JME: *Journal of Multidiscipline & Equality*

Vol. 3 No. 1 January-June 2026

Islamic Business Ethics and Rubber Farmer Empowerment: A Qualitative Study in Langkap Village, Musi Banyuasin

Echa Janiarta, Ulil Amri*

Universitas Islam Negeri Raden Fatah Palembang

E-mail*: ulilamri_uin@radenfatah.ac.id

Abstract

This study examines rubber farmers' business behavior and the implementation of Islamic business ethics in empowering rubber-based businesses in Langkap Village, Babat Supat District, Musi Banyuasin Regency. The study employs a qualitative field-research approach. Informants were selected purposively and consisted of five rubber farmers and four middlemen directly involved in rubber economic activities. Data were collected through interviews, observation, and documentation, while data validity was examined through source, technique, and time triangulation. Data were analyzed using the Miles and Huberman framework through data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification. The findings indicate that rubber farming businesses remain predominantly traditional, relying on inherited experience and focusing on primary production and the immediate fulfillment of household needs. Farmers have made efforts to maintain productivity through fertilization, land maintenance, replanting, and adaptation to weather conditions, yet product processing, market expansion, value-added creation, and farmer-group participation remain limited. From the perspective of Islamic business ethics, farmers generally demonstrate awareness of *tawhid*, equilibrium or justice, free will, and responsibility. Nevertheless, their implementation remains partial. Cases involving the mixing of rubber with other materials indicate inconsistencies in honesty and product quality, while limited market access, debt relationships, and dependence on middlemen restrict farmers' effective freedom of choice. The study concludes that Islamic business ethics have been normatively internalized but have not yet been fully transformed into sustainable business empowerment. Strengthening farmer institutions, market access, processing capabilities, and Islamic business ethics education is therefore required to increase farmers' economic independence and the value added of rubber products.

Keywords: Islamic business ethics; rubber farmers; farmer empowerment; rubber business; rural econom

INTRODUCTION

Agriculture and plantation sectors play a crucial role in the economic life of rural communities. In many regions of South Sumatra, rubber plantations are not merely production activities but also constitute the primary source of livelihood for rural households. High dependence on a single commodity makes farmers' welfare highly vulnerable to fluctuations in prices, weather conditions, market access, product quality, and the structure of relationships between farmers and buyers.

Langkap Village, located in Babat Supat District, Musi Banyuasin Regency, is one of the areas where rubber plantations represent a major economic activity.

Geographically, the village is dominated by plantation land, particularly rubber plantations, and most residents depend on agriculture for their livelihoods. Consequently, fluctuations in rubber prices and weather conditions directly influence household income and community welfare. At the same time, economic institutions such as farmer groups have not yet functioned optimally in supporting farmer empowerment.

The challenges faced by rubber farmers are not limited to production. Their business structure is also characterized by limited market access, inadequate technology, weak post-harvest processing, dependence on middlemen, and insufficient capacity to create added value. The original study also identifies ethical challenges in rubber trading practices, including potential problems related to weighing transparency, the mixing of rubber with other materials, and unequal economic relationships between farmers and buyers.

Within this context, Islamic business ethics provides an important analytical framework because Islam does not separate economic profit from moral responsibility. Economic activities are expected to be conducted based on honesty, justice, accountability, responsible freedom, and concern for public welfare. Islamic business ethics can therefore be understood as a set of moral principles derived from the Qur'an and Sunnah that guide economic actors in distinguishing between acceptable and unacceptable business practices (Aprianto, 2020; Zamzam & Aravik, 2020).

The main theoretical framework adopted in this research refers to Syed Nawab Haidar Naqvi's Islamic business ethics, as operationalized in the study through Nurmadiansyah (2021). This framework consists of four fundamental principles: unity (*tawhid*), equilibrium, free will, and responsibility.

The principle of *tawhid* integrates economic activities with spiritual consciousness and submission to Allah. Accordingly, business activities cannot be separated from moral obligations. The principle of equilibrium emphasizes justice in product quality, prices, measurements, and the distribution of rights and obligations. Free will provides individuals with the freedom to make economic choices as long as those choices do not violate Sharia principles or harm others. Meanwhile, responsibility emphasizes that every economic action and decision carries consequences that must be accounted for socially, morally, and spiritually (Nurmadiansyah, 2021).

However, normative understanding of ethics does not automatically guarantee fully ethical business practices. In rubber farming, urgent household economic needs, limited market access, fluctuating prices, lack of capital, and structural dependence on middlemen may generate a gap between ethical values and actual economic behavior.

