

*Original Research Article*

## Relationship Between Awareness, Knowledge, and Attitude of Behavioural Intention Towards Halal Jobs among Malaysian Muslim University Students

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**Abstract:** In the emergence of the global halal market, developing halal human capital with provisions of knowledge and skills is indispensable for professional efficiency in management and implementation, especially for Malaysia as the world's leader in the halal industry. Therefore, it is important to determine the awareness among Muslim university students on job opportunities and their intentions to choose career paths in the halal industry. The objectives of this study were to determine the level of Muslim university students' awareness, knowledge and attitude towards halal jobs as well as to determine the relationship between awareness, knowledge and attitude of behavioural intention towards halal jobs. A structured questionnaire was used as a research instrument to collect responses from 1,454 final year Muslim university students in public and private universities located in Klang Valley, Malaysia. Data were analysed using descriptive analysis and Pearson correlation methods. Results of the study revealed that the Muslim university students have a high level of awareness, an adequate level of knowledge and an adequate level of attitude towards halal jobs. Besides, there was a moderate relationship observed between awareness and attitudes among Muslim university students. The present study concluded that positive awareness, knowledge, and attitude towards halal jobs influenced significantly on the respondents' behavioural intention towards their halal job preference. This study contributes to the growth and development of halal industries and halal jobs for the Muslims community to explore and reduce unemployment among Muslims with satisfactory human resources management practiced by the employers.

**Keywords:** awareness; knowledge; attitude; Muslim university students; halal jobs

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## 1. Introduction

Halal and haram are the rules and spines in Muslims' daily lives in accordance with Islamic Shariah. The term halal covers a broad scope from food and beverage consumptions, human relations, business, trade, finance, to every aspect of behaviours (Samori *et al.*, 2014). According to Al-Qaradhawi (2014), *Al-Halal* (the lawful), which is permitted, with respect to which no restriction exists, and the doing of which the lawgiver, Allah, has allowed. Hence, halal means whatever is allowed and wholesome for humanity, while haram means whatever is forbidden, and harmful (Maqsood, 1998). The word halal means what is acceptable by Islam and what is not acceptable by Islam (Hashim & Mat Hashim, 2013). In contrast, '*haram*' or '*haraam*', in Arabic words strictly means illegal, prohibited, forbidden or illicit, interdicted, illegal, or banned and they are regarded as *najis* (unclean) from the perspective of Islamic law (Shariah). Thus, halal and haram are entailing with food and drink, behaviours and manners, styles and fashions, careers, or jobs to cover the daily lifestyle. Shariah is an integral part of Islam and the practical guidance for Muslims' lifestyle also connotes 'Islamic Laws'. Shariah from utterance '*Syara*', which is explained and demonstrated by Islamic pledge, means to accept something legitimate. Shariah is also the law or the rules governing the relationship between all mankind. Every aspect of Muslims' life is regulated by Islamic Law (Shariah). The Shariah Law is based on the al-Quran (i.e. the Holy Book of Islam), Hadith and Sunnah, (i.e. habits and approvals of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH)), *Ijma'* (i.e. consensus of *Ulama's*), and *Qiyas* (i.e. deduction or analogy) according to various Islamic School of Thoughts (*Mazhab*) or *fatwa* approved by the relevant Islamic Authorities (Che Man & Abdul Latif, 2002; Alanazi *et al.*, 2018).

Malaysia has continued to flourish in the halal industry (MITI, 2016). In 2017, Malaysia recorded RM 43.3 billion in halal exports which made up RM 935.4 billion (4.6%) of the nation's total exports. Among the top importers of halal products from Malaysia were China (RM4.9 billion), Singapore (RM 4.9 billion), Japan (RM 2.8 billion), the United States of America (USA) (RM 2.7 billion), and Indonesia (RM 2.2 billion) (MIHAS, 2019). Malaysia External Trade Development Corporation (MATRADE) was expected a 5% increase in 2019 for the export value of halal products and services in fulfilling the significant global demand (MIHAS, 2019). According to the Department of Standards Malaysia (2017), there are a total of 568,481 small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in Malaysia, in which 347 SMEs are certified with Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points (HACCP), 133 accredited with ISO22000, while 7,217 are certified with ISO9001 (Chik *et al.*, 2018). Based on the numbers, 5,500 of the SMEs are halal-certified companies (SME Corporation Malaysia, 2016; Arsat, 2016; Chik *et al.*, 2018). Halal Industry Master Plan (HIMP) (2008-2020) highlighted three main key performance indicators (KPIs) of halal: (1) to achieve halal export revenue amounting to RM 19 billion; (2) to create additional employment in the halal industry to 300,000 employments in 2020; (3) to achieve positive annual growth rate compared to 2010 (Halal Statistics, 2015). Halal RM 10.2 billion worth of incomes were recorded in 2015 compared to RM4.8 billion in 2010 with an average annual growth of 16.3%.

