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Halal food safety on campus: Regulatory contexts, institutional responses, and consumer trust

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ABSTRACT

This study examines how institutional and regulatory contexts shape responses to halal food safety incidents on university campuses. Using a qualitative comparative document analysis approach, the study compares incidents at Universiti Malaya (Malaysia) and Northwestern University (United States). Data were obtained from official statements, media reports, and policy documents and analyzed using institutional analysis and the International Risk Governance Council (IRGC) Risk Governance Framework. The findings reveal notable differences in governance approaches. The Universiti Malaya case involved the alleged misuse of a halal logo on non-halal food, prompting immediate enforcement actions, outlet closures, and regulatory intervention. In contrast, the Northwestern University case involved halal mislabeling and cross-contamination concerns that were addressed mainly through internal corrective measures, staff retraining, and stakeholder engagement. These differences demonstrate how a centralized halal governance system can support coordinated risk management and stronger regulatory oversight, while less formal regulatory environments may face greater challenges in maintaining compliance and consumer trust. The study highlights the importance of clear halal standards, staff training, stakeholder engagement, and transparent communication in strengthening halal risk governance. The findings contribute to the literature on halal governance and provide practical insights for universities seeking to enhance consumer protection and trust in diverse campus environments.

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1. Introduction

Malaysia's halal industry is projected to expand to US$113.2 billion (US$1=RM4.43) by 2030, with a gross domestic product (GDP) contribution of 8.1 per cent by 2025 through the Halal Industry Master Plan 2030. This expansion reflects the increasing importance of halal not only as a religious requirement, but also as an economic, regulatory, and consumer policy domain. The growing significance of halal has also attracted increasing scholarly attention. A bibliometric analysis of halal product literature identified halal products and halal material authentication as two dominant research streams, with halal certification, consumer behavior, and halal governance emerging as key themes in contemporary halal studies (Apriantoro et al., 2024). As the halal sector matures, attention has shifted from production and certification alone towards the sustainability of the halal ecosystem, particularly the role of institutions in developing competent halal human capital and maintaining public trust.

Within this context, higher education institutions occupy a strategic position. Universities are integral to the operationalization of halal compliance, not only through education and talent development but also by ensuring that their own consumption environments adhere to halal standards. Addressing the challenges and leveraging innovative solutions can enhance the effectiveness of halal compliance in

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university settings. Students represent future halal professionals, regulators, and consumers; therefore, institutional adherence to halal principles extends beyond symbolic commitment to a tangible governance responsibility. For universities involved in program mapping and registered halal-related training under JAKIM, halal compliance becomes integral to institutional credibility, student confidence, and alignment with national halal policy objectives.

Despite this strategic role, the management of halal food premises on university campuses remains challenging. Food operators often face difficulties in interpreting the scope of Malaysia's halal certification requirements, identifying critical compliance elements, and sustaining consistent implementation (Shuhaimi and Ab Karim, 2021). These challenges frequently complicate halal certification applications and expose weaknesses in campus-level halal governance structures. Such gaps indicate that halal compliance in higher education institutions is not merely a technical issue, but one that requires systematic academic scrutiny, particularly in relation to governance capacity, institutional oversight, and risk management.

From a consumer policy perspective, ensuring the integrity of halal food is especially critical in multicultural environments such as university campuses, where diverse populations rely on institutional food systems (Husseini de Araújo et al., 2022). In Malaysia, halal certification is a stringent regulatory process overseen by JAKIM, encompassing all stages of sourcing, handling, and distribution. The official halal logo functions as a central trust mechanism, signaling compliance with Islamic dietary laws and assuring consumers of product integrity (Hulwati et al., 2025). In campus settings in majority Muslim and non-Muslim communities, where daily food consumption is institutionalized, trust in halal certification and labelling becomes a cornerstone of inclusion, religious accommodation, and consumer protection (Ahmed Osman, 2023).

Recent incidents, however, demonstrate that this trust is vulnerable. In early January 2025, it was reported that the discovery of pre-packaged "ham and cheese" sandwiches sold in halal-certified convenience stores on a Malaysian university campus sparked significant public concern and prompted regulatory enforcement action. In November 2024, students at Northwestern University (NU) in the United States reported incidents in which non-halal food items, including pork products, were mislabeled as "halal" in campus dining facilities, raising concerns over food integrity and religious dietary compliance.

In Malaysia, where Islam is the official religion and about 60% of the population is Muslim, halal governance is backed by rigorous state oversight (Ebrahimi et al., 2023). By contrast, in many Western countries, halal certification is primarily driven by private or non-governmental bodies rather than national regulatory authorities (Akbar et al., 2023). In the United States, for instance, universities provide halal dining options as part of diversity and inclusion efforts rather than due to legal mandate (Al-Mahmood and Fraser, 2023). An incident at Northwestern University highlighted how gaps in training and oversight can lead to serious mistakes: students discovered bacon and pork sausages mistakenly labeled as "halal" in a campus dining hall.

These contrasting cases underscore the central question of this study: How do different institutional and regulatory contexts influence the management of halal product safety incidents on campus, and what lessons can be learned to improve risk governance and policy? The purpose of this paper is to analyze such incidents through a comparative institutional lens, informed by risk governance theory, to extract insights for strengthening consumer protection and trust in halal products. By comparing and examining a case in a strongly regulated setting in Malaysia versus one in a less regulated, pluralistic setting in the U.S., the analysis demonstrates how formal rules, organizational culture, and stakeholder pressures shape differing outcomes. It further highlights the regulatory implications arising from universities' dual roles as educational institutions and service providers accountable for student well-being.

Accordingly, this study seeks to answer two research questions:

RQ1: How do institutional and regulatory differences shape university responses to halal food safety incidents? and
RQ2: What lessons can universities operating in different governance contexts learn to strengthen halal risk governance and consumer trust?

There is a persistent lack of awareness and understanding of the halal concept among campus communities. Halal-certified food premises, or those officially recognized by JAKIM, remain limited within institutions of higher learning. In addition, weaknesses in effective monitoring infrastructure and insufficient institutional support for food operators pursuing halal certification continue to pose significant challenges.

2. Literature review

2.1. Halal certification, consumer protection and trust

Halal certification functions as a quality and compliance guarantee for Muslim consumers, corresponding to food safety certifications but with a religious dimension. In countries like Malaysia, halal labels are legally regulated and carry significant weight in consumer decision-making. JAKIM's halal logo, for example, is trusted nationally and internationally due to stringent accreditation and monitoring processes. The integrity of this system is paramount: when a halal label is misused or a certified establishment is found selling non-halal

items, it is seen not just as a regulatory infraction but as a breach of public trust. Studies have shown that consumer trust in halal labels depends on the credibility of the certifying body. Malaysian consumers exhibit high confidence in JAKIM's certification, whereas they are more sceptical of foreign or unofficial halal marks (Rezai et al., 2012).