Furthermore, farmer empowerment should not be measured merely through increased production. Effective empowerment should improve farmers' capacity to control production processes, obtain information, strengthen bargaining power, develop products, expand market access, and generate greater economic value added. Thus, the implementation of Islamic business ethics should not only promote honest transactions but should also contribute to creating a more equitable and independent business structure.

Previous studies have examined Islamic business ethics in agricultural transactions, rubber trading practices, farmer-middleman relations, and cooperation arrangements in rubber plantations. For instance, studies on middlemen indicate that farmers with limited economic resources may become dependent on intermediaries for capital, market access, and the fulfillment of daily household needs. Nevertheless, studies that simultaneously connect farmers' economic behavior, the four principles of Islamic business ethics, and rubber business empowerment in the specific context of Langkap Village remain relatively limited.

The novelty of this research lies in positioning Islamic business ethics not merely as a normative instrument for assessing transactions, but also as a potential framework for farmer empowerment. In this perspective, *tawhid* is associated with integrity, equilibrium with fairness and product quality, free will with market access and bargaining power, and responsibility with sustainable business accountability.

Based on this background, this study addresses three main research questions: first, how rubber farmers behave in empowering their businesses; second, how Islamic business ethics are implemented in farmers' economic activities; and third, to what extent farmers' behavior is consistent with the principles of Islamic business ethics in empowering their rubber businesses. These questions correspond with the central objectives of the original research.

METHODS

This study employed a qualitative field-research approach to obtain an in-depth understanding of rubber farmers' experiences, perceptions, economic behavior, and interpretations within their natural social setting, consistent with the characteristics of qualitative research described by Sugiyono (2018). The research was conducted in Langkap Village, Babat Supat District, Musi Banyuasin Regency, South Sumatra, Indonesia, where rubber farming constitutes a major source of livelihood for the local community. Informants were selected through purposive sampling based on their direct involvement in rubber production and trading activities. The study involved nine informants, consisting of five rubber farmers and four middlemen. Primary data were obtained through observations and interviews with these informants, while secondary data were derived from books, scientific journals, official documents, websites, and other relevant academic sources. Interviews were conducted using a structured interview guide to explore rubber business management, farmers' economic behavior, market relationships, Islamic business ethics, and constraints on business empowerment, while documentation was used to complement and strengthen the field data (Bungin, 2013; Sugiyono, 2018).

To ensure the credibility of the findings, data validity was examined through source, technique, and time triangulation. Source triangulation was conducted by comparing information from different informants, while technique triangulation involved cross-checking data obtained through interviews, observations, and documentation; time triangulation was used to assess the consistency of information collected at different times (Sugiyono, 2018). Data analysis followed the interactive model of Miles and Huberman as presented in qualitative research methodology, consisting of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification. Relevant field information was selected, summarized, categorized, and organized according to the research themes before conclusions were continuously verified against the collected evidence (Sugiyono, 2018). The interpretation of the findings was subsequently guided by four principles of Islamic business ethics—*tawhid* (unity), equilibrium or justice, free will, and responsibility—which constituted the main analytical framework for assessing the relationship between farmers' business behavior and rubber business empowerment (Nurmadiansyah, 2021).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

1. Traditional Business Management and Limited Value Addition

Rubber farmers in Langkap Village generally manage their plantations through routine activities such as fertilization, weed control, land clearing, pest management, and maintenance of tapping equipment. These practices indicate farmers' awareness of the importance of maintaining productivity and product quality. However, plantation management remains largely traditional and relies on inherited knowledge and long-standing experience rather than modern technology, structured business planning, or technical innovation. Several farmers reported learning plantation management primarily from their parents and rarely adopting new production methods. Such conditions reflect the broader characteristics of smallholder agriculture, where limited access to technology, information, and production resources may constrain improvements in productivity and business efficiency (Tantawi et al., 2024). Field findings also show that most farmers sell rubber immediately after tapping and collection without further processing, indicating that their economic activities remain concentrated on primary production rather than downstream processing.

