

IMPLEMENTATION OF ISLAMIC BUSINESS ETHICS IN BROWN SUGAR PRODUCTION CHAIN IN WEST OTAM VILLAGE, NORTH SULAWESI

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyze the implementation of Islamic business ethics principles in the production practices and transactions of buying and selling brown sugar in West Otam Village and its implications on the sustainability of producers' income. The research uses a qualitative method with a field study approach. Data were collected through participatory observation, semistructured interviews with producers, collectors, and consumers, and documentation, then analyzed using Miles and Huberman's interactive model with source triangulation techniques and techniques. The results of the study show that the economic practices of the people of West Otam Village have substantively reflected the main values of Islamic business ethics, especially honesty (shiddiq), mutual willingness (an-tarāḍin), and

responsibility (mas'uliyah), even though the business actors do not understand these concepts formally. The heavy inconsistency of the product due to the use of traditional molds does not give rise to the element of gharar in a substantive way because it is mitigated through information disclosure and agreement between the manufacturer and the buyer. The quality integrity of products without chemical mixtures is proven to build consumer trust and loyalty, which contributes to the stability of producers' income. However, the study also found that some small producers have some bargaining position against collectors, indicating that distributive justice is not optimal. This study concludes that Islamic business ethics not only function as a normative guideline, but also as a rational economic strategy in supporting the sustainability of rural micro business income. Therefore, this study recommends strengthening sharia-based local economic institutions as well as simple standardization of production tools to improve the justice and economic sustainability of the community.

Keywords: Brown Sugar, Islamic Business Ethics, Producer Income, Rural Economics.

INTRODUCTION

Economic activities in the form of buying and selling are an inseparable part of human life and are the main means of meeting the needs of life. From an Islamic perspective, economic activities are not only oriented towards achieving material gains but must also be carried out in accordance with sharia principles that emphasize justice, honesty, and social responsibility (Antonio, 2001). Islam expressly prohibits economic practices that contain elements of fraud, injustice, and the unlawful taking of the rights of others, as well as encouraging the creation of mutually beneficial and beneficial transactions (QS. An-Nisa: 29).

At the people's economic level, especially in rural areas, the production and buying and selling of traditional commodities such as brown sugar have a crucial role in supporting household income. Brown sugar processed from palm sap in West Otam Village is a superior product that is pursued by around 30 families, where this production is the main focus of the local community's economy. However, the results of initial observations show the existence of a phenomenon of ethical vulnerability in the transaction chain. Researchers found that the weight of brown sugar products was often inconsistent (varying between 8 and 9 ounces per piece) due to the use of non-uniform-sized coconut shell molds, while transactions were often made in bulk without accurate reweighing in the presence of buyers. In addition, there is a pattern of producer dependence on certain collectors in pricing, which risks ignoring the principles of transparency and price fairness if it is not based on Sharia values. Without standardization of measuring instruments and internalization of Islamic business ethics, these traditional economic practices have the potential to ignore consumer rights and the sustainability of the producer's own income.

Literature review shows that attention to the application of Islamic business ethics in community economic activities is increasing, especially in the micro and traditional business sectors. However, empirical studies that specifically review the alignment of brown sugar production and buying practices with sharia principles are still very limited. For example, research conducted by Putri (2022) focuses more on the economic potential of palm sugar production in general without touching the aspects of transactional ethics in depth. Likewise, a study Riskawati (2023) that evaluates business ethics in traditional markets has not yet photographed specific problems in the supply chain of plantation commodities at the village level. The fundamental difference between this study and previous studies lies in the unique characteristics of brown sugar in West Otam Village, where the production process still uses traditional molds that trigger severe inconsistencies, but is still able to support the income of up to Rp7,000,000 per month for the producer. The main focus of this research is not only on marketing management, but on an empirical analysis of the value of balance fairness and price transparency, which is a crucial point in maintaining the sustainability of rural people's income.

