

Intentions on Free Nutritional Meal Program in Indonesia: Integration of *Theory of Planned Behavior* and *Halal Compliance*

Dini Mardiani^{1*}, Muhammad Dzulfaqori Jatnika², Nadya Larasati Aghnia³, Cahya Darmawan⁴

^{1,3} Muhammadiyah University of Bandung, Indonesia

^{2,4} Siliwangi University, Indonesia

* Corresponding Author : dini.mardiani@umbandung.ac.id

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to examine and analyze the influence of knowledge on halal, concern on halal, and awareness on halal on attitude, as well as the effects of attitude, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control on Generation Z's Behavioral Intention regarding the Free Nutritious Meal Program in Indonesia by integrating the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) and the Halal Compliance framework. A quantitative approach was employed using an online survey distributed to Muslim Generation Z respondents across Indonesia, with data analyzed using Structural Equation Modeling–Partial Least Squares (SEM-PLS). A total of 452 valid responses from Muslim Generation Z individuals were collected and analyzed. The results indicate that knowledge on halal, concern on halal, and awareness on halal have a positive and significant effect on attitude. Furthermore, attitude, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control significantly and positively influence behavioral intention. Additionally, attitude was proven to play a key mediating role in bridging the relationship between halal factors (knowledge, concern, and awareness) and generation z behavioral intention. These findings provide valuable insights for policymakers and program administrators to design transparent, halal-assured nutritious meal distribution strategies that encourage sustainable participation among Generation Z.

INTRODUCTION

Free Nutritional Meal Program (MBG) is one of Indonesia's strategic public policies designed to improve national nutritional quality, reduce stunting, and develop high-quality human resources. Generation Z (Gen Z) plays a crucial role as one of the primary beneficiary groups and as a key social actor in determining the success of this program. As a generation that grew up in the digital era with easy access to information, Gen Z tends to be more critical and concerned about ethical values, health, and the quality of the products they consume (Koay & Leong, 2025). However, Gen Z's acceptance and willingness to participate in public food assistance programs such as the Free Nutritional Meal Program are influenced not only

by their nutritional needs but also by their perceptions of halal compliance and psychosocial evaluation of the program (Azhar et al., 2025; Jatnika et al., 2023).

In the Indonesian context, where the majority of the population is Muslim, halal is not only a religious obligation but also an important indicator of product quality, hygiene, safety, and consumer trust (Andriansi et al., 2024; Mitra et al., 2026). Therefore, ensuring halal compliance in the Free Nutritional Meal Program is crucial to increase public acceptance of the program (Kurniawati et al., 2022). Religious considerations related to halal consist of three important dimensions: knowledge about halal, concern for halal, and awareness about halal. (Fathi et al., 2016; Ngah et al., 2014). Adequate knowledge about halal provides consumers with a rational basis for evaluating whether a public program meets Islamic principles (Aisyah et al., 2024). In addition, consumers who are more concerned about the halal status of food tend to be more selective in consuming food provided through public programs (Fathi et al., 2016). Therefore, ensuring halal compliance throughout the food supply chain and the Free Nutritional Meal Program delivery process is crucial for building trust among Generation Z (Sawalni, 2025).

To explain how individual and social factors influence people's interest in participating in a program, the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) proposed by (Ajzen, 1991) provides an appropriate theoretical framework. According to TPB, behavioral intention is determined by three main constructs: attitude, subjective norm, and perceived behavioral control. In the context of the Free Nutrition Meal Program, attitude refers to Generation Z's overall evaluation of whether the program is beneficial and valuable to society. Subjective norm reflects the influence of family members, friends, and other significant others who encourage or support an individual's participation in the program (Hidayah & Widanti, 2023). Meanwhile, perceived behavioral control refers to an individual's belief about having sufficient information, opportunities, and abilities to participate in the program (Yulianti, 2022).

Integration of the *Theory of Planned Behavior* (TPB) and *halal compliance* framework provides a more comprehensive approach to understanding Generation Z's behavioral intentions toward the Free Nutritional Meal Program. Halal-related factors, including halal knowledge, halal concern, and halal compliance, are expected to shape individuals' positive attitudes toward the program. Together with social influence and perceived behavioral control, these factors contribute to the formation of behavioral intentions to participate, support, and recommend the program to others (Ajzen, 1991; Amalia et al., 2019).