The halal industry sector is one of the major contributors to Malaysia's future economic growth. It is considered as one of the most important trading halal products or services in all of the economies and sectors that have generated many job opportunities. However, the halal industry depends on the quality and skills of human capital in ensuring the halal industry a success (MOHR, 2009). According to the Halal Industry Development Corporation (HDC), the job domains in the halal industry cover five sub-sectors following Malaysia Standard Industrial Classification (MSIC), which are comprised of Halal Logistics, Livestock Production, Food Manufacturing, Meat Processing, and Industry Management Services (HDC, 2018). There are 12 job areas in the halal industry such as halal compliance, purchasing, production, quality assurance, research and development, slaughtering operation, warehouse, transportation, livestock farming, livestock breeding, and livestock product (HDC, 2018). There are also 52 job titles in the halal industry with 18 job titles that have been identified as critical under five sub-sectors. All job titles are registered under the Malaysia Standard Classification of Occupations (MASCO). In 2017, HDC established 'Halal Talent Portal' as a platform that provides information on halal talents and employment availability, both domestically and globally. The platform also serves as a job portal with vast options and opportunities. It is also a channel that ensures industry flow with the network connection of qualified advisors and experts such as halal auditor, analyst, tourist guide, executive, trainer, Syariah advisor, marketing, chef, and health and personal care (HDC, 2017). In 2018, the 'Halal Talent Portal' registered a total of 1,997 talents and 55 companies as employers with 171 facilitations (HDC, 2018).

Halal human capital development requires intensive collaborative inputs, thoughts, and expertise from halal industry such as halal-certified companies, logistics, and supply chain organizations, authorities, and institutions of learning and training (Shariff *et al.*, 2016). Halal human capital development consists of four main elements, namely knowledge, skills, abilities, and Shariah (Shariff *et al.*, 2016). Halal human capital with provisions of knowledge and skills for professional efficiency in management and implementation is crucial in Malaysia (Muhammad *et al.*, 2009; Shariff *et al.*, 2016). It is also an important asset that determines the success of operational performance particularly in protecting the integrity of halal products (Gurcharan & Mohamad, 2016). The costs of training local talents are the main issue resulting in a shortage of talents (HDC, 2016). Lack of halal-based orientation workers is identified as one of the challenges faced in the halal industry (MOHR, 2009).

The need for halal talented workers is highlighted as a priority, parallel with the improvement of the industry playmakers in the halal industry. According to Alina *et al.* (2013), the major challenges faced by the halal industry in Malaysia are the shortage of skilled workers and semi-skilled workers that understand the Shariah requirements and implementing Shariah knowledge into actual industrial practice to maintain the halal integrity. Hence, having these skilled and knowledgeable workers are critical to ensure the sustainable growth of the halal industry. Furthermore, the increasing demands of halal human capital such as halal executives, auditors, and committee members are driving the increasing number of halal training services (Shariff *et al.*, 2016). Higher education institutions must

bear the responsibility to provide an adequate workforce for the halal industry. Therefore, halal awareness, knowledge, and skills should be deliberately emphasized academically in higher learning institutions in universities and colleges to ensure the efficiency of halal skilled workers are created to produce halal products and services (Ahmad *et al.*, 2011).

Since the introduction of Malaysian Halal Certification, the need for halal professionals has increased significantly which leads to the demand for competent halal executives and committee members (Jais, 2014; Che Hashim & Mohd Shariff, 2016). In 2015, the Department of Islamic Development Malaysia (JAKIM) has reiterated the requirement for at least two Muslim skilled workers with permanent posts, full-time workers, and Malaysian citizens in the food handling or processing section. The appointment of halal executives is also required for halal certification. It is likely that lack of awareness, knowledge, or encouragement and reassurance among companies on halal certification that limit the halal talent availability and career options to university students. Thus, the awareness, knowledge, participation, and exposure for university students are crucial in producing skilled workers in the halal industry.

Nevertheless, studies on halal talents in relevant industries are still lacking and previous studies have only emphasized on halal food (Awan *et al.*, 2015; Bashir *et al.*, 2018; Yunus *et al.*, 2018), cosmetics (Abd Rahman *et al.*, 2014; Majid *et al.*, 2015), and training and education (Jais, 2014; Rafida *et al.*, 2013; Shariff *et al.*, 2016; Ahmad *et al.*, 2011). Furthermore, there is a lack of emphasis on measuring awareness, knowledge, and attitude among Malaysian students towards halal jobs. Consequently, the major challenge for government and the halal industry playmakers in developing talents from Muslim university students is to harness the capabilities and knowledge that they naturally embodied for halal jobs.

