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Analysis of the Application of the Principles of Fairness and Honesty in Sharia Business Practices in the Traditional Market of Metro City, Lampung

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the application of fairness (al-'adl) and honesty (ash-shidq) principles in sharia business practices within the traditional market of Metro City, Lampung. Despite the growing development of Islamic economics in Indonesia, traditional markets—as vital centers of people's economic activity—still face challenges in implementing ethical business values. This research employs a qualitative descriptive approach, utilizing in-depth interviews, observations, and documentation at Pasar Kopindo, Metro City. The findings reveal a dichotomous pattern in the application of honesty: while some traders demonstrate ethical awareness in measurement accuracy and product transparency, others engage in information asymmetry practices, including concealing product defects (tadlis fi al-kayfiyyah), particularly for perishable goods. Regarding fairness, hidden price discrimination between new and loyal customers persists as a sociologically accepted practice. Furthermore, structural inequality is evident in labor relations (ijarah), including unilateral wage delays and reductions. The study concludes that the implementation of Islamic business ethics in traditional markets remains in a transitional phase, characterized by gaps between normative understanding and empirical practice. These findings contribute to the development of sharia-compliant business models in traditional market ecosystems and offer practical implications for market governance and consumer protection.

Keywords: Fairness, Honesty, Sharia Business, Traditional Markets

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INTRODUCTION

The growth of sharia business across various parts of the world, including Indonesia as the country with the largest Muslim population, shows encouraging development. Various Islamic financial institutions, sharia-based cooperatives, and micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) that apply Islamic principles continue to increase and make tangible contributions to the national economy (Saputri 2025).

The principles of Islamic economics, which encompass the values of justice (*al-'adl*), balance (*al-tawazun*), and togetherness (*al-musyarakah*), constitute a fundamental foundation in building an ethical and socially just economic order. These values not only emphasize the equitable distribution of economic outcomes but also direct economic activities to run harmoniously between individuals, society, and the environment. In this context, the Islamic economic system is not oriented toward mere profit achievement or wealth accumulation by a handful of parties, but rather focuses on creating shared welfare and socio-economic sustainability. Through the application of justice, balance, and togetherness, it is expected to create an inclusive economic system where every individual has equal opportunities to participate, benefit, and contribute to realizing the overall prosperity of the community (Mubarok, Hikam, and Ghifari 2025).

In the global context marked by increasing cross-border economic interactions, the principle of justice becomes a very important foundation in the Islamic economic system. Justice in the Islamic perspective is not only interpreted as an equal distribution of profits among involved parties but also encompasses the proportional fulfillment of rights and obligations. This principle demands integrity in every transaction, where economic actors are required to be honest, not to commit fraud, and to avoid practices that harm other parties. Furthermore, transparency becomes a key element to ensure information disclosure so that economic decisions can be made fairly and responsibly. Justice is also closely related to social responsibility, namely concern for the impact of economic activities on society and the environment (Paryanti and Sangapan 2025).

Dishonest trading practices remain a crucial issue that ignores consumer rights in the modern era. Phenomena such as scale fraud, unclear information regarding product specifications, and unilateral market price manipulation are often encountered in daily buying and selling activities. These behaviors not only harm consumers financially but also damage the ethical order of business and the healthy business climate. The lack of awareness among some business actors regarding the importance of justice and transparency is the main driver for the persistence of these deviations (Meriza Elpha Darnia et al. 2024).

The impact of these deviant practices is directly felt by the community, who are in a weaker bargaining position compared to sellers. When product information is concealed or falsified, consumers lose their right to obtain goods that correspond to the value of the money they spend. Additionally, scale fraud and manipulative pricing erode the trust between traders and buyers. If left without strict law enforcement and continuous education, this phenomenon has the potential to undermine the integrity of economic transactions as a whole (Setiawati, Maulida, and Nisa 2023).

