



## Al-Muhajirin International Conference

### Business ethics in Islamic economics based on the Qur'anic perspective

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#### Abstract

This article aims to analyze the application of Qur'anic verses concerning business ethics in Islamic economics to business practices. This study employs a qualitative method to provide a deep understanding of Islamic business ethics from the Qur'anic perspective. The primary data source consists of relevant Qur'anic verses, while secondary sources include academic literature and publications. Data were collected through a literature review involving journal articles and scholarly works related to Islamic economic ethics. The analysis was conducted using descriptive techniques to elaborate on the findings. The results show that Surah *An-Nahl* verse 90 encourages justice and kindness, while Surah *Al-Isrā'* verse 35 promotes fairness in measurement and scale, both of which are foundational ethical principles in business practices. Islamic business ethics requires adherence to both the substance and formal aspects of *shari'ah*. The internalization of the Prophet Muhammad's noble character in daily business activities will facilitate alignment with Islamic principles.

**Keywords:** Qur'an; Business ethics; Islamic economics; Shari'ah; Justice

#### INTRODUCTION

The foundation of this study is rooted in the concept of business ethics in Islamic economics from a Qur'anic perspective. Prophet Muhammad ﷺ was sent to perfect noble character, and he instructed his followers to uphold justice in every action as a means to foster compassion among human beings (Mutmainah, Maemanah, & Kurniawan, 2021). In Islam, ethics and moral values are essential to every aspect of life, including economic transactions, which must be conducted ethically and in accordance with Islamic principles.

Islamic business ethics places significant emphasis on distinguishing between *halāl* (permissible) and *harām* (prohibited) activities. These ethics demand that Muslims conduct business in a manner that aligns with divine commands as stated in the Qur'an and the ḥadīth. Ethical guidelines function as a moral compass for entrepreneurs, guiding them through dilemmas that may arise in commercial activities

(Baidowi, 2016). A solid grasp of ethical principles reduces the likelihood of business failure, as the entrepreneur operates within the boundaries of righteousness. These ethical norms govern interactions with stakeholders and institutions, ensuring fair and transparent transactions.

Previous studies have explored various aspects of Islamic business ethics. Ardi (2015) found that Islamic business ethics differ from secular or non-Muslim perspectives that often emphasize materialism. Instead, Muslim business practices are anchored in religious values such as *'aqidah*, and place equal importance on both material and spiritual success—including accountability, the growth of *zakāh*, and long-term blessings (*barakah*).

Maulida and Aisyah (2024) emphasized the importance of justice and responsibility in building sustainable businesses. In line with Islamic principles, ethical business models must incorporate transparency, social responsibility, environmental sustainability, community participation, and innovation.

Baidowi (2016) further elaborated that Islamic ethical principles not only regulate behavior but also aim to attain *barakah*, rewarding individuals in both this life and the hereafter. Islamic ethics, guided by divine revelation (*naṣṣ*) and rationality (*'aql*), aim to shape moral behavior and create a balanced social order.

Another example comes from Tohawi, Iswanto, and Fitrtotus SaDiyah (2023), who studied shallot traders in Sukomoro Market. Their study showed that Islamic ethical principles—justice, freedom, and *ihsān*—were effectively implemented by Muslim traders. However, non-Muslim traders were less familiar with the Islamic concepts of *tawhīd* and accountability, though they operated under similar ethical practices. Community training was recommended to improve awareness of Islamic norms among traders.

Syahputri and Suryaningsih (2022) investigated trading practices at Kedurus Market, Surabaya, and noted that although Islamic business ethics—unity, balance, free will, and responsibility—were mostly observed, the principle of honesty was often neglected. Sellers did not consistently disclose the quality of goods, though overall, transactions adhered to Islamic legal and ethical standards.

From these studies, it is evident that business ethics significantly influence the development of Islamic economic practices. Sound ethical conduct brings prosperity and divine blessings (*barakah*) in both worlds. However, while these studies address ethical practices broadly, a focused analysis of Islamic business ethics based specifically on the Qur'anic text remains lacking. Therefore, this research aims to address this gap by critically examining business ethics in Islamic economics based on the Qur'anic perspective.

## RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs a qualitative research method. According to Sugiyono (2017), qualitative methods are rooted in phenomenological philosophy, which is used to explore the conditions of natural objects, where the researcher acts as the primary instrument. The qualitative approach was selected to gain a holistic understanding of business ethics in Islamic economics from the perspective of the Qur'an.

This approach emphasizes meaning and interpretation rather than numerical data. The primary data source in this research consists of verses from the *al-Qur'an* along with their interpretations (*tafsīr*) provided by classical and contemporary

scholars. Secondary data were gathered from scholarly articles, academic journals, and books related to the topic of Islamic business ethics.

The data used in this study are qualitative in nature, comprising Qur'anic verses and narrative texts. The data collection technique involved a literature review, which included the identification, evaluation, and synthesis of relevant texts. This process focused on Qur'anic verses that explicitly address ethical values, as well as interpretations found in various exegeses and academic publications concerning Islamic economics and business ethics.

The analytical method used is a thematic analysis, which seeks to identify patterns and concepts within the data. This technique enables the researcher to construct a detailed understanding of the ethical teachings embedded in the Qur'anic discourse. Themes such as justice ('adl), benevolence (*ihsān*), balance (*mīzān*), and truthfulness (*sidq*) are identified and examined in relation to business practices. This method ensures that the interpretation of Qur'anic ethics remains grounded in both textual evidence and scholarly commentary.

By using this methodological approach, the study aims to present a comprehensive picture of how Islamic business ethics, as derived from the *al-Qur'ān*, should be implemented in modern economic practices.

## DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS

### *Business Ethics in Islamic Economics*

The term *ethos* (Greek) means custom or habit and forms the root of the concept of ethics. In practice, ethics refers to norms of appropriate behavior at both individual and societal levels. Ethics thus becomes a code of conduct that should be observed by all, including business actors. Business ethics in Islam is not merely a moral guideline; it is a divine mandate grounded in the teachings of the *al-Qur'ān* and *Sunnah*.

Islamic economists define economic ethics as a discipline that seeks to ensure human welfare through economic activity grounded in both rationality ('aql) and revelation (*naṣṣ*) (Baidowi, 2016; Desiana & Afrianty, 2017). It addresses both the positive and negative aspects of human behavior, striving for universal standards of ethical conduct applicable across cultures and eras. However, achieving universal application is often challenged by cultural and ideological differences regarding what constitutes good and bad.

Islamic business ethics is shaped by fundamental principles derived from *sharī'ah*. These principles include:

1. **Tawhīd (Unity):** Human actions, including economic ones, must be directed toward pleasing Allah ﷺ, recognizing His sovereignty in all affairs.
2. **'Adl (Justice):** Fairness must be upheld in all transactions. In commerce, this includes honest measurement and weighing of goods (Mutmainah et al., 2021).
3. **Ikhtiyār (Free Will):** Humans are granted free will by Allah ﷺ, but it must be exercised within the boundaries of Islamic law (*hudūd*).
4. **Mas'ūliyyah (Responsibility):** Freedom must be accompanied by accountability. Humans are stewards of resources and must use them justly and responsibly (Maulida & Aisyah, 2024).

5. **Ṣidq (Truthfulness):** Honesty is essential in transactions. Trade is not merely a material exchange but also a moral and spiritual act.
6. **Iḥsān (Excellence):** Actions should go beyond justice to embody benevolence and benefit others.

Islamic teachings emphasize that all consumption and economic activities must be both *ḥalāl* (lawful) and *ṭayyib* (wholesome). Seeking wealth and distributing it fairly are forms of obedience to Allah ﷺ. Economics, from the Islamic perspective, is the science of managing scarce resources to fulfill human needs ethically and justly.