The influence of initiatives towards halal jobs among Muslim university students is yet to be evaluated. Moreover, research on halal jobs is important in understanding the awareness, knowledge, and attitude of behavioural intention towards halal jobs, as it also reflects the effectiveness of government initiatives in this aspect. Analysis of feedback from future potential workers could also improve the initiatives from the Malaysian government in strengthening halal talent workers. This could provide further support for future planning in promoting halal talent workers in Malaysia. The determinants of Muslim university students' behavioural intention towards halal jobs could provide students with their knowledge, understanding, and benefits. Therefore, the objectives of this study were: (i) to determine the level of Muslim university students' awareness, knowledge, and attitude towards halal jobs; (ii) to determine the relationship between awareness, knowledge, and attitude of behavioural intention towards halal jobs.

## **2. Literature Review**

In accordance to the fundamentals of halal work or jobs, Islam has prohibited certain professions to all Muslims involving harmful and destructive acts, which are against the

beliefs, morals, honour, and well-being of the society and surroundings such as manufacturing intoxicants and drugs, prostitution, dancing or erotic arts, involving usury (*Riba*'), making statues and similar activities. In short, any work or business that yields no benefit or harmful is prohibited. On the contrary, any job or business that is fair, beneficial to others, and obeys the rights of Islamic justice and wisdom is permissible. Any forms of earning money that involves dishonesty, cheating, deceit or fraudulent, bribery, robbery or burglary, hoarding in a negative way, exploitation, artificial surgery due of dissatisfaction of God's creation, anything to do with alcohol, gambling or lotteries, sexual degradation or any immoral practices or any other means of making profit by exploiting others is forbidden to the Muslim (Maqsood, 1998). The aforementioned profession or job is strictly prohibited in Islam as it may affect and even harm the society in terms of faith, morale, self-esteem, honour, and courtesy (Shahid, 2017). Thus, all jobs and businesses which are permissible, halal, should not involve any prohibited acts (i.e. haram) in Islam. The great scholars and jurists have postulated the term obligations as "the obligations of sufficiency" (*fardu kifayah*), where Muslim community must engage in every essential science, industry, and profession to meet its needs (Shahid, 2017). Imam al-Ghazali justified *fardu kifayah* as all knowledge that is essential to the world, such as doctoral science, as it is necessary to maintain the health of the body. In addition, mathematics for daily businesses and the division of legacies and inheritance and what not also uses the practice of "the obligations of sufficiency".

Awareness is the ability to perceive, to feel, to be conscious, and to imply understanding and perception towards specific situations (Aziz & Chok, 2013). According to Merikle (1984), awareness equates with the ability to make a forced-choice decision above the chance level of performance. Awareness is subjective and simply equates awareness with self-reports indicating that an observer "consciously sees" a stimulus (Henley, 1984). Further, according to Nguyen and Watanabe (2019), awareness pertains to an observer's consciousness and ability to discriminate among several possible stimulus states. Besides, awareness can be described as a level of attentiveness or realization among Muslim entrepreneurs towards halal production (Ambali & Bakar, 2014). Awareness comprises education and skill requirements, types of job availabilities, regulations, and expectations of industry (Nasir & Lin, 2013). Every Muslim has a different level of awareness depending on their religious belief, halal exposure, logo, and health reason in terms of Muslim awareness towards halal consumptions (Ambali & Bakar, 2014). Aminrad *et al.* (2013) revealed an insignificant relationship between awareness and attitude among students. Furthermore, Salman and Siddiqui (2011) stated that religious people may not necessarily have a high level of awareness. Awareness factors among Malaysians have been acknowledged to be increasing, yet their level of awareness is still low compared to other countries such as Indonesia and Thailand (Yusoff & Adzharuddin, 2017). A study conducted by Rafida *et al.* (2013) revealed that there is a moderate and positive relationship between consumers' awareness of halal goods and certification. It implies the increment of level in awareness towards halal issues is correlating with the increase of their perceptions towards halal certification.

Awareness is significantly correlated with information-seeking behaviour among Muslims and information-seeking action is sparked by curiosity and awareness of the existence of the knowledge gaps. In addition, Muslim's awareness is a great power to educate the workers or halal human capital in producing halal market (Yusoff & Adzharuddin, 2017). However, level of awareness among Muslim workers towards the granting of halal certification is very low (Tawil *et al.*, 2015). Besides, there is also halal awareness initiated by certain bodies of authorities who provide training to increase the level of awareness on the principles and concepts of halal, educating the importance of proper sourcing of raw materials and production of halal food and consumer products and sharing the knowledge in halal industry. Training will ensure the realization in creating awareness and integrity of halal process (Che Hashim & Shariff, 2016).

Knowledge is referred to as an understanding of a subject which is obtained through experience, while halal knowledge is how individuals or Muslims should digest and practice Islamic teachings regarding halal and haram (Sadeeqa *et al.*, 2013). Knowledge is an important influence on halal purchase intention (Shaari & Arifin, 2010). Lack of knowledge, awareness, and understanding on halal concept affected the loss of appreciation on halal among Muslims and product manufacturers (Wahab, 2004). Awareness, knowledge, and attitude towards food labels, subjective norm, and perceived behavioural control are factors that influence intention to purchase (Latiff *et al.*, 2016). Said *et al.* (2014) revealed that there is a lack of initiative and disclosure of halal knowledge, information, and education from government agencies.