Based on these conditions, the novelty of this research lies in an in-depth analysis of the practice of buying and selling brown sugar which is integrated with the local wisdom of West Otam Village through the perspective of Islamic business ethics. In contrast to qualitative research in general, this study specifically dissects the phenomenon of using traditional coconut shell molds that has implications for variations in product weight between 8 to 9 ounces. The focus of this research is not only on the aspect of honesty in general, but on how the principle of *antaradhin* (shared willingness) is implemented as an ethical solution to the technical inconsistency through the mechanism of information disclosure at the producer level. In addition, this study evaluates how the internalization of sharia values is maintained in the midst of traditional transaction patterns that rely heavily on the emotional relationship between producers and local collectors. Thus, this study not only assesses economic efficiency, but positions indicators of justice (*'adl*) and responsibility (*mas'uliyah*) in the context of solving technical production problems that are unique in rural areas.

Based on this background, the main focus of this research is directed at exploring how to implement Islamic business ethics principles in the production chain and brown sugar buying and selling transactions in West Otam Village. Specifically, this study explores the extent to which the value of fairness in scales and pricing transparency is integrated into the traditional economic practices of local communities, as well as how these ethical dynamics have implications for the income stability of producers. In line with that, this article aims to analyze in depth the mechanism of buying and selling brown sugar as an instrument to improve the economic welfare of the community in West Otam Village, West Passi District, within the framework of comprehensive Islamic business ethics.

METHODS

This study uses a qualitative method with a field research approach. The location of the research was determined in West Otam Village, West Passi District, which was chosen deliberately (*purposive*) because it is one of the largest brown sugar production centers in the region with production characteristics that still maintain traditional printing tools. This research was carried out for three months, , to get a comprehensive picture of the production cycle and seasonal transaction patterns.

The informants in this study were determined using the purposive sampling technique, which is to select individuals who are considered to best understand the phenomenon being studied. The informants consist of 10 brown sugar business actors (producers) who have been operating for more than 10 years, 2 local collectors/middlemen, and 5 regular consumers. The determination of this criterion aims to ensure the depth of data related to the history of production practices, price fluctuations, and the dynamics of buying and selling interactions.

The types of data include primary data and secondary data. Primary data is obtained through direct interaction in the field, while secondary data is sourced from village profiles, sales records, and relevant documentation. The data collection technique was carried out through participatory observation, to directly observe the process of tapping sap, cooking, to weighing practices and transactions in the market or at the producer's house, Semi-structured interviews, were chosen so that the researcher has the flexibility to dig deeper into information beyond the rigid question guide. Abstract principles of Islamic business ethics are translated into operational indicators, such as honesty measured through transparency in the use of additives (non-chemical) and product measurements; justice is measured through price agreements without coercion; and responsibility is measured through the manufacturer's response to product quality complaints and documentation, to record physical evidence in the form of printing tools, production processes, and transaction records.

The research instrument is the researcher himself (*human instrument*), which is supported by interview guidelines and observation sheets. Data analysis follows an interactive model from Miles et al. (2014), which includes the data reduction stage, the presentation of data in the form of an analytical narrative, and the verification and drawing of conclusions on an ongoing basis.

To ensure the validity and reliability of the findings, this study uses data triangulation techniques. Triangulation is carried out in two ways: (1) Source Triangulation, which is comparing information about the price and weight of the product between farmers, collectors, and buyers; and (2) Technical Triangulation, which is verifying the conformity between the informant's statements in the interview and the facts found by the researcher during direct observation in the field.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This study involved nine informants who were selected *purposively*. This study provides a more transparent picture of the economic contribution of brown sugar production to household income, the data of producer informants is presented in the following table:

Table 1. Production Profile and Estimated Revenue of Brown Sugar Producers

No.	Informant Initials	Length of Operation (Years)	Production Capacity (per week)	Selling Price (per kg)	Estimated Maximum Revenue (Per Month)
1	OL	30	50 Kg	Rp 25.000	Rp 5.000.000
2	SN	15	80 Kg	Rp 25.000	Rp 7.000.000
3	MN	20	40 Kg	Rp 25.000	Rp 4.000.000
4	RT	7	25 Kg	Rp 25.000	Rp 3.000.000
5	KM	12	30 Kg	Rp 25.000	Rp 3.000.000

Source: Processed Primary Data (2024)

In addition to producers, this study also interviewed four buyers consisting of two end consumers (households) and two collectors (middlemen). Collectors are chosen because they have stricter standards of feasibility than the end consumer, especially regarding the consistency of weight and physical quality of sugar.

Scale Fairness Analysis: Between Technical Constraints and Gharar Mitigation

Crucial findings in the field show that there are severe inconsistencies in brown sugar products. The majority of manufacturers use traditional coconut shell or wood molds that do not have precision volume standards, so the weight of one piece of sugar is often not even 1 kg (ranging from 850g – 950g). From the perspective of Islamic Business Ethics, this condition is particularly sensitive given the strict prohibitions in QS. Al-Mutaffifin (1-3) regarding the reduction of the dose. However, this study found a mitigation mechanism to avoid the elements of *Gharar* (uncertainty) and *Tadlis* (fraud) through two ways, namely first, information disclosure (*At-Tabayyun*) where the producer honestly explains from the beginning that "one fruit" does not always mean "one kilogram" as conveyed by the OL Informant who stated that "*I tell the buyer that sometimes the contents are less because of the influence of cooking or molding.*" The second way is compensation and bonuses, as a form of responsibility (*mas'uliyah*), if there is a significant weight shortfall in a package, the manufacturer often gives a discount or additional small pieces of sugar as a "bonus" or fulfillment.

This analysis shows that although there is technically a lack of measurement, *the Gharar element is lost* due to transparency. Transactions switch from buying and selling based on absolute scales to buying and selling based on agreements (*An-Taradhin*) on units of goods whose condition has been known by both parties.

Implementation of Shiddiq Values and Ethical Challenges in the Field

Conformity with *the principle of Shiddiq* (honesty) is seen in the production process. In the midst of economic temptation to mix sap with chemical preservatives or artificial sweeteners to produce more production, informants in West Otam Village continue to maintain the use of natural ingredients (betel lime and coconut fiber). This is done to maintain the trust of long-term buyers. Nevertheless, the study found ethical irregularities in the level of transactions with collectors. There is economic pressure that makes some producers feel "forced" to accept the low price set by collectors due to the urgent need for cash. In this context, the principle of free will (*Al-Hurriyah*) is slightly injured due to the weak bargaining position of producers. It is a note that even though production practices are sharia, the distribution chain still leaves challenges in terms of price justice.

Buyer Perception: End Consumer vs Collector

The results of observations and interviews found that there was an interesting difference in perception between the two types of buyers. For consumers, the emphasis is more on the aspects of quality, taste and cleanliness. They tend to tolerate weight differences as long as the quality of sugar is considered premium. As for collectors, it is more critical of the weight. If the weight is not up to their standards, the collector will cut the price unilaterally. This is *where the importance of the responsibility (Ihsan)* of the producer lies in providing honest service so that there are no losses on the part of the collector who will resell the product.

Internalizing Islamic Business Ethics: Between Local Traditions and Sharia Principles

The results of the research in West Otam Village show that the principles of Islamic business ethics are implemented substantively even though producers do not understand the theoretical terminology formally. These findings are in line with research Irfan et al. (2023) which revealed that Islamic religiosity in rural communities does not stand as a mere normative concept, but is integrated with local customs and culture so as to shape daily economic norms, work ethic, and practices. In this context, economic activity is seen as part of devotion to God and an expression of society's socio-religious identity. This alignment emphasizes that the economic practices of the people of West Otam Village are driven by lived *Islamic values*, which are internalized in producer behavior and economic decision-making, although they are not always expressed in the conceptual framework or academic terms of Islamic business ethics.