The application of honesty, justice, and responsibility in business activities can create a positive perception in the eyes of consumers and become the main foundation for business sustainability. Honesty in conveying product information, prices, and service quality will foster trust, making consumers feel secure in making decisions. Justice is reflected through equal treatment of all consumers, fair pricing, and transactions that are free from fraud and exploitation. Meanwhile, business responsibility is manifested through a commitment to maintaining product quality, providing optimal service, and considering the social and environmental impacts of business activities. The application of these three values not only strengthens the company's image and reputation but also encourages the creation of long-term relationships with consumers. Consumers who feel valued and treated fairly tend to have high loyalty, recommend products to others, and support sustainable business growth (Mubtadiah and Su 2025).

In practical terms, the integration of *al-'adl* and *ash-shidq* has a direct impact on business sustainability and consumer protection in the market. When traders uphold honesty in conveying product quality and practice fairness in measurements and profit margins, social trust between sellers and buyers will be firmly established. This trust is the most valuable social capital for creating a stable, harmonious trading ecosystem free from horizontal conflict. Conversely, the neglect of these two principles will only bring inequality, erode public trust, and damage the overall business climate (Apriliani and Mira 2024).

Traditional markets in Metro City still hold a strategic role as the heartbeat center of the local community's economy. As one of the developing secondary cities in Lampung Province, the dynamics of trading activities in Metro City's markets display their own uniqueness, where social interactions and economic transactions take place directly and intensively every day. The density of goods flow, the diversity of traders' backgrounds, and the rhythm of buying and selling activities that begin early in the morning create a commercial landscape rich in empirical information. These characteristics make Metro City's traditional markets an ideal space for observing economic behavior phenomena, business ethics, and transactional realities at the grassroots level.

However, behind their economic vitality, the condition of traditional markets in Metro City is also marked by various structural and cultural challenges that are interesting to study in depth. Issues of product information transparency, variations in stall arrangements, measurement accuracy, and pricing dynamics often color the daily transaction patterns between traders and buyers. The presence of competition among traders amid retail modernization also influences how local business actors maintain their business continuity. This situation provides a highly relevant and rich contextual background for this research to critically dissect the reality of trading practices, trust relationships, and the application of buying and selling ethical values in the local traditional market ecosystem.

Various previous studies have discussed the application of sharia principles in the business world. Economics discusses how humans make choices in determining the types of goods to be consumed based on their income. Consumption activities are carried out to fulfill various needs, as long as they remain in line with and do not contradict the values and principles taught by Islam(Qolbi et al. n.d.). In the Islamic context, buying and selling transactions are not only viewed as economic activities but also as part of worship that demands honesty, justice, and moral responsibility from both parties. Therefore, buying and selling practices reflect the socio-economic behavior of society and religiosity applied in daily life (Rabbani et al. n.d.). The studies conducted by Qolbi and Rabbani traced the sharia principles practiced by communities in conducting transactions. However, their studies are still limited to transactions in general without deeply examining how the principles of justice and honesty are actually implemented in daily trading activities. Thus, there remains a research gap regarding the application of these two main principles of sharia business in the traditional market environment, which is the center of people's economic activity (Rabbani et al., n.d.).

RESEARCH METHOD

This research uses a qualitative approach with descriptive methods. This approach was chosen because it aims to understand in depth how the principles of justice and honesty are applied in sharia business practices in the traditional market of Metro City, Lampung. The qualitative method allows researchers to explore social phenomena and trader behavior based on the real context in the field. This research seeks to describe the actual conditions regarding the application of the principles of justice and honesty in trading activities in traditional markets, without manipulating the variables under study.

The data sources in this research consist of primary data, namely data obtained directly from in-depth interviews and observations of traders, buyers, and traditional market managers in Metro City, and secondary data, namely data obtained from various literature, such as scientific journals, previous research results, articles, and official documents relevant to the research theme, particularly those related to the principles of justice, honesty, and sharia business.

Data collection techniques were carried out through several stages: first, Observation, to directly observe buying and selling practices, trader behavior, and interactions between sellers and buyers in the traditional market. Second, Interviews, conducted in-depth with a number of informants consisting of traders, buyers, and community leaders or parties who understand sharia business principles. Third, Documentation, in the form of field notes such as photographs.