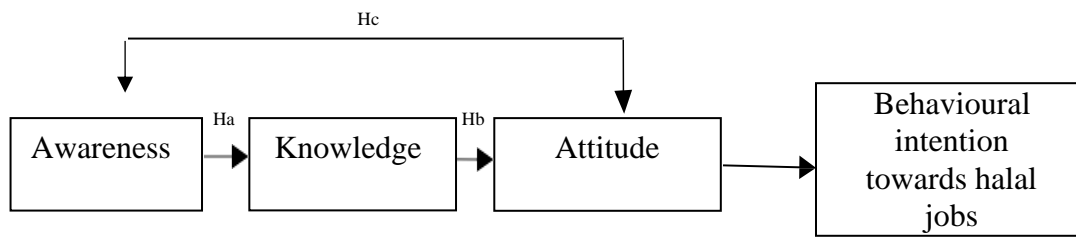
The awareness and knowledge among students on the halal concept are crucial in ensuring the continuity of halal education among university students (Elias *et al.*, 2016). Muslim students demonstrate a positive relationship between awareness, knowledge, and intention towards producing halal products and possess a high level of halal awareness and knowledge to motivate them to become a Muslim entrepreneur. Meanwhile, the best predictor of consumer purchase intention towards halal food is their knowledge on halal processes such as slaughtering, storage, and packaging (Yusoff *et al.*, 2015). Unfortunately, the familiarity concept of halal especially among Muslim students is inhibited by the extremely low level of awareness and knowledge towards halal certification and branding (Rajagopal *et al.*, 2011). Abd Rahman *et al.* (2014) indicated that the relationship between Muslims' knowledge and attitude is insignificant towards halal cosmetic products. Meanwhile, according to Neni *et al.* (2019), the relationship between awareness, knowledge, and attitude correlates with attitude, moderate, awareness, and knowledge. Furthermore, Aminrad *et al.* (2013) revealed there is a significant and weak relationship between knowledge and awareness and insignificant relationship between attitude and knowledge among students. High level of awareness and adequate knowledge plus favourable attitude from students may have been influenced by the families, teachers, media, private reading and school curriculums (Aminrad *et al.*, 2013).

Attitude towards behaviour is an individual belief whether the person decides to or not to perform a certain behaviour that contributes either positively or negatively to a certain activity. Attitude is related to belief in terms of halal food (Salman & Siddiqui, 2011). According to Ahmad and Omar (2016), religious belief, availability of halal label and exposure to halal concept demonstrate a significant positive effect on consumer attitude towards halal cosmetics. Attitude is found to be valid predictors of intent to purchase halal personal care products in Pakistan (Ansari & Mohammed, 2015). The authors also found that there is a significant and positive relationship between attitude and behavioural intention of purchasing halal cosmetics products. Abd Rahman *et al.* (2014) revealed there is a significant positive relationship between attitude and religiosity and between attitude and intention towards halal cosmetics products. This is supported by Zakaria (2017), who demonstrated that religiosity is the most influential factor towards intention to purchase halal products. On the contrary, Kusumawardhini *et al.* (2016) stated that the effect of religiosity on intention towards Islamic brand is not significant. In another study by Elseidi (2018) revealed that attitude was used as a variable to predict the behaviour of Muslim consumers where high and low Islamic religiosity influenced the intention to purchase halal food products. Ishak *et al.* (2017) indeed showed that attitude is significant and the direct effect of intention towards halal food outlet. However, Marmaya *et al.* (2019) revealed that the attitude of Gen-Y consumers was not significant on the intention to purchase halal food. Earlier, Abd Aziz *et al.* (2017) revealed the factors that influence the public university graduates' career intention in the franchise industry are moderately high and attitude is significantly correlated with intention towards career intention.

Behavioural intention is referred to an individual's probability that he or she will perform the behaviour (Ajzen, 1991). According to Latiff *et al.* (2016), purchasing behavioural intention was influenced by awareness, knowledge, attitude, as well as food labels. Meanwhile, Yunus *et al.* (2014) described that behavioural intention was influenced by halal awareness towards purchasing halal products. Similarly, Aziz and Chok (2013) stated that purchase intention was influenced by awareness towards halal products. It is also revealed that attitude is positively related to behavioural intention to choose halal products (Lada *et al.*, 2009). Furthermore, the behavioral intention to become halal entrepreneurs was influenced by awareness, knowledge, attitude, subjective norm, perceived behavioural control, and perceived relational support (Elias *et al.*, 2016; Ambad *et al.*, 2016; Mohammed *et al.*, 2017).

### 3. Methodology

The conceptual framework (Figure 1) was established based on several studies (Ajzen, 2002; Aminrad *et al.*, 2013; Latiff *et al.*, 2016; Neni *et al.*, 2019) to determine the relationship between awareness, knowledge, and attitude of Muslim university student's behavioural intention towards halal jobs.