These findings are also strengthened by Prayitno et al. (2019) which emphasizes that social networks, religious institutions, and cultural practices in rural areas are the main sources of social capital that shape the work ethic, honesty, and economic interaction patterns of village business actors. Religious and social values in this context are naturally internalized in economic and entrepreneurial behavior without having to be academically formulated by the perpetrators.

In line with that, an internal study Wicaksono et al. (2025) on orange farmers in rural areas shows that religious and social understanding underlies the way business actors make economic decisions, manage businesses, and interpret work as a form of worship. The study illustrates that "living" religious values are strongly attached to people's social identities and are reflected in everyday business practices, even if they are not expressed in the theoretical terminology of business ethics. This argument is further emphasized by Wicaksono et al. (2025) who explain that religion provides identities, norms, and social networks that direct economic behavior, especially in societies with a strong religious and cultural base in the local. Thus, economic practices in West Otam Village can be understood as

economic activities driven by Islamic values that have been integrated with the socio-religious identity of the community, not solely as a form of textual compliance with the concept of Islamic business ethics.

The Paradox of Scale Fairness: Transparency as a Gharar Mitigation

The paradox of scale fairness in the practice of buying and selling sugar in West Otam Village shows the tension between the ideal norm of scale accuracy and the technical reality of using traditional printing tools that results in weight variations (8–9 ounces). Normatively, this condition is directly intersecting with the prohibition of reducing scales as affirmed in the QS. Al-Mutaffifin. However, the findings of the study suggest that the element of gharar is not present substantively because the uncertainty is mitigated through information disclosure (*at-tabayyun*), where the producer honestly explains the weight range to the buyer and the transaction takes place on the basis of mutual consent (*an-tarāḍin*).

This finding is in line with Yarli et al. (2024) which affirm that small gharar can still be tolerated from the perspective of fiqh muamalah as long as it does not contain fraud, does not cause tyranny, and is accompanied by clarity and agreement from both parties. This argument is strengthened by Farikhin & Mulyasari, (2022) who emphasizes that the core of the gharar prohibition is not on technical uncertainty alone, but on the risk of loss due to information asymmetry. Therefore, disclosure serves as the main mechanism for preventing disputes and injustices.

The view of Candrawati & Robbani (2025) also emphasizes that *tadlīs* and concealment of information are the main sources of injustice in transactions, so transparency is the ethical key in maintaining the validity of contracts. On the other hand, a number of studies with a stricter approach such as Syarifudin (2019) and Dimas (2020) in the study of muamalah fiqh about cassava scales show that inaccuracies in scales that are not informed or detrimental to one of the parties are categorized as ethical violations and damage contracts.

These differences in findings confirm that the main problem is not only the existence or absence of the difference in scales, but also in the dimensions of transparency, buyer knowledge, and mutual willingness. Thus, the practice of buying and selling in West Otam Village represents a form of contextual justice, where transparency serves as a gharar mitigation mechanism, so that transactions remain within the corridor of Islamic business ethics even though they technically do not reach the perfection of the scales.

Quality Integrity and Its Impact on Customer Loyalty

The quality integrity shown by brown sugar producers in West Otam Village is reflected in their consistency in maintaining the purity of raw materials without chemical mixtures or sago flour. Honesty in this aspect of quality is a real

implementation of the principles of *shiddiq* and *trust* in Islamic business ethics, which directly builds trust as *the* main asset in the traditional supply chain.

These findings are in line with research Sikki et al. (2025) which show that the application of the principles of *shiddiq* and *amanah* in maintaining the quality and halalness of products has a positive effect on consumer trust, satisfaction, and the tendency to re-transact. Furthermore, Sukarningsih & Deliana (2019) emphasized that consistency in maintaining product quality is a manifestation of *the principle of ihsan* in muamalah, which has an impact on long-term reputation and customer loyalty, even in situations of fierce price competition. This argument is strengthened by Anas (2008) who explains that the internalization of Islamic ethical values, namely *shiddiq*, *amanah*, *tabligh*, and *fathanah* not only serves as a moral guideline, but also as a relational strategy that strengthens the long-term relationship between producers, collectors, and end consumers.