A business is considered ethical if it contributes positively to the welfare of society. Ethical behavior stems from personal character, shaped by consistent spiritual training and moral practice (Koni, 2017). Therefore, Islamic ethics and economics are inseparable; economic activity inevitably intersects with ethical concerns because it involves human interaction and societal well-being.

### ***Al-Qur'anic Perspective on Business Ethics***

The Arabic term for Islamic economics is *al-iqtisād al-Islāmī*. Linguistically, *al-iqtisād* derives from *al-qasd*, which means fairness or moderation. It also carries the connotations of strength, clarity, and simplicity. Islamic economics is a branch of social science that investigates economic activities guided by the *al-Qur'ān* and *Sunnah* (Silviyah & Lestari, 2022).

The *Qur'ān* introduces several ethical concepts relevant to economic life, including:

1. **khayr** (goodness)
2. **birr** (righteousness)
3. **qist** (equity)
4. **'adl** (justice)
5. **ḥaqq** (truth)
6. **ma'rūf** (known and accepted good)
7. **taqwā** (piety)

Acts of goodness are referred to as *ṣālihāt*, whereas disgraceful acts are known as *sayyi'āt*.

One of the clearest articulations of Islamic ethical standards appears in Surah *An-Nāḥl* verse 90:

إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَأْمُرُ بِالْعَدْلِ وَالْإِحْسَانِ وَإِيتَاءِ ذِي الْقُرْبَىٰ وَيَنْهَا عَنِ الْفَحْشَاءِ وَالْمُنْكَرِ وَالْبَغْيِ ۝ يَعِظُمُ لِعَذَابُ الظَّالِمِونَ

"Indeed, Allah commands justice ('adl), excellence (*iḥsān*), and giving to relatives, and He forbids immorality, bad conduct, and oppression. He admonishes you so that you may take heed." (Qur'an 16:90)

This verse represents a concise yet comprehensive moral code. It emphasizes not only formal justice but also *iḥsān*, which means acting with benevolence and moral excellence. At the same time, it warns against immorality and injustice. Scholars such as Ibn Mas'ūd noted that this verse encompasses the broadest spectrum of good and evil contained in the Qur'an (Mutmainah et al., 2021).

In the realm of business, this guidance manifests in the duty to avoid deception and uphold fairness. For instance, consider a merchant who mixes spoiled fruit with fresh ones to deceive buyers, or one who falsely claims their honey is pure. Both examples represent *mukhālafah* (violation) of Islamic business ethics. Islam teaches that

a Muslim must remain truthful and fair in trade. Honesty in measuring and weighing goods is especially emphasized because it is a matter that only the trader and Allah ﷺ know fully.

This is further supported by Surah *Al-Isrā'* verse 35:

وَأَوْفُوا الْكِيلَ إِذَا كِتَمْ وَرَزُّوَا بِالْقِسْنَاطِينَ الْمُسْتَقِيمَ ۝ ذَلِكَ خَيْرٌ وَأَحْسَنَ تَأْوِيلٌ

*"And give full measure when you measure, and weigh with an even balance. That is better and the best result." (Qur'an 17:35)*

According to Quraish Shihab, the phrase *al-qisṭās al-mustaqqīm* implies precision and integrity in transactions. This verse encourages ethical business by ensuring consumers are not cheated and their rights are preserved (Surat Al-Isra Ayat 35, n.d.).

Proper measurement and weighing in commerce create trust and bring about social harmony. Fulfillment of financial and material rights is a duty in Islam, and violating these rights through dishonest trade practices results in injustice (*zulm*) and loss of divine blessing (*barakah*).

These verses illustrate that ethical business practices are an extension of religious obedience. They reveal a Qur'anic moral framework that links integrity in trade directly to the believer's relationship with Allah ﷺ and society at large.

### **Correlation of Surah *An-Nahl*:90 and *Al-Isrā'*:35 with Business Ethics**

The ethical principles embedded in Surah *An-Nahl* verse 90 and Surah *Al-Isrā'* verse 35 are closely aligned with the foundational concepts of Islamic business ethics. These verses outline a moral framework that addresses both personal integrity and social justice, offering guidance particularly relevant to economic activities.