**Figure 1.** Conceptual framework. Adapted from Ajzen (2002); Aminrad *et al.* (2013); Latiff *et al.* (2016); Neni *et al.* (2019).

Several null and alternative hypotheses were established and tested in this study as the following:

H<sub>0</sub>: There is no relationship between Muslim university students' awareness and knowledge towards halal jobs.

H<sub>a</sub>: There is a relationship between Muslim university students' awareness and knowledge towards halal jobs.

H<sub>0</sub>: There is no relationship between Muslim university students' knowledge and attitude towards halal jobs.

H<sub>b</sub>: There is a relationship between Muslim university students' knowledge and attitude towards halal jobs.

H<sub>0</sub>: There is no relationship between Muslim university students' awareness and attitude awareness towards halal jobs.

H<sub>c</sub>: There is a relationship between Muslim university students' awareness and attitude towards halal jobs.

A quantitative approach was used in this study to collect data from 1,454 Muslim university students using a self-administered questionnaire. A structured questionnaire was designed to cater the objectives of this study. Purposive sampling was conducted towards a selective, or subjective group of informants (Saabar & Ibrahim, 2014) and used as the sampling method from selected public and private universities located in Klang Valley, Malaysia. The samples were selected based on the researcher's reliance on his/her judgement in choosing the populations that are suitable to provide the right information for the research (Kumar, 2011). The criteria of the respondents in this study were: 1) Muslims 2) university students, and 3) final year bachelor's degree students. Muslim university students were chosen because of the element of religious belief and also to focus on Shariah (Islamic law). The final year bachelor degree students were targeted because they will lead to specific professions immediately upon graduation (Amani *et al.*, 2013).

The questionnaire was constructed in Malay language and consisted of four sections. A total of 10 statements using 3-Point Likert scales (1 = No, 2 = Not Sure, 3 = Yes) related to respondents' awareness towards halal jobs were established (Yusof *et al.*, 2014; Rafida *et al.*, 2013). The use of 3-Point Likert scales for this section is to measure the degree level of respondents' awareness. A score of 1 was given to every "yes" answer whereas score of 0 was



given to “no” and “not sure” answers. The “yes” answer means the respondents are aware towards halal jobs whereas “no” and “not sure” answers mean the respondents are not aware towards halal jobs. This score is used to recode the data for score analysis. Respondents’ awareness was calculated based on a total score of awareness for each question and categorised as high and low levels. The overall score for awareness was from 0 to 10 and the cut-off point was determined at 50% of total range score (Darlington *et al.*, 2019). Respondents with high level of awareness were scored from 6 to 10, while those with low level of awareness were scored 0 to 5. Scales of awareness level were adapted from Yusoff *et al.* (2017).

To determine respondents’ knowledge towards halal jobs, 12 statements using 3-Point Likert scales (1 = No, 2 = Not Sure, 3 = Yes) were established (Akhtari-Zavare *et al.*, 2016; Liu *et al.*, 2016; Sadeeqa *et al.*, 2013). The use of 3-Point Likert scales for this section is to measure the degree level of respondents’ knowledge. A score of 1 was given to every “yes” answer whereas score 0 was given to “no” and “not sure” answers. The “yes” answer means the respondents have knowledge towards halal jobs whereas “no” and “not sure” answers mean the respondents have no knowledge towards halal jobs. The score was used to recode the data for score analysis. Respondents’ knowledge was calculated based on a total score of knowledge for each question and categorised as adequate and inadequate levels (Al-lela *et al.*, 2014; Mohd Azaman *et al.*, 2016; Habte *et al.*, 2018; Al-Qattan *et al.*, 2019). The overall score for knowledge ranged 0 to 12 and the cut-off point was labelled at 50% range of total score (Darlington *et al.*, 2019; Nwankwo *et al.*, 2018; Ismail *et al.*, 2018). Respondents with adequate knowledge were assigned to a score of 7 to 12, while those with inadequate knowledge were assigned to a score of 0 to 6. Scales of knowledge level were adapted from Al-lela *et al.* (2014); Mohd Azaman *et al.* (2016); Habte *et al.*, (2018); Al- Qattan *et al.* (2019).

There were 8 statements using 5-Point Likert scales (1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree) related to respondents’ attitude towards halal jobs were established (Abdullahi *et al.*, 2016). The attitude was calculated based on a mean score for each question and categorised as favourable and unfavourable levels (Mohd Azaman *et al.*, 2016; Alnujaim *et al.*, 2017; Habte *et al.*, 2018). An overall score for attitude ranged between 17 to 85 and the cut of point was determined at 50% of range total score. Respondents who have a favourable level of attitude were scored 52 to 85, while those who have an unfavourable level of attitude were scored 17 to 51. Scales of attitude level were adapted from Ismail *et al.* (2018); Habte *et al.* (2018); Al-Qattan *et al.* (2019). Descriptive analysis was used to analyse the socio-demographic profiles of the university students and their behavioural intention towards halal jobs. The scores of awareness, knowledge, and attitude among Muslim university students were also calculated. Pearson correlation analysis was used to identify the relationship between awareness, knowledge, and attitude towards halal jobs.