On the other hand, various fiqh muamalah studies and case studies of product transparency violations including studies on brown sugar adulteration and the Ajinomoto case show that dishonesty in product quality and composition leads to the collapse of public trust and a decrease in consumer loyalty. This contrast underscores the ethical superiority of producers in West Otam Village, who consciously reject the practice of mixing ingredients in order to maintain product purity. Thus, the quality integrity in West Otam Village not only serves as a fulfillment of the normative principles of Islamic business ethics, but also as a socio-economic foundation that strengthens customer satisfaction, trust, and loyalty in the long term.

The findings of this research can be formulated in a simple conceptual framework that explains the relationship between Islamic business ethics and consumer behavior in the context of rural businesses. The *principle of shiddiq* is reflected in the honesty of the manufacturer maintaining the quality purity of raw materials without mixtures that serve as an ethical foundation in the production and distribution process. The implementation of *shiddiq* forms *trust* at the level of consumers and collectors, because the quality of the product is consistent, safe, and in accordance with the information conveyed. Trust that is built repeatedly then develops into *loyalty*, characterized by repeated purchases, long-term preferences for certain producers, and the sustainability of relationships in traditional supply chains.

This framework affirms that Islamic business ethics do not stop at the normative dimension, but rather work as a relational mechanism that has a real economic impact. Thus, the theoretical contribution of this research lies in the affirmation that in the context of rural economics, *the value of shiddiq* operates as an ethical *trigger* that connects quality integrity with customer trust and loyalty, while strengthening the principle of *ihsan* as a long-term quality orientation in muamalah.

Business Ethics as a Realistic Revenue Increase Strategy

The findings of this study show that the increase in the income of brown sugar producers in West Otam Village in the range of Rp3,000,000-Rp7,000,000 per month reflects that moral compliance has real economic value. In this context, Islamic business ethics serve not only as a normative guideline, but also as a rational and realistic economic strategy.

Honest trading practices, consistently maintaining the halalness of products, and avoiding fraud have been proven to strengthen market confidence and ensure the sustainability of producers' income. These findings are in line with research Ihram et al. (2024) which shows that the integration of the values of honesty, justice, and social responsibility increases the competitiveness of MSMEs and contributes positively to local economic development. In addition, the study Umamy et al. (2025) emphasizes that the values of *shiddiq*, *amanah*, *tabligh*, and *fathanah* have a positive effect on MSME performance and business growth, so that business ethics play a role as a strategic variable that bridges halal practices with improving economic performance. This argument is strengthened by Harahap et al. (2023) and Judijanto et al. (2023) who found a significant relationship between the application of Islamic business ethics, sharia value-based leadership, and the financial performance of micro-enterprises in Indonesia.

Furthermore, the focus on halal principles as a business development strategy in West Otam Village is also in line with the model proposed in Panjaitan et al. (2025) which emphasizes that halal orientation can open wider market access and increase MSME income. However, some studies provide a critical note that sharia ethics and compliance alone are not enough to guarantee an automatic increase in income. The study Siregar et al. (2025) confirms that the impact of ethics on profitability can be hampered by managerial limitations, innovation, market access, and capital. Thus, the findings in West Otam Village show that Islamic business ethics function as a strategic foundation for realistic income increases, but its sustainability still requires the support of entrepreneurial competencies and business management that is adaptive to market dynamics.