The data processing techniques for data collected through observation, interviews, and documentation were then processed through several stages, namely: first, Data reduction, which is the process of selecting, simplifying, and focusing on data relevant to the research focus. second, Data display, which is organizing data in descriptive narrative form to make it easy to understand and analyze. third, Conclusion drawing, which is interpreting research findings to obtain an in-depth understanding of the application of the principles of justice and honesty in sharia business practices in traditional markets.

Data analysis techniques were carried out using descriptive qualitative methods covering three main stages: data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. Data were analyzed continuously from the beginning of data collection to the final stage of the research, so that the results could provide a comprehensive picture of the implementation of the principles of justice and honesty in the context of sharia business in the traditional market of Metro City, Lampung.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This research was conducted at Pasar Kopindo, which is the center of economic activity and the main traditional market in Metro City, Lampung. As the center of the flow of local goods and services, this market holds a strategic role in supporting the socio-economic activities of the local community. The trading ecosystem at Pasar Kopindo is characterized by the high diversity of commodities offered, including staple foods, agricultural products, clothing commodities, and household goods. The majority of business entities operating in this area are classified as Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) with proven business sustainability, having conducted commercial activities for more than five years.

Transaction procedures at Pasar Kopindo are characterized by conventional buying and selling mechanisms that take place offline and face-to-face between traders and buyers without the involvement of intermediaries. Additionally, cash-based payment instruments remain the dominant mode in settling daily transactions. In the Islamic economic perspective, this direct interaction structure creates relevant empirical space to evaluate the internalization and manifestation of sharia ethical values at the grassroots level, particularly the application of the principle of justice (*al-'adl*) in the constellation of measurement/pricing and the principle of honesty (*ash-shidq*) in product information disclosure (Septiani and Hadziq 2023).

From the interview results, many traders expressed that they strive to remain honest in weighing activities and determining prices. They understand that dishonesty such as reducing measurements or raising prices excessively can harm customers and reduce public trust. One trader at Pasar Kopindo said: "If I weigh less, that means I am cheating. I prefer to add a little weight so that buyers feel satisfied and come back again." This reflects an emerging ethical awareness that honesty is not merely a religious demand but also an approach to building customer loyalty. However, in practice, there is still a small group of traders who perform inaccurate weighing or use manual scales that are no longer accurate.

The aspect of product information transparency shows varied patterns of business ethics application among business actors. On one side, some traders have internalized the principle of honesty (*ash-shidq*) by actively practicing information disclosure, such as explicitly communicating the condition of commodities nearing their expiration date or experiencing technical quality degradation. This practice reflects efforts to guarantee consumers' right to accurate information. However, on the other side, indications of deliberate information asymmetry are still found, where sellers passively or actively conceal commodity defects. This phenomenon is prevalent in perishable goods categories, such as vegetables and fruits, driven by pragmatic urges to deplete stock to minimize financial loss risk.

In the normative framework of Islamic economics, the act of concealing product defects in pursuit of financial profit margins constitutes a fundamental violation of transaction ethics (Syahra et al. 2024). The deliberate concealment of defective product information falls under the practice of fraud (*tadlis*), which undermines the validity and blessing of buying and selling transactions. This behavior explicitly contradicts prophetic ethical principles as affirmed in the hadith narrated by Muslim, where Prophet Muhammad SAW said: "Whoever cheats us is not one of us." The neglect of product condition disclosure not only violates the values of justice (*al-'adl*) and mutual consent (*an-taradin*) but also erodes the social capital of public trust in the traditional market ecosystem.

Regarding product information disclosure practices, it can be tentatively concluded that the application of the principle of honesty (*ash-shidq*) among traditional market traders remains at a dichotomous level. On one side, some business actors have demonstrated ethical awareness by practicing transparency regarding expiration dates and quality degradation. However, on the other side, the practice of concealing commodity defects, particularly in perishable goods, remains widespread as a pragmatic impulse to avoid financial losses.