Previous studies have widely applied the integration of TPB and halal-related variables to explain consumer purchasing behavior towards halal food products, packaged foods, and halal cosmetics (Kasri et al., 2023). However, empirical studies examining the integration of Halal Compliance and TPB in the context of the national free public food program targeting Generation Z in Indonesia are still very limited. Based on this research gap, this study aims to examine the influence of halal awareness, concern for halal, and knowledge about halal on attitudes, as well as the influence of attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control on Generation Z's behavioral intentions to support and participate in the Free Nutritious Food Program in Indonesia.

This study is expected to contribute to the growing literature on Muslim consumer behavior and the evaluation of Sharia-based public policies. Furthermore, the findings are expected to provide practical insights for policymakers and program organizers in designing

nutritious food programs that are halal-certified, accountable, and widely accepted by Generation Z.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study employed a quantitative research approach using an online questionnaire survey. This study aimed to examine the factors influencing Generation Z's behavioral interest in the Free Nutritious Food Program (MBG) in Indonesia. The questionnaire was developed in Indonesian to ensure respondents could easily understand each statement. All measurement items were scored using a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The questionnaire consisted of two parts. The first part collected respondents' demographic information, while the second part measured the research variables, namely halal awareness (4 items), halal concern (5 items), halal knowledge (3 items), attitude (4 items), perceived behavioral control (5 items), subjective norms (4 items), and interest (3 items). The operational definitions and measurement indicators of each construct are presented in Table 1.

Data were analyzed using *Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling* (PLS-SEM) to simultaneously examine the measurement model and structural relationships among latent variables. PLS-SEM is widely recognized as a powerful analytical technique for behavioral and social science research because it can accommodate complex research models, relatively small to moderate sample sizes, and data that do not always follow a normal distribution (Ravand, 2016). This analytical approach has also been widely applied in studies on consumer behavior (Haripriya & Nandru, 2026; Ratnasari et al., 2020), consumer decision-making (Addae et al., 2026), and halal-related behavioral research (Azhar et al., 2025).

Primary data were collected through an online questionnaire distributed using purposive sampling techniques. Respondents were selected based on the following criteria: (1) Muslim, (2) Generation Z (born between 1997 and 2012), (3) domiciled in Indonesia, and (4) aware of the Free Nutritional Meal Program. These criteria were established to ensure that respondents were relevant to the research objectives.

In PLS-SEM, sample size adequacy corresponds to the number of indicators, which requires at least 10 times the number of indicators (Hair et al., 2019). Given that this study used 28 indicators, a minimum requirement of 280 respondents was set. After data cleaning to filter out irrelevant responses using the Longstrings method (Curran, 2016), a final sample of 452 valid respondents was retained for further analysis. This sample size significantly exceeds the threshold required for PLS-SEM analysis, thus ensuring high statistical power and robustness. Detailed operational definitions and indicators are presented in Table 1.

Table 1 Definition Operational

No	Variables	Indicator	Code
1	Awareness on Halal (AOH)	1. I consider halal status when participating in the Free Nutritious Meal Program.	AOH1
		2. I believe that the food provided should be in accordance with Islamic principles.	AOH2
		3. I would be more willing to support this program if the food was halal certified.	
		4. I am only interested in consuming food	AOH3

No	Variables	Indicator	Code
		whose halal status is clear.	AOH4
2	<i>Concern on Halal</i> (COH)	1. The halal status of food is important to me. 2. I am worried whether the food provided by the program is halal or not. 3. I pay attention to halal information before consuming food. 4. I hope the program follows Islamic principles in food preparation. 5. halal increases my confidence in this program.	COH1 COH2 COH3 COH4 COH5
3	<i>Knowledge on Halal</i> (KOH)	1. I understand the concept of halal food. 2. I know how halal food is certified in Indonesia. 3. I understand the importance of halal assurance in public food programs.	KOH1 KOH2 KOH3
4	<i>Attitude</i> (ATT)	1. Participating in the Free Nutritious Meal Program is a great idea. 2. This program is beneficial to the community. 3. Participating in this program is a positive decision. 4. I love the idea of a Free Nutritious Meal Program.	ATT1 ATT2 ATT3 ATT4
5	<i>Perceived Behavioral Control</i> (PBC)	1. I can participate in the program if I want. 2. Participation in this program is completely under my control. 3. I had enough opportunity to participate. 4. I have enough information to participate. 5. I am sure participating in this program will be easy.	PBC1 PBC2 PBC3 PBC4 PBC5
6	<i>Subjective Norms</i> (SN)	1. My family supports my participation in this program. 2. My friends think I should join the program. 3. People who are important to me encourage me to participate. 4. Most of the people around me have positive opinions about the program.	SN1 SN2 SN3 SN4
7	<i>Behavioral Intention</i> (BI)	1. I intend to participate in the Free Nutritious Meal Program. 2. I will support the implementation of this	BI1 BI2