In a conceptual model, this study was able to explain the mechanism of how Islamic business ethics contribute to the increase and sustainability of rural business actors' income. Ethical compliance, which is reflected in compliance with the principles of *shiddiq*, *trust*, and *halal orientation*, serves as the initial foundation of business practices. Ethical compliance builds trust among consumers and collectors, while expanding market access through a positive reputation, long-term relationships, and buyer preference for honest and consistent producers. Stronger trust and market access further encourage income sustainability, characterized by income stability and the ability to maintain an income range of IDR 3,000,000-IDR 7,000,000 per month on a sustainable basis.

This model asserts that Islamic business ethics play a role not only as a normative moral value, but also as a rational economic mechanism that links halal practices with business performance and revenue sustainability. Thus, the theoretical contribution of this research lies in the explanation of simple but contextual causal flows, which are relevant for small businesses and rural economies based on Islamic values.

Social Relations Dynamics and Distributive Justice

The dynamics of transactions in West Otam Village show a strong emotional relationship between palm sugar producers and buyers and collectors (Sudrajat et al. 2021), which is characterized by trust, social closeness, and sustainability of economic relations. However, behind these social relations, this study also identifies the weak bargaining position of some small producers towards collectors, so that price justice has not been fully realized.

This pattern is in line with the findings Fatimah et al. (2022) which describe the relationship between farmers and middlemen as a relationship between patrons and clients where on the one hand there is capital assistance, market access, and emotional closeness, but on the other hand there is price dominance that has the potential to create distributive injustice. Similar findings were also put forward in a study on the dependence of rice farmers in Curahdami, Bondowoso, which showed that urgent needs (*darūriyyāt*) make farmers receive unfair prices for survival, even though these conditions are contrary to the principle of fairness in Islamic business ethics (Jazuli et al., 2024).

A number of other studies have confirmed that distributive injustice in rural markets is influenced more by market structure and information asymmetry than solely by individual morality. A study on unilateral pricing by middlemen in Kediri and a study of ijon practices from an Islamic economic perspective Setiawan et al. (2025) recommend strengthening institutions such as sharia cooperatives, collective marketing, and local regulations as strategies to improve the bargaining position of smallholders (Abidin 2025; Rizqiya et al., 2025).

This recommendation is in line with the findings of this study that local wisdom in palm sugar production in North Sulawesi needs to be synergized with modern management so that distributive justice can be achieved more optimally. At the same time, a number of studies on traditional markets in Salatiga (Waluyo, 2022), Riau (Mawardi & Dahlan, 2024), and Mandailing Natal show that rural markets still reflect authentic Islamic moral values such as honesty, *ukhuwah*, and helpfulness even though the actors do not always understand the concept of Islamic economics formally

These findings confirm that rural markets tend to be more personal and morally nuanced than more impersonal urban markets (Samad & Adi, 2025), although some studies also remind that Islamic moral values are not completely

absent from urban markets (Mawardi & Dahlan, 2024). Thus, distributive justice in West Otam Village does not only depend on strong moral values and social relationships, but also on improving market structures, access to information, and strengthening institutions that favor small producers (Magesa et al., 2020).

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the practice of brown sugar production and buying and selling in West Otam Village has substantively applied the principles of Islamic business ethics, especially honesty (*shiddiq*), mutual willingness (*an-tarāḍin*), and responsibility (*mas'uliyah*), even though the producers do not formally understand these concepts. The heavy inconsistency of the product due to the use of traditional molds does not give rise to *gharar* substantively because it is mitigated through information disclosure and agreement between producers and buyers. The integrity of product quality maintained without chemical mixtures has been proven to build consumer trust and loyalty, which has an impact on the stability of producers' income. Thus, the purpose of the research to analyze the implementation of Islamic business ethics and its implications on the sustainability of the income of the people of West Otam Village was achieved.

This study recommends the need for simple standardization of printing tools or collective weighing mechanisms to strengthen the perception of transaction fairness, as well as strengthening sharia-based local economic institutions such as cooperatives to improve producers' bargaining positions against collectors. Further research is recommended to examine other traditional commodities with a quantitative approach or *mixed methods* to further examine the relationship between Islamic business ethics and the sustainability of rural micro business income.

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