipline is also one of the most important aspects in food handling. Every single part in handling food must be given a good attention. This is to ensure that consumers get good and great condition of food to be their blood and flesh.

Before the advent of Islam, the pagan Arabs permitted many kinds of impure foods, such as flesh of dead animals and flowing blood. Then Allah SWT addressed to all human by saying in surah al-Baqarah, verse 172-173.

“O You who believe! Eat of the good things that we have provided for you, and be thankful to Allah if it is He alone whom you worship. Indeed, what He has forbidden to you is the flesh of dead animals and blood and the flesh of swine, and that which has been sacrificed to anyone other than Allah. But if one is compelled to anyone by necessity, neither craving (it) nor transgressing, there is no sin on him; indeed, Allah is Forgiving, Merciful”

In the above verse, Allah SWT explains that there is no haram food except the four kinds mentioned. This means that generally, all foods are halal except those that are specifically mentioned as haram (unlawful or prohibited). Further details about four kinds of haram food are mentioned in another verse in surah al-Maidah: 3, Allah said:

“Forbidden unto you (for food) are: carrion and blood, and swine flesh, and that which hath been dedicated unto any other than Allah, and the strangled, and the dead through beating, and the dead through falling from a height, and that hath been killed by the gorging of horns, and the devoured of wild beast saving that which ye make lawful and that which hath been immolated to idols, and that ye swear by the divining arrows. Forbidden to you is anything that dies by itself, and blood and pork, as well as whatever has been consecrated to something besides Allah, and whatever has been strangled, beaten to death, trapped in a pit, gored, and what some beast of prey has begun to eat, unless you give it the final flow; and what has been slaughtered before some idol or what you divide up in a raffle; (all) that is immoral”

Based on the above Quranic verse, there are four categories of animals that are banned; 1) animals which are killed by strangulation, 2) by a blow, 3) fall, 4) being gored or which are partly eaten by wild animals. All these belong to the category of dead animals. Animals sacrificed to idols are also haram since it is dedicated to someone other than Allah. (Samori et al., 2014)

6. CONCLUSION
This paper briefly summarizes food safety, sanitation and personal hygiene in food handling from Islamic perspective. Food safety and halal are very important in Muslim countries. This is because halal demands safe, hygiene and halalan tayyiba as well as pure and benefited. The most important aspect of halal is the preparation, process and handling of the food. Islam places great emphasis on cleanliness, both physical and spiritual terms. The attention to hygiene is the aspect which is an unknown concern in other religions or philosophies before
Islam. While people generally consider cleanliness a desirable attribute, Islam insists on it, making it an indispensable fundamental of faith.

REFERENCES