On the flip side, in non-Muslim majority countries, halal assurance often relies on voluntary standards and the reputation of food providers (Calder, 2020). In the United States, for example, there may be multiple halal certifiers with varying standards, or none at all, with oversight is left to market forces or general food safety regulations (Al-Mahmood and Fraser, 2023). For Muslim minorities in such contexts, trust in halal food can be fragile. They must often depend on the goodwill and knowledge of institutional providers (like university dining services) or third-party halal certifiers if available. Mislabeling incidents, even if unintentional, can significantly erode confidence not only in the particular institution but in the broader sense of inclusion and respect for religious needs. As a student in the Northwestern case noted, these lapses made Muslim students feel that they "aren't being cared about" by the university's dining services. In essence, ensuring halal integrity is closely tied to consumer rights and protections for Muslim consumers. It safeguards their ability to consume products aligning with their values without fear of contamination or deceit.

2.2. Institutional frameworks for halal governance

Globally, approaches to halal governance vary widely. Malaysia represents a centralized institutional model, where a single authority (JAKIM) defines standards, certifies products and outlets, and enforces compliance with support from laws like the Trade Descriptions Act 2011, which makes it an offense to misrepresent halal status (Halim et al., 2024). This ecosystem integrates halal oversight into the fabric of consumer protection regulation, similar to health inspections or fraud prevention. When incidents occur, institutions in Malaysia coordinate with religious authorities and regulators (Muhammad et al., 2020). For instance, in the UM incident, the university's swift closure of the implicated stores was in line with regulatory expectations and likely done in consultation with halal authorities. UM publicly affirmed its commitment to ensuring products sold on campus are from suppliers who comply with laws, standards, and procedural rules, citing concerns that the sandwich product packs labelled 'ham and cheese sandwich' and the use of a halal logo on the product in the stores were doubtful. This reflects the university's alignment with Malaysia's national halal regulatory framework, particularly its emphasis on certified sourcing and compliance accountability.

In contrast, the decentralized or market-driven model prevalent in many Western countries places the accountability on producers and vendors or suppliers to meet halal demands as a market opportunity or as part of diversity initiatives. There is no federal halal law in the U.S.; some states have halal food laws, but enforcement is sporadic (Al-Mahmood and Fraser, 2023). According to Al-Mahmood and Fraser (2023), universities frequently adopt and implement internal protocols or self-claim halal for providing halal meals in the absence of formal certification, such as sourcing from halal-certified suppliers and training staff to maintain separation between halal and non-halal foods. These practices are often shaped by student advocacy or guided by the operational policies of third-party dining contractors. However, this decentralized model diffuses institutional accountability, whereby in this model is more diffuse to failures might be attributed to individual error or limited awareness rather than a systemic governance failure. The Daily Northwestern reported, for example, that accountability for the mislabeling rested primarily with the dining services vendor (Compass Group), which treated it as an operational issue, citing that signage might be "unintentionally moved by guests" and promising "increased monitoring" to prevent recurrences. The absence of an external audit or penalty in this case signifies how, without a formal halal governance structure, responses can remain internal and potentially less stringent. This reflects a governance gap where the lack of independent oversight undermines enforcement and accountability.

The case underscores the need for structured halal governance frameworks with clear audit and enforcement provisions. Here, a comparative snapshot of key differences between Malaysia and the United States is presented in Table 1 and shows how institutional and regulatory environments shape the handling of halal incidents.

Table 1: Key differences between Malaysia and U.S. campus halal incidents

Dimension	Malaysia (UM incident)	United States (NU incident)
Social context	Muslim-majority society (Islam official religion)	Muslim-minority, secular institutional context
Regulatory framework	Centralized halal certification (JAKIM); legal enforcement for misuse of halal logo	No specific halal regulations; voluntary compliance via internal policies and general food laws
Nature of incident	Non-halal product (pork "ham & cheese" sandwich) sold under a halal label in a campus store	Mislabeling of pork items (bacon, sausage) as "halal" in dining hall; cross-contamination of utensils
Institutional response	Immediate closure of affected outlets; investigation with religious authorities' involvement; public assurance of compliance	Removal of incorrect signage; internal review by dining services; promises of staff retraining and better signage; issue raised by student association (no external enforcement)
Impact on trust	Potential crisis of confidence swiftly managed by transparent action, preserving trust in the halal system and university's commitment	Erosion of trust among Muslim students; perception of negligence and lack of care by the university, leading to student advocacy for better oversight

2.3. Risk governance in food safety and halal assurance

Halal product safety can be examined through the theoretical lens of risk governance, which extends beyond conventional risk management by incorporating stakeholder engagement, contextual sensitivity, and socio-political dimensions of decision-making (Renn, 2008). The International Risk Governance Council (IRGC) framework (Fig. 1) articulates a process that moves through four sequential phases: (i) pre-assessment, (ii) appraisal, (iii) characterization and evaluation, and (iv) management, underpinned by cross-cutting principles such as stakeholder engagement, communication, and contextualization (irgc.org). In the context of halal incidents:

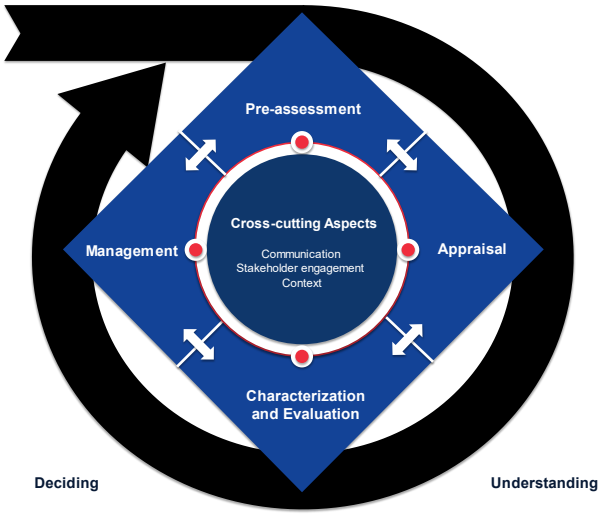


Fig. 1: IRGC risk governance framework

2.3.1. Risk identification (pre-assessment)

In halal assurance management, pre-assessment involves proactive identification of risks to halal integrity such as vulnerabilities in the (i) supply chain, (ii) labeling inconsistencies, or (iii) Halal cross-contamination. In highly regulated systems like Malaysia's, this can involve scheduled audits based on national halal certification standards (e.g., JAKIM). In less formal settings such as U.S. university campuses, pre-assessment often relies on vendor SOPs or student-led observations (halal awareness). The Northwestern University (NU) case exemplifies a pre-assessment failure as known as risk signals (e.g., cross-handling of pork and halal items) were only detected by consumers post-service were reflecting the absence of embedded preventive halal protocols.