No	Variables	Indicator	Code
		program in the future. 3. I am willing to recommend this program to others.	BI3

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Respondent Profile

Study This involving 452 respondents from from group Generation Z. Based on type gender , respondents dominated by women as many as 258 people (57.14%), while respondents man totaling 194 people (42.86%). Composition This show that participation Woman in study more tall compared to men . Seen from aspect age , some big respondents 17 years old as many as 143 people (31.64%), followed by respondents 16 years old as many as 121 people (26.77%), 18 years old as many as 100 people (22.12%), and 15 years as many as 88 people (19.47%). Distribution the show that majority respondents be in range age the end of adolescence which is group target potential of the Free Nutritional Meal Program (MBG).

Based on income or pocket money per month , the majority respondents have pocket money not enough from Rp. 1,000,000 as many as 205 people (45.35%). Furthermore , respondents with income or pocket money of Rp. 1,000,000–Rp. 2,500,000 amounted to 173 people (38.27%), followed by the Rp . 2,500,001–Rp. 5,000,000 category amounted to 52 people (11.50%), and the Rp. 2,500,001–Rp. 5,000,000 category amounted to 173 people (38.27%), followed by ... more from Rp. 5,000,000 as many as 22 people (4.88%). Findings This indicates that part big respondents originate from group with level income or pocket money relatively low , which is in line with characteristics respondents who still status students . Reviewed from level education , respondents spread in a way relatively evenly distributed across high school /vocational school levels . Respondents in class XI numbered 157 people (34.73%), making group the biggest in study this . Next , the respondents Class X has 148 students (32.74%), while respondents Class XII consists of 147 people (32.53%). The distribution is relatively... balanced in every level education show that study has get good representation from all over level education medium above . In overall , characteristics respondents show that study dominated by students Woman aged 16–17 years with pocket money under Rp . 1,000,000 per month , so that can give relevant image about intention Generation Z on the Free Nutritional Meal Program (MBG) in Indonesia.

Table 2 Profile Respondents

No	Category		Number of Respondents	Percentage
1	Gender	Man	194	42.86%
		Woman	258	57.14%
2	Age	15 years	88	19.47%
		16 years	121	26.77%
		17 years	143	31.64%
		18 years	100	22.12%
3	Income/Pocket Money per Month	< Rp. 1,000,000	205	45.35%
		Rp1,000,000–Rp2,500,000	173	38.27%
		Rp2,500,001–Rp5,000,000	52	11.50%

		> Rp. 5,000,000	22	4.88%
4	Education (High School/Vocational School)	Class X	148	32.74%
		Grade XI	157	34.73%
		Grade XII	147	32.53%

Outer Model

Model testing using SEM-PLS is carried out in two stages: first, the outer model is tested, followed by the inner model. The outer model is tested by identifying the relationship between indicators and constructs based on recommendations from (Hair et al., 2014), where a good loading factor value should be above 0.70. The analysis results show that all 22 indicators in this study have good loading factor values, ranging from 0.823 to 0.940.

In the next step, we evaluated whether the reliability and validity of the proposed variables met the requirements. Reliability was confirmed based on *Cronbach's Alpha* and *Composite Reliability* (CR). (Chin, 2010). According to the recommendations (Hair et al., 2014) has good reliability indicated by *Cronbach's Alpha* and CR values above 0.70. Based on the test results, *Cronbach's Alpha* values ranged from 0.845 to 0.953 and CR values ranged from 0.841 to 0.947, all of which were greater than 0.700; thus, it can be concluded that all constructs have good reliability. Convergent validity was determined by examining the *Average Variance Extracted* (AVE) value. According to (Hair et al., 2014) A good AVE value should be above 0.50. The test results show that the AVE values range from 0.742 to 0.852, which confirms that all constructs have strong convergent validity. Table 3 details the scale items in the constructs, including factor loadings, *Cronbach's Alpha*, and CR.