## 4. Results and Discussions

### *Socio-Demographic Profiles*

Table 1 shows the socio-demographic profiles of the respondents. The total number of 1,454 respondents were comprised of 69.7% (1,014 respondents) female and 30.3% (440 respondents) male. The respondents with the age range of 20 to 24 years were the majority of respondents who participated in the study, accounted for 94.4% (1,372 respondents), and 5.2% (76 respondents) aged 25 to 29. There were only 0.2% (4 respondents) aged 30 to 34, while 0.1% (2 respondents) with the age of above 35. In regard to ethnicity groups in this study, the respondents are comprised of 95.8% Malays (1,393 respondents), 1.4% Chinese (21 respondents), 0.6% Indians (8 respondents) and 2.2 % other races (32 respondents).

Majority of the respondents (99.4%, 1,445 respondents) were single and only 0.6% (9 respondents) were married. The majority of respondents (56.5%, 821 respondents) possessed working experience, whereas 43.5% (633 respondents) did not. A great number of students participated in the study (83.6%, 1,215 respondents) were funded by sponsorships such as Perbadanan Tabung Pendidikan Tinggi Nasional (PTPTN) Education Financing Scheme, Majlis Amanah Rakyat (MARA) Scholarship, Yayasan Selangor Scholarship, etc. and only 16.4% (239 respondents) were self-funded.

**Table 1.** Socio-demographic profiles of respondents.

<b>Characteristics</b>	<b>Frequency (<i>n</i>)</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
<i>Gender</i>		
Female	1,014	69.7
Male	440	30.3
<i>Age (years)</i>		
20–24	1,372	94.4
25–29	76	5.2
30–34	4	0.2
Above 35	2	0.1
<i>Race</i>		
Malay	1,393	95.8
Chinese	21	1.4
Indian	8	0.6
Others	32	2.2
<i>Marital Status</i>		
Single	1,445	99.4
Married	9	0.6
<i>Financial Assistance</i>		
Self-Funded	239	16.4
Sponsorship	1,215	83.6
<i>Working Experience</i>		
Yes	821	56.5
No	633	43.5

Characteristics	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
<i>University</i>		
Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM)	280	19.3
University Malaya (UM)	159	10.9
Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM)	119	8.2
International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM)	117	8
Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM)	166	11.4
Universiti Pertahanan Nasional Malaysia (UPNM)	93	6.4
Universiti Kuala Lumpur (UniKL)	168	11.6
Universiti Tenaga Nasional (UNITEN)	114	7.8
Management and Science University (MSU)	125	8.6
Universiti Selangor (UNISEL)	113	7.8
<i>Program</i>		
Islamic Studies	146	10.0
Education	76	5.2
Social Science, Business and Law	501	34.4
Science, Mathematic & Computer	439	30.2
Engineering, Manufacturing & Construction	161	11.1
Agriculture & Veterinary	131	9.0

$n = 1,454$

The Higher Education Institute (HEI) involved in this study consisted of 6 public and 4 private universities in Klang Valley, Malaysia. Table 1 shows that students from Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM) as the majority of the total respondents, accounted for 19.3% (280 respondents), whereas Universiti Pertahanan Negara Malaysia (UPNM) comprised as the minority, accounted for 6.4% (93 respondents). Participants from Universiti Malaya (UM) were accounted for 10.9% (159 respondents), Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM) 8.2% (119 respondents), International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM) 8% (117 respondents), Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM) 11.4% (166 respondents), Universiti Kuala Lumpur (UniKL) 11.6% (168 respondents), Universiti Tenaga Nasional (UNITEN) 7.8% (114 respondents), Management and Science University (MSU) 8.6% (125 respondents) and Universiti Selangor (UNISEL) accounted by 7.8% (113 respondents). The results also showed that the participants educated in the field of social science, business, and law recorded the highest number of respondents with 34.4% (501 respondents), followed by science, mathematics, and computer field with 30.2% (439 respondents), engineering, manufacturing, and construction field 11.1% (161 respondents), Islamic studies 10.0% (146 respondents), agriculture and veterinary 9.0% (131 respondents), while the least number of respondents (5.2%, 76 respondents) were educated in the education field.