2.3.2. Risk appraisal

This involves understanding the likelihood and impact of a halal breach. While halal violations may not pose direct health hazards, they entail high socio-cultural risk, particularly for Muslim consumers. A breach such as unintentional consumption of pork or mislabeling can cause moral distress, undermine trust, and damage institutional reputation while affecting the enrolment of Muslim students. In Muslim-majority contexts, perceived seriousness of these breaches is often heightened, as evidenced by the University of Malaya (UM) case, where the incident prompted widespread public backlash on social media and official inquiries. In contrast, in non-Muslim majority environments, institutional perception of severity may be lower. The risk might be assessed as moderate by administrators (viewing it as a contained issue for a specific group), but for the affected group it is severe, highlighting that risk perception varies among stakeholders.

2.3.3. Characterization and evaluation

The characterization and evaluation phase translates risk appraisal into actionable judgements by weighing the acceptability and tolerability of identified risks within specific normative, cultural, and institutional contexts (Renn, 2008). In halal assurance, this phase requires recognizing that risk is not merely technical but socially constructed; what is "tolerable" to one group may be unacceptable to another. This divergence illustrates that risk characterization in halal contexts is contingent upon institutional values, stakeholder expectations, and broader cultural framing. An inclusive evaluation process should therefore integrate multiple stakeholder perspectives, including religious, consumer protection, and operational viewpoints to ensure that corrective actions align with shared expectations and are acceptable to all affected parties.

2.3.4. Risk management

Once an incident occurs, the choices made by the institution are critical. The UM case demonstrates a precautionary risk management approach. The university opted to eliminate the risk immediately by closing shops and only resuming operations after assurance of compliance. This mirrors an "avoid or remove the risk" strategy in risk governance. Meanwhile, the NU case, conversely, illustrates a "mitigate and communicate" strategy: the mislabeling was corrected, the signs removed, and the dining service focused on procedural fixes and explanations rather than halting food service. Each strategy has implications: UM's approach might inconvenience some but sends a strong message of integrity, whereas NU's approach maintains business-as-usual but risks being seen as downplaying the incident.

Halal product safety incidents, though rooted in specific religious compliance issues, can be analyzed like other risk events. They test how institutions anticipate, respond, and learn from unexpected failures in protective systems.

The greater the complexity of a setting (e.g., a multicultural campus serving varied needs) and the higher the uncertainty or ambiguity (e.g., who is responsible for halal checks, how to enforce standards across supply chains), the more important a sound risk governance approach becomes. The lessons from the cases at hand feed into an understanding that beyond formal rules, the culture of risk awareness and the inclusiveness of risk management processes are vital to protect consumers and maintain trust.

3. Methodology

This research adopts a qualitative comparative document analysis approach to examine institutional responses to halal product safety incidents in university settings. The case selection was driven by a most-different systems reason. One case from Malaysia where a country with a formalized halal assurance infrastructure, and another one from the United States where a country without such centralized halal regulation. Focusing on the Universiti Malaya (UM) incident in early 2025 and the Northwestern University (NU) incident in late 2024 allows for a contrast between a highly regulated context and a minimally regulated context in terms of halal governance.

The study relies on multiple documentary sources of evidence to construct each case narrative and perform analysis. Primary sources include official statements and press releases from the universities and, where available, statements from relevant authorities such as JAKIM in Malaysia. For UM, an official statement was reported in news media announcing the closure of outlets and intent to investigate. For NU, statements from the dining services contractor were cited in student news media regarding the mislabeling issue.

News articles and media reports provided detailed chronologies and stakeholder perspectives. Key pieces analyzed were: a Malay Mail news report and a Halal Times article for the Malaysian case, and a Daily Northwestern campus newspaper article for the U.S. case. These articles included direct quotes from university officials, students, and other stakeholders, which were invaluable for understanding perceptions and reactions on the ground. Additionally, social media commentary and online discussion also captured indirectly through quotes in media reports and the Halal Times analysis were considered to gauge public sentiment.

The study applied an institutional analysis and risk governance analysis in parallel. Institutional analysis focused on the formal and informal rules, norms, and actors involved in each case (Siddiki and Frantz, 2021). This meant examining the role of university policies, national laws, and cultural norms such as the expectation of halal integrity in shaping the response. Risk governance analysis, guided by the IRGC framework (Mendes et al., 2021), examined how each institution performed in terms of risk handling stages from initial recognition to communication and mitigation. By using these frameworks, the study systematically compared the cases along dimensions such as speed of response, involvement of stakeholders, transparency of communication, and alignment with regulatory requirements.

The analysis process involved coding the documentary evidence for themes relevant to risk governance, e.g., “risk communication,” “preventive measures,” “trust/distrust expressed,” and institutional factors, e.g., “regulatory enforcement,” “internal protocol,” “student involvement.” A cross-case synthesis was subsequently conducted to identify recurring patterns and contrasts, such as “immediate shutdown” versus “no shutdown,” or “external enforcement present” vs. “absent.” Particular attention was given to evidence of policy learning and instances where the incident prompted calls for change or reflection on existing policies, as these indicate how lessons are being drawn within each context.

Given the qualitative nature, the study ensured credibility through triangulation of sources. Triangulation is a methodological approach used in qualitative research to enhance the credibility and validity of findings by employing multiple methods, data sources, theories, or investigators. This approach is particularly useful in qualitative studies that aim to understand complex social phenomena and multicultural environments. Multiple independent reports were used to verify key facts from both Malay Mail and Halal Times, confirming UM’s closure of stores, and multiple student testimonies corroborated the mislabeling at NU. Direct quotes were preserved where possible to avoid misinterpretation of stakeholders’ viewpoints. While the analysis is interpretive, it is anchored in documented events and statements.

Limitations include the reliance on documentary and media-based sources rather than primary data collected through interviews, surveys, or field observations. Consequently, the findings reflect documented institutional responses and publicly reported stakeholder perspectives. Media reports may contain reporting bias or incomplete information, and the focus on two cases may not capture the full diversity of halal-related incidents in higher education settings. Nonetheless, the chosen cases provide a foundation to explore how extremes in institutional context influence outcomes. The insights are analytically generalizable in the sense of theoretical propositions to similar contexts, for instance, other Muslim-majority vs. minority settings or strong vs. weak regulatory environments.