Table 3 Outer Model Results

No	Latent Variables	Manifest Variables	Loading Factor	A	rho_A	CR
1	Awareness on Halal (AOH)	AOH1	0.884	0.912	0.914	0.935
		AOH2	0.921			
		AOH3	0.865			
		AOH4	0.887			
2	Concern on Halal (COH)	COH 1	0.923	0.889	0.882	0.891
		COH 2	0.910			
		COH 3	0.907			
		COH 4	0.918			
		COH 5	0.915			
3	Knowledge on Halal (KOH)	KOH1	0.877	0.936	0.911	0.922
		KOH2	0.826			
		KOH3	0.871			
4	Attitude (ATT)	ATT1	0.875	0.845	0.846	0.906
		ATT2	0.883			
		ATT3	0.883			
		ATT4	0.913			
5	Perceived Behavioral Control (PBC)	PBC1	0.920	0.916	0.911	0.935
		PBC2	0.921			
		PBC3	0.918			
		PBC4	0.885			

No	Latent Variables	Manifest Variables	Loading Factor	A	rho_A	CR
6	Subjective Norms (SN)	PBC5	0.901	0.863	0.883	0.841
		SN1	0.823			
		SN2	0.835			
		SN3	0.879			
7	Behavioral Intention (BI)	SN4	0.842	0.953	0.932	0.947
		BI1	0.932			
		BI2	0.938			
		BI3	0.940			

Source: Researcher Analysis Results, 2026

Discussion

Once all measurement assumptions are met, the next step is to evaluate the structural model by assessing the t-statistic and p-value. According to recommendations (Hair et al., 2019) coefficient track show significant relationship in a way statistics between construct when t statistic more big of 1.96 ($t > 1.96$) and the p value is less of 0.05 ($p < 0.05$). Meanwhile that, value sample original show whether connection direction between variables nature positive or negative.

Table 4 Coefficient Track

No	Hypothesis	Original Value	t-statistics	p-value	Results
1	H1: KOH -> ATT	0.280	3,375	0.001	Supported
2	H2: COH -> ATT	0.311	3,546	0.012	Supported
3	H3: AOH -> ATT	0.389	4,732	0,000	Supported
4	H4: ATT -> BI	0.377	5,252	0,000	Supported
5	H5: SN -> BI	0.321	4,002	0,000	Supported
6	H6: PBC -> BI	0.274	3,421	0.001	Supported

Source: Researcher Analysis Results, 2026

Based on results analysis presented in Table 4, all hypothesis in study This supported . Hypothesis 1 shows that KOH has influence positive and significant against ATT (t statistic = 3.375; p value = 0.001). Hypothesis 2 shows that COH has influence positive and significant against ATT (t statistic = 3.546; p value = 0.012). Hypothesis 3 shows that AOH has influence positive and significant against ATT (t statistic = 4.732; p value = 0.000). Furthermore , Hypothesis 4 shows that ATT has influence positive and significant against BI (t statistic = 5.252; p value = 0.000). Hypothesis 5 shows that SN has influence positive and significant against BI (t statistic = 4.002; p value = 0.000). Finally , Hypothesis 6 shows that PBC has influence positive and significant against BI (t statistic = 3.421; p value = 0.001).

In a way overall , findings This show that the research model integrates TPB and *halal compliance* capable explain in a way empirical connection between variable . This is proven with received all the proposed hypothesis , which shows that the proposed model capable explain factors that influence interest Generation Z for support and participate in the Food Program Free Nutrition in Indonesia.

Based on mark coefficient path (sample original), relationship between KOH and ATT is positive ($\beta = 0.280$). This is show that the more big understanding Generation Z about concepts and principles halal food, increasingly positive attitude they towards the Food

Program Free Nutrition . Findings This confirm that knowledge is factor important in form evaluation positive to policy public based food . In addition , COH has influence positive against ATT ($\beta = 0.311$), indicating that the more big attention respondents to halal aspects of the food provided, increasingly positive attitude they . More furthermore , AOH has influence positive strongest against ATT ($\beta = 0.389$), indicating that guarantee halal compliance and existence halal certification throughout chain supply food in a way direct increase trust and evaluation positive Generation Z towards the program.

About originating variables from TPB, third variables the found as determinant main interest behavior . Attitude positive (ATT) ($\beta = 0.377$), subjective norm (SN) ($\beta = 0.321$), and control perceived behavior (PBC) ($\beta = 0.274$) all own influence positive and significant to interest behavior (BI). Findings This show that evaluation positive to program benefits , support from environment social like family and friends peers , and trust respondents to program accessibility and availability information everything contribute For strengthen interest Generation Z for support , participate , and recommend implementation of the Food Program Free Nutrition in the future . Findings This consistent with TPB framework developed by (Ajzen, 1991) . In addition , the findings this also supports study previously which has been run by (Chang & Amalina, 2025; Khashan et al., 2026).