The limited adoption of post-harvest processing consequently restricts opportunities for farmers to create greater economic value from their rubber production. Farmers remain positioned primarily as suppliers of raw materials rather than as actors participating in higher-value segments of the rubber value chain. This condition is also associated with limited knowledge, capital, market information, technology, and processing facilities, which constrain farmers' ability to develop more innovative business strategies. Therefore, farmer empowerment should not focus solely on improving cultivation techniques and production volume but should also include knowledge transfer, access to processing technology, business-management capacity, market diversification, institutional strengthening, and product development. Strengthening these dimensions is essential for enabling farmers to move beyond subsistence-oriented production toward more competitive and sustainable agribusiness activities (Tantawi et al., 2024; Yulianti et al., 2024).

2. Household Needs, Weather, and Prices Shape Farmers' Economic Behavior

The findings indicate that farmers' economic behavior in Langkap Village is shaped by a combination of internal and external factors. The most influential internal factor is household economic necessity, as income from rubber farming is primarily allocated to daily consumption, including food and other essential living expenses. Consequently, farmers often have limited flexibility to postpone sales while waiting for more favorable market prices. This strong dependence on rubber income encourages short-term economic decision-making focused on meeting immediate household needs rather than accumulating capital for long-term investment, technological adoption, or business expansion. Such conditions demonstrate that the economic behavior of smallholder farmers is closely associated with household livelihood pressures and limited financial resilience.

External factors, particularly weather conditions and fluctuations in rubber prices, further increase the economic vulnerability of farmers. Rainfall can disrupt tapping activities and reduce production, while unfavorable climatic conditions may affect both the quantity and quality of latex. At the same time, market-price fluctuations directly influence the income received from each harvest, leaving farmers exposed to uncertainty that is largely beyond their control. These conditions encourage adaptive behavior, but limited income security restricts farmers' capacity to engage in long-term business planning, investment, diversification, and value-added activities. Therefore, strengthening farmers' economic resilience requires not only improvements in production techniques but also better access to market information, alternative sources of income, financial resources, and institutional support to reduce their vulnerability to climatic and market risks (Tantawi et al., 2024).

3. Farmer Empowerment Remains Production-Oriented

The empowerment strategies adopted by rubber farmers in Langkap Village remain largely concentrated on technical cultivation and production maintenance. Farmers seek to sustain or increase output through fertilization, land maintenance, adjustment of tapping schedules according to weather conditions, and replanting dead or unproductive rubber trees. These practices demonstrate the presence of local knowledge and adaptive capacity in responding to environmental conditions. However, the empowerment process has not yet developed substantially toward downstream activities such as product processing, business diversification, branding, market expansion, and value-added creation. Several farmers acknowledged that rubber products have the potential to generate higher selling value, but their ability to pursue such opportunities is constrained by limited knowledge, capital, market information, technology, and processing facilities. Thus, farmer empowerment remains centered on maintaining raw rubber production rather than transforming the business toward more advanced agribusiness activities (Tantawi et al., 2024).

These findings indicate that sustainable farmer empowerment should extend beyond improvements in cultivation techniques and production volume. Empowerment needs to support farmers' transition from primary producers toward greater participation in the rubber value chain through improved processing capacity, product-quality enhancement, collective marketing, access to market and price information, stronger farmer institutions, and wider access to alternative buyers. Strengthening these dimensions would enable farmers to reduce dependence on the sale of unprocessed rubber, improve their bargaining position, and create greater economic value from their production. Therefore, the development of rubber farming should integrate technical improvement with market access, institutional strengthening, and value-added business development so that empowerment can contribute more effectively to farmers' long-term economic independence and business sustainability (Yulianti et al., 2024).

4. The Role of Farmer Groups Remains Limited

Farmer groups have considerable potential to function as strategic institutions for strengthening rubber farmer empowerment in Langkap Village. Through collective marketing, farmers can improve their bargaining position, reduce individual dependence on buyers, and potentially obtain more competitive prices. Farmer groups may also provide informal financial support through collective savings, group funds, or arisan, which can help members meet short-term financial needs before harvest or product sales. However, the findings indicate that farmer participation in formal farmer groups remains relatively low, as some farmers prefer informal community-based mechanisms. This limited participation reduces the capacity of farmer groups to serve as effective platforms for collective action, information sharing, and economic cooperation.

Despite these limitations, farmers who actively participate in groups reported several benefits, particularly collective selling arrangements that can improve bargaining power and access to better prices, as well as group-based financial assistance. Nevertheless, farmer groups have not yet functioned optimally as institutions for sustainable business empowerment because their activities, programs, and perceived economic benefits remain limited. Strengthening farmer groups should therefore focus not only on increasing membership but also on expanding their functions in market information, collective marketing, access to capital, business training, and product development. More effective farmer institutions could reduce farmers' dependence on individual middlemen and support a transition from fragmented production toward stronger collective business development and greater economic independence.