The comparative approach, though focused on two documented cases, is intended to yield lessons learned that can inform universities and policymakers worldwide on improving halal product safety management. By examining not just what happened but why and how each institution reacted, the findings can guide proactive changes to prevent future incidents and better protect consumer trust in diverse educational environments.

4. Results

4.1. Case 1: Halal logo controversy at Universiti Malaya (Malaysia)

In early January 2025, students and staff at Universiti Malaya (UM) raised alarms over a pre-packaged "ham & cheese" sandwich being sold at two 24-hour convenience stores on campus. The term "ham" typically denotes pork, which immediately conflicts with halal dietary rules. These campus shops were operating under halal certification. They displayed halal logos, indicating to consumers that all products inside complied with halal standards. The presence of a pork-based sandwich in this context represented a glaring anomaly. Word of the discovery spread quickly, initially through social media: photos of the sandwich and its packaging were shared online, prompting outrage and disbelief among the Muslim community on campus and beyond. The issue swiftly caught national attention, with mainstream media reporting on the "ham and cheese sandwich" controversy as it touched a nerve in Malaysia's predominantly Muslim society.

The UM administration reacted with urgency. On January 10, 2025, UM issued a public statement announcing the immediate shutdown of the two implicated convenience stores. The closures were described as a precaution to "allow investigations into the allegations to proceed without interference." By taking this step, UM aimed to contain the problem and signal its seriousness in upholding halal standards. In its statement, the university reaffirmed that it "prioritizes ensuring all products sold on campus comply with relevant laws and standards," a clear reference to halal regulations. Concurrently, UM indicated it was cooperating with relevant authorities. Although not explicitly stated in the press release, this likely involved notifying JAKIM or the State Islamic Department to verify the halal status of the products and the certification of the vendor. The swiftness and transparency of this response were widely noted. Within days, the issue had reached the Ministry level; Malaysia's Minister of Religious Affairs even commented on the need for stricter compliance checks in campus food outlets, showing how the incident escalated up governance channels as reported in follow-up news.

Law enforcement also became formally involved in the incident. According to Brickfields District Police Chief ACP, a report was filed by a Universiti Malaya (UM) student concerning the sale of a sandwich labeled "Ham and Cheese" with questionable halal status at one of the campus convenience stores. "A police report was lodged last Friday by a student from the public university involved," the officer confirmed. This underscores the seriousness with which the matter was perceived not only as a compliance lapse but as a possible violation warranting formal investigation. The investigation sought to answer how a non-halal product entered the supply chain of halal-certified stores. Preliminary findings, as reported in the media, suggested that the sandwiches were supplied by an outside vendor who had perhaps mislabeled or misrepresented the product's halal status. JAKIM quickly clarified that no halal certification had been issued for the particular ham & cheese sandwich in question. In other words, the halal logo on the sandwich packaging was unauthorized. This pointed towards a possible case of fraud or negligence by the supplier. The campus retailer KK Mart, a convenience store chain, also faced scrutiny for failing to vet the products. In the wake of the incident, KK Mart's management in UM publicly apologized and stated they would enhance their internal controls and only source from verified halal suppliers moving forward, according to a KK Mart statement reported by the media. The accountability chain thus included: the supplier for misuse of the halal logo, the store management for oversight lapses, and the university for ensuring compliance on its premises. Malaysian authorities indicated that legal action could be taken under the Trade Descriptions (Halal) Order 2011 against parties misusing halal labels. By late January, the two campus stores were allowed to reopen, but only after thorough inspections and replacement of non-compliant stock. JAKIM was reportedly considering more frequent spot-checks on university vendors after this incident, reflecting an institutional learning outcome.

The incident triggered strong reactions at multiple levels. Muslim students and staff at UM expressed shock and concern that they could no longer implicitly trust the halal logo that they had always relied on. Some students described feeling "betrayed" that such a lapse could happen at a premier university in the heart of the Muslim world. On the other hand, non-Muslim voices also chimed in, some questioning whether the closure of stores was an overreaction and what it meant for them, as those outlets served all students. Overall, however, campus sentiment largely supported the decisive action, seeing it as necessary to maintain the sanctity of halal on campus. Public discourse amplified by social media broadened the conversation. Many Malaysians saw this episode as symptomatic of a larger issue; calls were made for better enforcement of halal regulations not just in universities but in all convenience stores and eateries nationwide. Commentators in Malaysian newspapers argued that as the halal industry grows, vigilance must grow correspondingly to protect consumers from unscrupulous practices. At the same time, some writers praised UM's response as a model of institutional responsibility; by acting swiftly, the university arguably prevented further erosion of trust.

The Halal Times, in an in-depth piece, framed the incident as highlighting the "delicate balance of multiculturalism" on campus. It noted that UM's diverse community necessitates careful respect for religious sensitivities while serving everyone's needs, and that this incident, though unfortunate,

spurred constructive dialogue about how to improve systems and understanding on campus.

The UM case resulted in several concrete and potential changes. In the immediate term, this paper suggests that UM and other Malaysian universities review their vendor vetting processes, ensuring that any outlet operating on campus is not only halal-certified if such claims are made but also subject to continuous monitoring. There were discussions about requiring halal-certified campus vendors to submit periodic reports or undergo random audits by campus authorities in addition to existing external certification checks. On a broader policy level, the incident fed into national conversations about empowering JAKIM with greater enforcement powers or increasing penalties for halal certification breaches. Consumer associations called for tighter supply chain traceability for halal products, suggesting that technology like blockchain tracking or a halal product registry could help prevent uncertified products from slipping through (Wahab et al., 2025). The case also underscored the importance of education. It is recommended that Universiti Malaya implement comprehensive awareness programs for campus retailers and cafeteria operators on halal integrity, potentially coordinated through the Universiti Malaya Halal Research Centre (UMHRC), a certified Halal Training Provider under the Halal Professional Board (HPB), JAKIM. In essence, the shock of the incident created momentum for reinforcing the halal assurance ecosystem at multiple levels, with UM's experience serving as a cautionary tale and a learning opportunity for other institutions.