Table 5. Specific Indirect Effect

No	Hypothesis	Original Value	t-statistics	p-value	Results
1	KOH -> ATT -> BI	0.105	2,888	0.004	Supported
2	COH -> ATT -> BI	0.117	2,907	0.003	Supported
3	AOH -> ATT -> BI	0.146	3,476	0.001	Supported

Source: Researcher Analysis Results, 2026

Furthermore, this study confirms that the indirect effect hypothesis is supported, which indicates that attitude mediates the effect of knowledge about halal . Concern for halal, and halal awareness, influence Generation Z's behavioral intention to support and participate in the Free Nutritious Food Program. These findings indicate that a higher level of understanding, greater concern, and stronger assurance of adherence to halal food principles contribute to the development of more positive attitudes toward this public food assistance program among Generation Z. This positive attitude, in turn, effectively increases their behavioral intention to participate, support, and recommend the implementation of this program to others.

This finding is consistent with previous studies (Amalia et al., 2019; Billah et al., 2020; Kasri et al., 2023) , which reported that attitudes act as an important mediating variable linking halal-related factors to individual behavioral intentions or intentions toward specific behaviors. Therefore, efforts to increase knowledge and strengthen halal compliance assurance in the Free Nutritious Food Program must be accompanied by effective public outreach and initiatives aimed at fostering positive attitudes. Such efforts are crucial to maximize public acceptance and encourage continued participation of Generation Z in the program.

Practical and theoretical implications

This study expected can give contribution practical for government , public program managers , and providers chain supply food in identify factors that influence interest behavior Generation Z for support and participate in the Free Nutritious Meal Program in Indonesia. Findings This offer guide strategic for the makers policy about variables the key that must be prioritized , namely knowledge about halal, concern towards halal, awareness about halal, attitudes , subjective norms , and control perceived behavior . Implementation of the Free Nutritious Meal Program must emphasize transparency in halal guarantee with ensure that all material standard , procedure processing food , and chains distribution halal certified and compliant with standard thayyib . In addition , the government and program managers must educate community and promote halal compliance program wide through social media platforms that are familiar to Generation Z. Remembering Generation Z is very sensitive to related issues with health , ethics , and religious values , providing clear and accountable information regarding the halal status of food is very important For build trust and encouragement participation active they.

From the perspective theoretical, study This contribute to enrichment literature academic with research factors that influence interest behavior Generation Z through integration of TPB and framework halal compliance . Thus , the findings the enrich literature about behavior Muslim consumers , evaluation policy public , and the halal industry . The TPB framework shows that attitude positive , social norms from environment closest , and perception control behavior is determinant main interest Generation Z for participate . More further integration dimensions halal compliance (knowledge , concern , and awareness) shows that compliance to Islamic principles function as predecessor important in strengthen attitude positive individual to policy help food national framework integrated This overcome limitations studies previously and confirmed that halal guarantee is factor psychological and religious that is not inseparable in evaluate reception public towards public programs based food in countries with large Muslim population , such as Indonesia.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

This study aim For analyze factors that influence interest behavior Generation Z for support and participate in the Food Program Free Nutrition in Indonesia with integrate approach halal compliance (knowledge about halal, concern towards halal, and awareness about halal) with TPB. The second integration approach This give greater understanding comprehensive about influence halal, psychological and social factors to interest participation public . Findings show that knowledge about halal, concern towards halal, and awareness about halal having influence positive and significant to attitude . More continued , attitudes , subjective norms, and control perceived behavior found own influence positive and significant to interest behavior Generation Z. This study also confirms that attitude functioning as variables significant mediation in connect factors related to halal interest behavior . In addition to contributing to the development literature about behavior Muslim consumers and evaluation policy public Sharia- based , studies it also offers framework Work conceptual practical for assistance program administrators food national.

This study own a number of limitations . First , the study This in a way exclusive focused on demographics Generation Z and using approach online survey based perception. Second , the research model limited to integration variables halal compliance and TPB, which means that other factors can also influence interest participation public. Therefore that , future studies recommended For expand sample to cover different generations (such as Generation

X and Millennials), expanding coverage geographical research, and consider variables addition like literacy nutrition , reliability chain supply, risk perceived health , and confidence to government . Findings studies This expected can give outlook strategic for government, National Nutrition Agency, and program administrators in designing policy For provision food nutritious, guaranteed halal, transparent and supported in a way widely by the community.

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