### ***Awareness Level***

The level of awareness was calculated based on a total score for each respondent. From the awareness statements, 10 were related to respondents' awareness towards halal jobs. The items were evaluated using 3-point Likert scales ranging from 1 to 3 (1 = No, 2 = Not

Sure, 3 = Yes) (Yusof *et al.*, 2014; Rafida *et al.*, 2013). A score of 1 was given to every “true” answer while score 0 was given to “false” and “not sure” answers. The overall score for awareness ranged from 0 to 10 and the cut-off point was determined at 50% range from the total score (Darlington *et al.*, 2019; Ismail *et al.*, 2018). The awareness level was categorized into two levels namely high awareness and low awareness. The score ranges between 6 to 10 was assigned to respondents with high level of awareness, whereas the score between 0 to 5 was assigned to those who have a low level of awareness. The scales of awareness level were adapted from Yusoff *et al.* (2017). Table 2 summarizes the awareness level towards halal jobs from the respondents. The results showed that 88.2% ( $n = 1,284$ ) of the respondents have high awareness, whereas 11.6% ( $n = 170$ ) have low awareness.

**Table 2.** Awareness Level.

Awareness Level	Score	Frequency ( <i>n</i> )	Percentage (%)
High	6-10	1,284	88.2
Low	0-5	170	11.6
<b>Total</b>		<b>1,454</b>	<b>100</b>

$n = 1,454$

### Knowledge Level

Respondents’ knowledge level was calculated based on a total score for each respondent and labelled as adequate and inadequate (Al-lela *et al.*, 2014; Mohd Azaman *et al.*, 2016). From the knowledge statements, 12 were related to respondents’ knowledge towards halal jobs. The items were evaluated using Likert scales ranging from 1 to 3 (1 = No, 2 = Not Sure, 3 = Yes) (Akhtari-Zavare *et al.*, 2016; Liu *et al.*, 2016; Sadeeqa *et al.*, 2013). A score of 1 was given to every “true” answer, while score 0 was given to “false” and “not sure” answers. The overall score for knowledge ranged from 0 to 12 and the cut-off point was determined at 50% range of total score (Darlington *et al.*, 2019; Nwankwo *et al.*, 2018; Ismail *et al.*, 2018). Respondents who were labelled as adequate scored 7 to 12, while those who were inadequate scored 0 to 6. Scales of awareness level were adapted from Al-lela *et al.* (2014); Habte *et al.* (2018); Al-Qattan *et al.* (2019). Table 3 summarizes the knowledge level towards halal jobs from the respondents. The results showed that 91.7% (1,333) of the students have adequate knowledge, as opposed to 8.4% (121) with inadequate knowledge. The finding was in line with Nuratifah *et al.* (2019) on the adequate level of knowledge towards halal jobs.

**Table 3.** Knowledge Level.

Knowledge Level	Score	Frequency ( <i>n</i> )	Percentage (%)
Adequate Knowledge	7-12	1,333	91.7
Inadequate Knowledge	0-6	121	8.4
<b>Total</b>		<b>1,454</b>	<b>100</b>

$n = 1,454$

**Attitude Level**

Respondents’ attitude level was calculated based on a mean score of attitudes for each question and categorised as favourable and unfavourable attitude. From the attitude statements, eight were related to respondents’ attitude towards halal jobs. The items were evaluated using Likert scales ranging from 1 to 5 (1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree) (Abdullahi *et al.*, 2016). The overall score for attitude ranged from 17 to 85 and the cut-off point was determined at the range of 50% from the total score (Darlington *et al.*, 2019; Nwankwo *et al.*, 2018). Respondents who have favourable attitude scored 52 to 85, while those who have unfavourable attitude scored 17 to 51. Table 4 summarizes the attitude level towards halal jobs from respondents. The result shows that 96.4% ( $n = 1,398$ ) of the respondents possessed favourable attitude, as opposed to 3.9% ( $n = 56$ ), who possessed unfavourable attitude.

**Table 4.** Attitude Level.

Attitude Level	Score	Frequency ( $n$ )	Percentage (%)
Favourable Attitude	52 - 85	1,398	96.4
Unfavourable Attitude	17 - 51	56	3.9

$n = 1,454$

**Relationship between Awareness, Knowledge, and Attitude towards Behavioural Intention of Halal Jobs**

Pearson correlation analysis was used to measure the strengths and directions of the linear relationship between two variables. In this study, Pearson Correlation analysis was used to examine the strength of relationships between awareness, knowledge, and attitude towards behavioural intention of halal jobs.

Table 5 summarizes the Pearson correlations analysis. Firstly, the result showed there was a positive relationship at 1% level of significance between awareness and knowledge. The  $H_0$  hypothesis was rejected, indicating there was a significant relationship between Muslim university students’ awareness and knowledge towards halal jobs. The strength of the relationship was moderate between awareness and knowledge with  $r = 0.411$  ( $p < 0.000$ ). Secondly, the result showed there was a positive relationship at 1% level of significance between knowledge and attitude. The  $H_0$  hypothesis was rejected, indicating a significant relationship between university students’ knowledge and attitude towards halal jobs. The strength of relationship was weak between knowledge and attitude with  $r = 0.303$  ( $p < 0.000$ ). Lastly, the highest score showed there was a positive relationship at 1% level of significance between attitude and awareness. The  $H_0$  hypothesis was rejected, indicating a significant relationship between university students’ attitude and awareness towards halal jobs. The strength of relationship was moderate between awareness and attitude with  $r = 0.416$  ( $p < 0.000$ ). The present findings are in accordance with Aminrad *et al.* (2013) where the relationship between knowledge and awareness is significant, but weak. While the relationship between awareness and attitude is significant and have high relationship among

students. Neni *et al.* (2019) revealed the significant but weak relationship between awareness and knowledge and attitude among students.