4.2. Case 2: Halal mislabeling and cross-contamination at Northwestern University (USA)

At Northwestern University (NU) in Evanston, Illinois, incidents of halal mislabeling came to light in the fall of November 2024. Muslim students reported at least two troubling observations in the campus dining halls. First, at a self-serve breakfast station, a student noticed that a tray of what appeared to be pork bacon was placed under a sign labelled "Halal." Upon questioning a dining hall worker, the student confirmed the meat was indeed bacon, which is categorically non-halal, and the worker then removed the incorrect halal label. In a separate instance, pork sausages were similarly mislabeled as halal on the serving line, as recounted by another student who had to double-check the digital menu display to realize the mistake. In addition to these labeling errors, students observed practices raising cross-contamination concerns: for example, staff using the same gloves or utensils to handle both halal chicken and pork products and placing pork and halal items adjacent on the same warming table with risk of mingling. These revelations were largely brought forth by members of NU's Muslim-cultural Students Association (McSA), some of whom had noticed such issues recurring over time. By late 2024, frustrations peaked, and students decided to voice their concerns publicly via the campus newspaper and student government channels. Unlike the UM case, which involved a single glaring product issue, the NU case highlighted process failures in day-to-day operations.

When the mislabeling incidents were exposed, the response at the institutional level was more measured and internally oriented. The Northwestern Dining services, operated by a major food service company, Compass Group, acknowledged the errors. A Compass Group spokesperson provided an explanation to The Daily Northwestern, stating that the physical signage in dining halls is not fixed in place and "can sometimes be unintentionally moved by guests," implying the mislabeling could have been accidental. They assured that to minimize recurrences, they would implement "increased monitoring" and look into more stable signage solutions. Additionally, after meetings with student representatives, dining management agreed to steps such as re-training staff on halal dietary rules, placing clearer markings, one student leader suggested putting a small pig symbol next to pork dishes to avoid confusion, and exploring the idea of physically separating halal food stations to prevent cross-contact. It is important to note what did not happen: (i) there was no suspension of dining operations, (ii) no external regulatory inquiry, and (iii) no public press release from the university administration at large. The issue was treated as a quality improvement matter within the dining services department. NU's Office of Religious and Spiritual Life quietly coordinated with dining managers to support the changes, but there wasn't a high-profile apology from top university leadership. This relatively low-key response may be due to NU's context; halal provision is seen as a voluntary accommodation, not a compliance issue per se, thus it lacked a clear enforcement mechanism. The lack of a formal apology from the university administration regarding the halal food controversy is likely due to a combination of factors including lack of awareness, sensitivity to government policies, consumer confidence issues, ethical and legal complexities, differing perceptions of animal welfare, internal organizational challenges, and regulatory weaknesses. Addressing these factors comprehensively would be essential for the administration to respond appropriately to such controversies.

Given the perceived insufficiency of the initial response, the McSA and allied student leaders took further action. They passed a resolution in the Associated Student Government urging the university to formalize halal food handling protocols and to institute regular training for dining staff on religious dietary compliance. They also collected testimonies from Muslim students who had been adversely affected for instance, some students reported skipping meals or eating less at the dining hall out of fear that supposedly halal items might be contaminated. These accounts highlighted impacts on student well-being and inclusion. As one student

put it, issues with food affect "performance in school or on their mental health," and when inclusive dining isn't ensured, "students aren't feeling included, or don't feel like they're being cared about." Such narratives added urgency to the call for improvements. By early 2025, NU dining had taken a few concrete steps: new color-coded utensils were introduced, with green handles for halal-dedicated tools, additional signage was installed to clearly demarcate halal sections, and an online feedback form was launched for students to immediately report any concerns. McSA leaders noted incremental progress but continued to monitor the situation. They also pointed out a need for deeper cultural competency; many dining hall student workers and staff simply were not well-informed about what "halal" truly entails, so mistakes could be made out of ignorance. In response, the university considered incorporating a module on religious dietary laws in staff onboarding training.

Reactions from the broader community: Unlike the UM case, the NU incident did not become national news. However, it did resonate with Muslim communities at other universities once shared on social media. Students at several U.S. campuses reported encountering similar concerns regarding halal food provision, suggesting that such challenges may extend beyond a single institution. Some community members wrote op-eds in local media about "Halal mislabeling: an overlooked issue," arguing that while unintentional, such incidents reflect a gap in cultural inclusion on campuses. Non-Muslim student allies at NU also voiced support; for example, some members of interfaith groups stated that an institution that values diversity should allocate proper resources to get something as basic as dining options right.

There was also a pragmatic reaction among some observers: a few alumni and parents suggested that the market could provide a solution, e.g., hire only vendors certified in halal food service, or contract an external halal certification body to audit the campus dining periodically. These suggestions connect to an emerging trend of third-party halal accreditation for institutions; some hospitals and schools in the U.S. have started doing this (Keleher et al., 2024). Whether NU will pursue such a route remains to be seen, but the discussion itself indicates that stakeholders were brainstorming preventive measures. The NU case underscores a scenario of gradual corrective action driven by consumer pressure among students. It showcases how, in the absence of regulatory compulsion, the effectiveness of addressing halal safety issues depends largely on institutional willingness to listen and act. Initially, NU's response was arguably minimal fix the signs, remind staff which did not fully satisfy those affected. Only after sustained student engagement did more substantive changes roll out. This reactive, iterative approach contrasts sharply with UM's decisive, one-off intervention backed by regulation. The result in NU's case is an ongoing process of improvement rather than a swift resolution. Nevertheless, by mid-2025 there was a sense that NU had learned from the episode: dining halls reportedly had fewer complaints, and the profile of halal needs had been raised on campus, hopefully translating to better long-term attentiveness. Still, persistent barriers remain, including the high cost of halal food options, limited sourcing availability, and student mistrust regarding the authenticity of halal labelling (Sheikh et al., 2026).

The comparative results of the Malaysian and the United States campus incidents provide a rich ground for discussing how institutional structures and risk governance practices impact the handling of halal product safety issues. Several key themes emerge: the role of regulatory enforcement vs. voluntary compliance, the management of consumer trust and outrage, the engagement of stakeholders such as students, authorities, and the community, and the capacity for policy learning and adaptation. This discussion synthesizes these themes, highlighting cross-national insights and their implications for theory and practice.

Table 2 demonstrates clear differences in how two institutions navigated each phase of the IRGC framework (irgc.org). In the pre-assessment phase, both cases revealed weakness in preventive controls. However, risk identification in NU depended largely on student observations, whereas the Malaysian context benefited from an established halal governance assurance management. During the appraisal and evaluation phases, the UM incident was framed as a significant compliance and public trust issue with broader societal implications, while the NU incident was initially perceived as an operational concern before being elevated through stakeholder advocacy. The most notable contrast emerged in the risk management phase. Universiti Malaya adopted a precautionary and enforcement-oriented approach involving outlet closure, investigations, and regulatory engagement, whereas Northwestern University relied on corrective actions, staff training, and stakeholder dialogue. These differences illustrate how institutional and regulatory environments influence the implementation of risk governance strategies in halal-related incidents.