Pricing fairness is a manifestation of the principle of *al-'adl*, which demands the placement of commodity value according to its rights and objective portion without causing injustice (*zalim*) to the transacting parties (Taimiyah n.d.). Empirically, the majority of business actors determine price structures based on operational costs and market mechanisms. However, in the dynamics of traditional markets, covert price discrimination practices are often found, where significant nominal disparities exist between loyal consumers and new consumers . Although this pattern is sociologically understood as part of the bargaining tradition, from the Islamic economic perspective, price differentiation without objective rationalization, such as differences in purchase volume or distribution costs, has the potential to create price injustice (*ghaban*). This practice violates consumers' right to equality in obtaining fair market prices (*thaman al-mithl*).

Fairness in product quality is also reflected in the correspondence between the economic value paid and the quality of goods received (Soumena, Imran, and Salsabila 2024). Some traders have consistently applied this standard of conformity. Nevertheless, manipulative practices in the form of product blending are still identified, namely combining premium quality goods with inferior quality commodities without adequate disclosure to buyers. In the discourse of sharia transaction ethics, this quality concealment act is classified as a form of qualitative fraud (*tadlis fi al-kayfiyyah*). The concealment of quality variations not only violates consumers' right to accurate information (right to accurate information) but also disrupts market transparency and undermines the validity of agreements based on mutual consent.

The application of the principle of justice (al-*'adl*) is not limited to the relationship between sellers and buyers but also encompasses industrial relations between employers and workers (Rofiq, Ihya'Uddin, and Hilmi 2025). In traditional markets, the utilization of daily workers or market porters plays a vital role in supporting the smooth flow of supply chains and daily logistics operations. However, field findings indicate vulnerabilities in the wage mechanism, where the financial compensation provided is often inconsistent with the initial agreement (breach of contract). Practices of wage delays or unilateral deductions are often justified by traders due to fluctuating turnover or decreased consumer visits. Sociologically, this condition places market workers in a very weak bargaining position (asymmetric bargaining position) and creates welfare uncertainty.

In the framework of muamalah ethics, the neglect of workers' rights to fair and timely compensation constitutes a form of structural injustice that violates socio-economic justice values (Chapra 2016). Islam provides very fundamental attention to the certainty of labor compensation through the fulfillment of wage contracts (*ijarah*). The act of delaying or ignoring workers' rights unilaterally explicitly contradicts prophetic doctrine regarding the urgency of timely wage payment, as affirmed in the hadith narrated by Ibn Majah: "Give the worker his wages before his sweat dries." In the context of sharia business governance, wage delays without urgent reasons under Islamic law (*syar'i*) not only damage the integrity of the contract but also erode social capital and the value of blessings (*barakah*) in the local trading ecosystem(Ascarya 2022).

Based on the analysis of the justice dimension in labor relations and wages in traditional markets, it can be tentatively concluded that the application of muamalah ethics in the employment domain (*ijarah*) still faces structural inequality challenges. Although the utilization of market porters plays a vital role in maintaining the smooth flow of supply chains and daily logistics, wage practices in the field have not fully reflected the principles of justice (*al-'adl*) and contractual certainty. The existence of unilateral delays and compensation deductions triggered by fluctuations in traders' turnover indicates that business risks are often transferred to workers who are in a weaker bargaining position.

CONCLUSION

The application of Islamic business ethics in Metro City's market is still in a transitional phase characterized by gaps between normative understanding and empirical practice at the grassroots level. In the aspect of honesty (*ash-shidq*), a dichotomous pattern occurs where the ethical awareness of some traders in maintaining measurement accuracy and commodity transparency coexists with information asymmetry practices, such as concealing product defects and qualitative fraud (*tadlis fi al-kayfiyyah*) in perishable goods. Meanwhile, in the dimension of justice (*al-'adl*), patterns of covert price discrimination (*ghaban*) between new and loyal consumers are still sociologically justified. Furthermore, in the realm of labor relations (*ijarah*), structural inequality was found in the form of unilateral wage delays and deductions for market workers due to the transfer of business risks to parties with weak bargaining positions.

This research has several methodological limitations. First, the spatial scope of the research is limited to the context of the market in Metro City, so the dynamics found may not be directly generalizable to the characteristics of traditional markets in metropolitan cities or other regions with different cultures. Second, the qualitative approach used emphasizes observation and in-depth interviews, so it has not quantitatively measured the extent of consumer financial losses or the impact of ethical variables on trader profitability statistically.

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