#### **Surah *An-Nahl*:90**

إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَأْمُرُ بِالْعَدْلِ

*"Indeed, Allah commands justice..."*

According to Sufyān ibn 'Uyaynah, '*adl*' in this verse is defined as the equilibrium between the internal and external dimensions of human actions done sincerely for the sake of Allah ﷺ. Meanwhile, *al-faḥshā'* (indecency) and *al-munkar* (evil) represent actions where the outward appears better than the inward. Conversely, *iḥsān* denotes that one's inner state is superior to the outer display of actions. These ethical calibrations call upon Muslims to align their internal intentions with outward conduct—especially in business, where deceptive practices often thrive behind appealing facades (Mutmainah et al., 2021).

The phrase *وَابْتَاعَ ذِي الْقُرْبَى* ("...and giving to relatives") emphasizes the social dimension of business ethics, namely the obligation to support and uplift close kin, further reinforcing the role of business as a tool for social welfare and equity.

#### **Surah *Al-Isrā'*:35**

وَأَوْفُوا الْكِيلَ إِذَا كِتَمْ وَرَزُّوَا بِالْقِسْنَاطِينَ الْمُسْتَقِيمَ

*"Give full measure when you measure, and weigh with an even balance."*

This verse calls for honesty in trade, particularly in the context of weights and measures. According to al-Rāghib al-Asfahānī, the term *al-qisṭās al-mustaqqīm* signifies

ذَلِكَ خَيْرٌ وَأَحْسَنُ تَأْوِيلًا ("That is better and the best outcome") is interpreted by al-Asfahānī as indicating that fair dealings lead to desirable results—such as customer satisfaction, trust, and sustained blessings (*barakah*) (Surat Al-Isra Ayat 35, n.d.).

From an ethical business standpoint, these verses serve to:

1. **Prohibit dishonest practices**, such as falsifying weights or misrepresenting product quality.
2. **Promote moral integrity**, as traders are expected to uphold justice even in hidden matters—actions known only to them and to Allah ﷺ.
3. **Encourage social responsibility**, aligning commercial gain with social benefit, particularly towards vulnerable groups like orphans and the poor.

If implemented, these Qur'anic ethics will yield not only economic sustainability but also spiritual rewards, elevating commerce from mere profit-making to an act of worship. As Baidowi (2016) asserted, when business adheres to these divine principles, it becomes a means of attaining success in both this world and the hereafter.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the discussion above, it is evident that ethics play a pivotal role in the practice of Islamic economics, particularly in commercial transactions and entrepreneurial activities. Surah *An-Nahl* verse 90 underscores the importance of justice ('adl), benevolence (*ihsān*), and the obligation to care for relatives. It also firmly prohibits immoral conduct, evil, and oppression—establishing a moral compass that guides both individual and collective behavior in economic life (Mutmainah, Maemanah, & Kurniawan, 2021).

Meanwhile, Surah *Al-Isrā'* verse 35 highlights the necessity of maintaining honesty in measurements and weights during trade, as a form of fulfilling the rights of others. This Qur'anic command ensures that business interactions are fair, transparent, and trustworthy—thereby promoting consumer protection, social harmony, and mutual confidence in economic dealings (Surat Al-Isra Ayat 35, n.d.).

Ethics in Islamic economics encompass principles such as integrity, transparency, reciprocity, and accountability. When these principles are consistently applied, they foster a business environment characterized by peace, justice, and sustainable prosperity. Islam explicitly forbids practices that cause harm to others, including *ribā* (usury), fraud, deceit, and exploitation.

In conclusion, adherence to Islamic business ethics not only ensures lawful profit but also brings about blessings (*barakah*) and spiritual fulfillment. By rooting economic practices in Qur'anic ethics, Muslims are able to contribute to the welfare of both individuals and society. Consequently, cultivating a fair, trustworthy, and ethically grounded business environment is not only a religious imperative but also a pathway to holistic development in the Islamic economic system.

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