5. Discussion

5.1. Institutional enforcement versus voluntary compliance

One of the starkest contrasts between the two cases is the presence or absence of a formal enforcement mechanism. In Malaysia, the existence of a legal framework around halal with JAKIM at its core meant that the UM incident was immediately situated in a compliance context. The university's actions, store closures, investigation can be seen as an enforcement of halal rules, effectively acting in position of or in tandem with regulators. The benefit of this system is clear. It empowers institutions to take drastic action when violations occur, backed by

the legitimacy of law and the expectation of the public. There is a clear standard of right and wrong: the halal certification is either valid or not, and violations trigger consequences. This likely contributed to the swift restoration of a sense of order once the offending products were removed and the stores were penalized temporarily; stakeholders could be assured that "something was being done" in line with national norms of halal integrity.

Table 2: Application of the IRGC risk governance framework to the UM and NU cases

IRGC phase	Malaysia (UM incident)	United States (NU incident)
Pre-assessment (risk identification)	Risk emerged when a "ham and cheese" sandwich carrying a questionable halal claim was discovered in halal-certified campus outlets. The incident revealed weakness in supplier verification and product monitoring by internal staff.	Risk emerged when students identified pork products incorrectly labelled as halal and raised concerns regarding cross-contamination in campus dining facilities without proper segregation or labelling.
Risk appraisal	The incident was regarded as a serious breach of halal integrity with potential legal, religious, and reputational consequences. Public concern quickly escalated beyond the campus community.	The incident was initially treated as an operational and food-service issue, although Muslim students viewed it as a significant breach of religious dietary requirements and institutional trust. There was a lack of a proper procedure for cultural sensitivity.
Characterization and evaluation	University management, halal authorities, and the public evaluated the incident as unacceptable, requiring immediate intervention and investigation.	Evaluation occurred primarily through student feedback and internal discussions. The issue was recognized as requiring corrective action, but without external regulatory involvement.
Risk management	Immediate closure of affected outlets, investigation of suppliers, engagement with relevant authorities, and public communication regarding corrective actions.	Removal of incorrect signage, staff retraining, enhanced monitoring, stakeholder engagement, and gradual improvements in dining hall procedures.

In the Northwestern case, the lack of a governing halal standard placed the issue in a grey zone of voluntary compliance and internal policy. The dining hall offering halal options was a service, not a statutory requirement, so lapses were treated as mistakes to be corrected rather than breaches to be punished. From a risk governance perspective, this is problematic because without enforceable rules, there is less pressure to prioritize the issue. The NU case demonstrates how, in a voluntary government, change often requires activism; students had to voice complaints repeatedly and leverage moral suasion, i.e., appealing to the university's values of diversity and inclusion to get action. This suggests a reactive stance rather than a preventive or pre-emptive one. It also raises a critical question: Can trust in halal food be fully ensured without some form of accountability mechanism? The evidence from NU implies that self-regulation has limits; while not every context can have a JAKIM-equivalent (sole authority), institutions may consider adopting quasi-regulatory measures like third-party certification or routine audits (Cacciatore and Germano, 2024) to formalize their commitment. In policy terms, even in non-Muslim majority countries, universities could voluntarily adhere to standards set by reputable halal certification bodies, for example, the Islamic Food and Nutrition Council of America (IFANCA) or others, as a best practice.

5.2. Consumer trust, outrage, and recovery

Trust emerges as a central concept linking these cases. The pre-incident trust was high in both contexts but rooted differently: at UM, trust was in the system the halal logo backed by JAKIM and the university as enforcer, whereas at NU, trust was in the institution's promise to cater to Muslim needs in good faith. When the incidents occurred, that trust was broken, leading to what can be termed consumer outrage, albeit expressed differently. In Malaysia, outrage was broad and vocal nationally, reflecting not only a consumer reaction but a sense of religious affront. In the U.S. case, outrage was concentrated among the Muslim student community and their allies, framed as a breach of inclusion and respect.

The strategies to recover trust also diverged. UM's strategy aligned with classic crisis management: remove the source of harm, demonstrate top-level commitment, involve external validators (religious authorities), and communicate transparently. This approach is consistent with best practices in risk communication, acknowledging the issue and showing concrete action goes a long way in quelling public anger. The Halal Times analysis noted that UM's "prompt response aimed to reassure the university community," which indeed seems to have helped; while there was anger, it did not escalate into long-term distrust of the university because the institution positioned itself on the side of the consumers, not as a defensive culprit.

Northwestern's approach to trust recovery was more incremental. Initially, the institution's response explaining signage issues might have even aggravated frustration because it sounded like an excuse. Only later, through dialogue and visible changes like new signage and staff training, did the trust begin to be rebuilt. Even so, some scepticism likely lingers among students: "Will they slip up again next semester?" What this highlights is that transparency and proactiveness are crucial. Risk governance literature stresses that in high-uncertainty or high-concern issues, authorities must go beyond minimal communication and actively engage stakeholders to restore trust (Renn, 2008). NU's case underscores that engagement via student meetings and soliciting feedback is key in a voluntary setting; it is essentially a substitute for formal accountability. The concept of procedural fairness also comes into play: people are more forgiving of adverse events if they feel the process of addressing them is fair and inclusive. At NU, involving Muslim students in crafting solutions, e.g.,

consulting on separate serving areas, gave them ownership and likely mitigated feelings of helplessness or exclusion.

From a policy-learning standpoint, both cases taught the respective institutions about trust (Kang and Hustvedt, 2014). UM learned that even a single errant product can shake confidence in a robust system; thus, constant vigilance is required. NU learned that good intentions are not enough; systems must be foolproof to maintain trust, and continuous dialogue with students is necessary to identify concerns early and strengthen institutional responsiveness.

5.3. Stakeholder engagement and cross-pressure

The outcomes were also shaped by which stakeholders exerted pressure. In Malaysia, besides students, external stakeholders, religious authorities, media, general public, all quickly engaged. This multi-directional pressure created a sense of urgency and scrutiny. The fact that Malaysia's society at large cares about halal issues meant UM's reputation in the public eye was at stake, not just its standing with its students. Hence, the stakeholder environment was extensive. In risk governance terms, especially in a food safety management system, this is a classic example of a salient risk issue with high social amplification (Manning and Grant, 2025). Meanwhile, media and public discourse amplified the campus incident into a national conversation, thereby increasing the stakes for risk managers (Théolier et al., 2021).