**Table 5.** Relationships between knowledge, awareness, and attitude of behavioural intention towards halal jobs.

		Awareness	Knowledge	Attitude	Decision
Awareness	Correlation Coefficient	1	0.411***	0.416***	Reject H <sub>0</sub>
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.000	0.000	
	<hr/>				
Knowledge	Correlation Coefficient	0.411***	1	0.303***	Reject H <sub>0</sub>
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000		0.000	
	<hr/>				
Attitude	Correlation Coefficient	0.416***	0.303***	1	Reject H <sub>0</sub>
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.000		
	<hr/>				

Note: n = 1,454

\*\*\* Correlation is significant at 1% level of significance (2-tailed)

\*\*Correlation is significant at 5% level of significance (2-tailed)

\* Correlation is significant at 10% level of significance (2-tailed)

### 5. Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research

This study had a few limitations that have been noted and need to be improved. Firstly, it is important to discuss the demographical background of the samples assessed, in which the gender of respondents were mostly female Muslim university students. This may result to gender biased finding. Hence, the sampling size and targeted group should be further stratified based on the number of total populations of male and female, so that the distribution of gender in all Universities listed will be well represented. Secondly, the study only focused on six public universities and four private universities due to the difference in their semesters' schedule, time constraint, and cost that lead to only four private universities in Klang Valley were chosen. The number of public and private universities to be chosen for this study should be based on fair percentages that will represent the whole Malaysia. Online survey technique may reduce the conflicts of timetable as an issue, as more Universities, both public and private universities can participate in the study. Thirdly, this study only focused on the final year bachelor students, which excluded those students who were undergoing internship training during this data collection. This can be prevented by reaching those who undergoes internship training through email or online survey after obtaining their contact through the respective faculties. Furthermore, the sampling should be conducted at all levels of programme offered from Diploma to Postgraduate level. Fourth limitation of this study is that it only assessed the students' behavioural intention to decide on their career choices. Intention can predict behaviour with a considerable degree of accuracy, this is often dependent on the behaviour being assessed (Fishbein & Ajzen, 2010). Thus, in this study, the actual behaviour is not measured. This can be measured with face to face interview of selected respondents. Finally, another constraint of this is study was to get the accurate number of Muslim university populations in Klang Valley. This can be done by obtaining the secondary data from the Ministry of Higher Education of Malaysia which has categorized the Universities

based on programmes offered. Hence, for the purpose of this study, we shall select those Universities that are Islamically oriented in terms of their courses offered and mode of delivery, teaching and training of students that promote halal concept and approach in all aspects. Comparisons can be further made between Islamically oriented Universities and conventional Universities to determine the impact of teaching and training mode (Islamic/Non-Islamic) practiced by the academic staff throughout the students' academic life. In future research, the actual behaviour should be measured through actual behavior or criteria to be met by fellow halal jobs' applicants, perhaps through the feedback given by fellow halal Industries' and Companies' Human Resources Department. The finding from this approach may resulted to the amendment of existing curriculum and module in the Malaysian Universities to inculcate the knowledge, skills and awareness necessary to become a successful halal job employee.

## **6. Conclusion**

In general, this study indicates Muslim university students' knowledge, awareness, and attitude towards halal jobs among Muslim university students in the Klang Valley, Malaysia. The result revealed that most of the respondents have high level of awareness, adequate knowledge, and favourable attitude towards halal jobs. The Pearson correlation has proven that knowledge, awareness, and attitude have positive and significant relationships. Thus, the correlation value indicates that the more awareness and knowledge among the students on halal jobs, the higher the behavioural intention towards the option for halal jobs. This study has provided a significant impact on awareness, knowledge, and attitude of behavioural intention towards halal jobs among Muslim university students. There is a lack of emphasis especially in academic research and society on the determinants of awareness, knowledge, and attitude of behavioural intention towards halal jobs among Muslim university students. Various initiatives such as halal training and 'Halal Talent Portal' establishment have been carried out to increase participation and awareness towards career in halal industry. Therefore, the higher education institutions (HEI) should create strong opportunities and incentives such as study visits/benchmark to halal-certified factories or companies for future halal talent workers that can simultaneously introduce or expose students to the specific requirements for halal industry occupation. Such initiatives must be acted upon to enhance the effectiveness of the plan implemented by institutions of higher education to produce halal talent workers. The exposure, awareness, and knowledge towards halal jobs and halal industry should be continued and intensified not only focusing on higher education levels but the introduction of halal education should commence early at the school levels.

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### Conflict of Interest

The author declares no potential conflict of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

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