5. Implementation of Islamic Business Ethics

The implementation of Islamic business ethics was analyzed using the four principles of *tawhid*, equilibrium, free will, and responsibility.

a. Tawhid or Unity

The principle of *tawhid* positions all human activities, including business activities, within the framework of devotion and accountability to Allah. The farmers generally recognize honesty as a religious obligation. Several informants explained that conducting business honestly is important because economic activities should bring not only income but also *barakah* or divine blessing. Farmers also expressed an awareness that Allah knows and evaluates human actions. This spiritual consciousness influences their understanding of honesty and acceptable business practices.

However, interviews with middlemen reveal that some farmers continue to engage in practices inconsistent with this principle. Examples include mixing rubber with pieces of bark, soil, or other substances to increase its weight. These findings indicate that *tawhid* has been internalized at the level of belief and moral awareness but is not consistently reflected in all economic practices. Economic pressure and the desire to obtain greater short-term income may contribute to this inconsistency.

b. Equilibrium and Justice

The principle of equilibrium emphasizes fairness and balance in economic transactions. In the context of rubber trading, this includes product quality, accurate weighing, fair prices, and transparency. The farmers generally understand the importance of maintaining product quality and avoiding practices that disadvantage buyers. Some respondents stated that rubber should not be mixed with unnecessary substances and that measurements should be accurate. Farmers also recognize that product quality should correspond to the price received. This demonstrates an ethical awareness of fairness in exchange.

However, information from middlemen indicates that the application of this principle remains inconsistent. Some rubber products were reportedly mixed with other materials, resulting in lower quality. Thus, while many farmers understand the concept of fairness, not all transactions fully reflect the principle of equilibrium.

c. Free Will

The principle of free will provides individuals with the right to make economic decisions as long as those decisions remain within moral and Sharia boundaries. Farmers generally have the formal freedom to choose buyers offering better prices. Several informants stated that they were free to sell their rubber to different buyers. However, this freedom is not absolute.

Some farmers are constrained by debts, informal savings arrangements, long-standing relationships with particular buyers, and the limited number of rubber buyers operating in the village. Dependence on middlemen also restricts farmers' effective ability to choose alternative markets. Accordingly, farmers possess formal freedom but limited substantive economic freedom.

d. Responsibility

The principle of responsibility requires economic actors to accept responsibility for their decisions and actions. Farmers generally demonstrate responsibility through their willingness to resolve transactional disputes openly, correct mistakes, and maintain trust with buyers. Disputes concerning weighing, quality, or payment are usually resolved through discussion and family-oriented approaches. Farmers also emphasize transparency as a way of preventing misunderstandings. For example, direct participation during the weighing process is considered important for maintaining trust between buyers and sellers.

Middlemen similarly recognize responsibility for mistakes that occur during transactions and generally attempt to resolve problems through discussion. However, responsibility remains largely based on informal and situational mechanisms rather than standardized procedures. The dominance of family-based conflict resolution is socially valuable but may limit the development of more formal standards for business accountability.

Discussion

1. The Ethical–Empowerment Gap among Rubber Farmers

The central contribution of this study lies in identifying an ethical–empowerment gap among rubber farmers in Langkap Village. This gap reflects the difference between farmers’ normative awareness of Islamic ethical values and their actual capacity to translate those values into economically sustainable and empowering business practices. Most farmers recognize the importance of honesty, justice, responsibility, and avoiding harm in economic transactions; however, their understanding is largely derived from religious teachings, local traditions, and everyday experience rather than from systematic education in Islamic business ethics. Several informants acknowledged that their understanding remained practical and relatively limited, and some had never received specific training on Islamic business ethics. This condition indicates that Islamic ethical values have been internalized at the level of moral awareness but have not yet been fully integrated into professional business management and sustainable economic development. In the framework used in this study, Islamic business ethics encompasses the principles of *tawhid* (unity), equilibrium, free will, and responsibility, which should guide both individual conduct and economic decision-making (Nurmadiansyah, 2021).