In the United States, the stakeholder field was narrower: primarily the affected students and their supporters. The general student body or public were largely indifferent. The issue didn't resonate beyond the Muslim community and those attuned to religious accommodation matters. As a result, the pressure on NU's administration was significant but contained; it did not threaten NU's national reputation or attract regulatory scrutiny. There's no equivalent regulator to attract, in fact. Therefore, NU had the latitude to handle it quietly. However, from an ethical perspective, one could argue that institutions shouldn't wait for broad pressure to do the right thing. Engaging stakeholders proactively, even those in the minority, is part of being an inclusive organization (Turin et al., 2023). The NU case therefore is a lesson in internal stakeholder engagement: it took internal lobbying to drive change. A more proactive engagement, such as periodic meetings between dining services and religious student groups, might have caught issues sooner or prevented them; for instance, students could have been asked to help review menus for potential concerns.

Cultural context plays a pivotal role in shaping stakeholder dynamics, influencing engagement strategies, decision-making, and organizational outcomes (Manokaran et al., 2026). In Muslim-majority contexts, halal issues are mainstream issues. In minority contexts, they may remain niche unless framed in a larger context of diversity/inclusion or rights. One implication for Muslim-minority universities is that they may need to consciously elevate halal and other religious dietary needs from the periphery to mainstream consideration, essentially treating them not as special-interest complaints but as integral to student welfare and consumer protection for that segment (Halim et al., 2024).

This may involve bringing in external stakeholders even if not required, e.g., inviting a local Muslim community or halal certification expert to advise dining services, thus mimicking the role a regulator might play elsewhere.

5.4. Policy learning and cross-national insights

A crucial aim of this study was to glean policy lessons from comparing these incidents. Several insights emerge that transcend the individual cases shown in Table 3.

Table 3: Policy learning and cross-national insights

Aspect	Key insights	References
Guidelines & training	Structured, collaborative training improves policy capacity and implementation	Cameron (2025)
Monitoring & audits	Clear frameworks and iterative evaluation enhance compliance and performance	Schoenefeld et al. (2019)
Inclusion vs. segregation	Systemic changes and targeted campaigns foster integration and reduce segregation	Carrington et al. (2022)

Based on aspects presented in Table 3, further brief explanations can be drawn from the cases in Malaysia and the United States.

- Need for Clear Guidelines and Training (Cameron, 2025): Both cases underscore that having unambiguous guidelines for halal handling and ensuring staff are educated is fundamental. In Malaysia, guidelines exist but perhaps needed stricter local enforcement; had the campus store staff been more vigilant, they might have noticed the "ham" ingredient before stocking it. In the U.S., the lack of formal guidelines was apparent; hence, developing a clear standard operating procedure for halal covering procurement, signage, storage separation, serving utensils, etc. became an action item. Policymakers or university administrators can create checklists or manuals; some institutions have done this, often in consultation with halal certifiers or Muslim chaplaincy offices. Regular training sessions are a frontline defense against these incidents. A lesson shared by both contexts: people on the ground need to know why halal matters and how to uphold it. When frontline workers understand the "why," they are more likely to take care in the "how."
- Importance of Monitoring and Audits (Schoenefeld et al., 2019): The Malaysian case illustrates the value of audits. One reason their halal system is generally trusted is due to oversight. Post-incident,

calls for even more frequent checks imply that continuous monitoring is key. For universities, this could mean implementing their own audit routine: for example, a monthly review by campus food safety officers to verify compliance with halal protocols. From a cross-national perspective, a university in a non-Muslim country might invite a halal certification body to audit its dining annually, which could serve both as a compliance check and as a marketing point: "our dining is externally verified halal-friendly"

- Balancing Act; Inclusion vs. Segregation (Carrington et al., 2022): An interesting point of discussion from these cases is how to balance accommodating halal needs without alienating others. UM's case raised the issue of balancing Muslim and non-Muslim preferences on campus. There's a risk that over-emphasizing halal could be misinterpreted by non-Muslims as exclusionary; e.g., if a campus only allows halal-certified vendors, some might ask, "What about our choice to have non-halal?" In Malaysia, this is less argumentative because halal often, by default, serves everyone; non-Muslims can consume halal food generally. But in diverse campuses elsewhere, a dual system might be needed: halal options alongside non-halal options. The key is transparent labeling and respecting choices. The Northwestern suggestion of clearly marking pork with an icon is one way to help everyone navigate. Similarly, some universities have instituted separate halal food stations; while this avoids cross-contamination, it should be handled in a way that doesn't stigmatize either side. The policy implication is that inclusive dining doesn't mean one-size-fits-all, but rather thoughtfully designed spaces and systems that allow coexistence of requirements (Saeed, 2023). This might involve small infrastructure or process investments like separate grills or fryers for halal food (Eldaw and Ahmed Osman, 2023).

Perhaps the most profound lesson from comparing these cases is that context matters, but commitment matters more. A university in a Muslim country might have the advantage of a regulatory backbone, whereas one in a secular country relies on institutional commitment. However, if the commitment to halal integrity is strong, institutions in any context can take effective measures. Conversely, if commitment is weak, even a formal system can be undermined. Imagine if UM had chosen to hush it up or delay action; trust in JAKIM's system could have been shaken.

This discussion also connects to broader theoretical implications. It provides a real-world illustration of institutional theory in practice: institutions (universities) are influenced by their regulatory and cultural environment. Scott's pillars of institutions involved regulatory, normative, cultural-cognitive, are all visible here. UM responded strongly due to regulatory (law) and normative (societal expectation) pressures; NU's response was shaped more by cultural-cognitive elements, administrators perhaps not fully internalizing the importance initially, until norms were impressed upon them by students. Over time, one might see isomorphism happening, e.g., if more incidents occur on U.S. campuses and get publicized, universities may start mimicking each other or adopting "industry standards" for halal to avoid being the next headline (Hazahari and Mohd Noor, 2026).

From a risk governance theoretical lens, these cases highlight that risk is not only the probability of harm but the perception and social significance of that harm. The "harm" in both cases was not physical illness but a violation of ethical/religious standards, a less tangible but very real risk. Governance of such risks requires sensitivity to intangible values, not just technical fixes. Institutions must broaden their definition of what constitutes a risk worth governing for Muslim consumers; non-halal ingredients are indeed a serious risk to faith obligations, which should be respected similarly to how allergen risks are respected for those with allergies.

In conclusion of this discussion, the cross-national comparison yields a central message: Halal product safety in universities should be managed with the same rigor and respect as any other critical aspect of student welfare. The mechanisms to do so can vary, legal enforcement where available, or strong internal policies where not, but the end goal is convergent: to ensure that all students can trust the food provided to them. The next section will build on these insights to propose concrete policy implications for various stakeholders, followed by a concluding reflection on the broader significance of these lessons.

5.5. Policy implications

The analysis of halal product safety incidents at UM and NU points to several actionable policy implications for universities, food service providers, and regulators. Ensuring halal integrity on campus is multifaceted, involving compliance, education, and communication. Below are nine key recommendations derived from the lessons learned shown in Table 4.

In summary, the above implications form a comprehensive approach. They range from preventive measures, standards, training, and audits to reactive measures, response protocols, legal accountability, and emphasize involvement of both internal and external expertise. Implementing these policies requires commitment of resources, training costs, possibly hiring or contracting experts, etc., but the benefits in terms of safeguarding student welfare and institutional reputation are significant. Moreover, these measures foster an environment of respect and inclusion, aligning with the educational mission of universities to care for their communities. Policymakers and university leaders reading these lessons should recognize that halal product safety, while a niche topic at first glance, has broad ramifications for consumer rights and trust in

institutional governance. Addressing it systematically can serve as a model for how to accommodate cultural and religious diversity in other domains of campus life as well.

Table 4: Policy implications for halal product safety in campus settings

Policy area	Implication and practical application
Halal compliance standards	Implement structured halal governance through certified suppliers, segregation practices, appropriate food-handling procedures, and contractual compliance requirements.
Engagement with halal authorities	Collaborate with recognized halal authorities and certification bodies to enhance compliance, oversight, staff competency, and institutional credibility.
Monitoring and reporting	Enhance halal compliance through systematic monitoring, periodic inspections, dedicated oversight responsibilities, and effective reporting channels (Md Nawi et al., 2023).
Crisis response and incident management	Develop structured incident response protocols to ensure prompt corrective action, transparent communication, and effective management of halal compliance breaches.
Education and training	Strengthen halal awareness and competency through continuous training programs that integrate halal principles, food safety practices, and understanding of religious and cultural requirements (Megat, 2025).
Stakeholder engagement	Strengthen halal governance through active participation of Muslim student representatives, food service providers, and relevant university units in policy development and oversight (Sheikh et al., 2026).
Governance coordination	Enhance institutional consistency and credibility by aligning halal management practices with established national and international halal governance frameworks (Hazahari and Mohd Noor, 2026).
Consumer protection and compliance	Strengthen consumer protection through accurate halal labelling, transparent certification information, and effective measures to prevent misleading halal claims (Nazari et al., 2023).
Strategic communication	Develop templates for timely, transparent, and consistent communication during halal-related incidents and corrective actions.

5.6. Limitations of the study

This study has several limitations. First, the analysis relies on documentary and media-based sources rather than the primary data collected through interviews, surveys, or field observations. Although multiple sources were used to verify information, media reports may contain bias or incomplete information. Second, the study focuses on only two university cases, which limits the generalizability of the findings to other institutional contexts. Third, the two cases are not directly comparable because they operate within different regulatory, cultural, and institutional environments. Therefore, the findings should be interpreted as comparative insights rather than broad generalizations. Despite these limitations, the study provides useful insights into how two different governance contexts influence halal risk management and consumer trust in higher education settings.

6. Conclusion

Halal product safety incidents in university settings offer a revealing lens through which to examine the interplay of consumer protection, trust, and regulatory responsibility. This study, by comparing a case in Malaysia with one in the United States, demonstrates that while the context differs, the fundamental challenge is the same. How can institutions ensure that the food they provide is consistent with the expectations and needs of their constituents, and what happens when that assurance falters? The answers lie in robust risk governance and a willingness to learn from each incident.

In the Malaysian case at Universiti Malaya, we saw the power of a well-established institutional framework. The immediate actions taken, 1) closing shops, 2) launching an investigation, 3) transparently communicating were enabled by a shared societal commitment to halal integrity and 4) clear regulatory backing. Trust, though shaken, was largely preserved because the university and authorities acted as guardians of consumer interest. In the American case at Northwestern, the void of formal regulation was filled, at least partially, by student activism and the institution's eventual receptiveness to change. This underscores that in the absence of external enforcement, internal governance and stakeholder engagement become paramount. Trust, once lost, had to be earned back through incremental improvements and dialogue.

Comparative analysis highlights that cross-national learning is both possible and valuable. Malaysian institutions could glean from their U.S. counterparts the importance of engaging diverse communities in solutions. The UM incident, while handled well, also opened up conversations about accommodating everyone's needs on campus (halal and non-halal consumers alike). Conversely, U.S. universities and others in non-Muslim majority contexts can learn from Malaysia's experience that having structured certification systems, regular audits, and clear legal accountability. Students are more likely to feel assured and confident about the food they consume on campus. Both contexts illustrate that education of stakeholders (be it staff or consumers) is critical; ignorance is a common enemy, whether it's a worker not recognizing bacon isn't halal, or a store manager not verifying a supplier's halal claims. The importance of education and capacity building is also reflected in Ibrahim et al. (2026), who identify human capital development and community empowerment as key elements of sustainable and self-reliant governance systems.

From a theoretical perspective, the incidents reinforce the concept that risk is socially constructed and institutions must navigate not just the technical aspects of risk but the social expectations. What might be considered a minor oversight in one cultural context is a major breach in another. Effective risk governance adapts to this reality, treating soft issues like religious compliance with the seriousness accorded to hard issues like foodborne illness when the stakeholder community deems it important. The IRGC's emphasis on communication and stakeholder inclusion proves especially

pertinent here. The more stakeholders feel included and heard, the more resilient the trust network becomes, even if mistakes happen.

Looking ahead, as universities worldwide become ever more diverse, the importance of culturally aware consumer protection will only grow. The global halal food market is expanding, and international student mobility means campuses in many countries will host significant Muslim student populations. Ensuring halal options is no longer a niche concern but part of mainstream student services. In this regard, the policy lessons derived from this study have broad applicability. A university in Europe, for example, might never have faced a halal scandal yet, but it would be prudent to proactively implement measures discussed here to avoid one. In parallel, Muslim-majority countries where halal is assumed to be taken care of must remain vigilant against complacency and opportunism in the supply chain. The UM case is a reminder that even in the heart of the halal ecosystem, breaches can occur and must be planned for.

In conclusion, halal product safety on campus is both an immediate operational concern and a window into larger questions of governance and cultural respect. By treating it with the depth of analysis and action it deserves, institutions affirm that every segment of their community is valued a message as important as any academic lesson taught in their classrooms.

List of abbreviations

ACP	Assistant commissioner of police
GDP	Gross domestic product
HPB	Halal Professional Board
IFANCA	Islamic Food and Nutrition Council of America
IRGC	International Risk Governance Council
JAKIM	Jabatan Kemajuan Islam Malaysia
McSA	Muslim-cultural students association
NU	Northwestern University
RM	Malaysian ringgit
RQ	Research question
SOP	Standard operating procedure

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Compliance with ethical standards

Conflict of interest

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