These findings suggest that Islamic business ethics should be extended beyond the domain of individual morality and transformed into an institutional framework for farmer empowerment. Ethical principles need to be reflected in transparent transactions, consistent product-quality standards, fair weighing and pricing practices, stronger farmer organizations, collective marketing, improved access to market information, and sustainable value-added activities. The study shows that although farmers’ behavior is generally consistent with Islamic ethical principles at the normative level, implementation remains partial and has not yet generated significant improvements in value creation or long-term economic independence. Therefore, the institutionalization of Islamic business ethics through practical education, stronger farmer organizations, improved market access, and business-development support is essential for converting ethical awareness into sustainable economic empowerment (Nurmadiansyah, 2021; Abrori & Sakinah, 2024).

2. Tawhid and the Consistency of Economic Behavior

Within the Islamic ethical framework employed in this study, tawhid requires the integration of spiritual consciousness with economic behavior, meaning that business activities should reflect religious commitments rather than being guided solely by profit considerations. In the perspective of Syed Nawab Haidar Naqvi, as adopted in this research, tawhid serves as the moral foundation that connects economic actions with accountability to Allah and requires consistency between religious values and actual business practices (Nurmadiansyah, 2021). The findings show that rubber farmers in Langkap Village generally regard honesty as a religious obligation and believe that business activities should be conducted in ways that generate both income and barakah. However, interviews with middlemen revealed that some farmers still mix rubber with soil, bark residues, or other materials to increase its weight. This practice demonstrates a gap between ethical awareness and actual economic behavior, indicating that the principle of tawhid has been internalized at the level of belief but has not yet been implemented consistently in daily transactions.

This inconsistency suggests that religious awareness alone may be insufficient when farmers operate under significant economic pressure. The study indicates that household needs, fluctuating rubber prices, limited market alternatives, and dependence on rubber income strongly influence farmers' economic decisions, often encouraging short-term survival-oriented behavior rather than long-term ethical and business considerations. Therefore, strengthening tawhid-based business ethics should not be limited to religious instruction or moral awareness but should also be accompanied by economic empowerment. Practical interventions such as strengthening farmer groups, improving access to alternative markets and price information, expanding processing opportunities, and reducing dependence on middlemen can help create an economic environment in which ethical behavior becomes more sustainable. In this sense, the implementation of tawhid requires both spiritual internalization and structural support so that Islamic ethical principles can be consistently translated into economically viable business practices (Nurmadiansyah, 2021).

3. Equilibrium, Justice, and Product Quality

The principle of equilibrium (*al-'adl*) emphasizes fairness and proportionality in economic exchange. In the context of rubber trading, this principle can be reflected through accurate weighing, fair pricing, honest disclosure of product quality, and a balanced exchange between sellers and buyers. The farmers interviewed in Langkap Village generally demonstrated an awareness of these ethical standards and expressed a commitment to maintaining product quality, using accurate measurements, and avoiding practices that could disadvantage buyers. However, information obtained from middlemen indicated that some rubber products were still mixed with soil, bark residues, or other substances, revealing a persistent gap between farmers' ethical understanding and their actual business practices. Within the Islamic business ethics framework adopted in this study, such practices are inconsistent with the principle of equilibrium because fairness requires that the quality and quantity of goods delivered correspond to what has been represented in the transaction (Nurmadiansyah, 2021).

As an analytical implication of these findings, inconsistent product quality may affect buyer confidence and the long-term sustainability of rubber trading relationships. Therefore, the principle of equilibrium should not be limited to individual ethical conduct but can be strengthened through collective mechanisms that support fairness and product quality. Such mechanisms may include agreed quality standards, transparent weighing procedures, collective sorting, standardized grading, and monitoring through farmer groups or cooperatives. This recommendation is consistent with the study's finding that farmer organizations have the potential to improve bargaining power and collective marketing, although their current role remains limited. In this way, Islamic business ethics can move beyond an abstract moral expectation and become an institutional framework that supports fair transactions, consistent quality, and more sustainable farmer empowerment.

4. Free Will and Structural Dependence on Middlemen

An important finding of this study concerns the distinction between formal freedom and substantive freedom in farmers' economic decision-making. Formally, rubber farmers in Langkap Village have the freedom to select buyers, negotiate prices, and sell their products to alternative purchasing channels. However, this freedom is not absolute because farmers' actual choices are constrained by limited numbers of buyers, debt arrangements, *arisan* relationships, long-standing social ties, and dependence on middlemen. The findings therefore show that farmers may possess contractual freedom while still facing structural limitations that reduce their effective bargaining power. From the perspective of Islamic business ethics, the principle of free will emphasizes individuals' freedom to make economic choices, but such freedom must remain within moral boundaries and should not result in unfairness or harm to others (Nurmadiansyah, 2021). Accordingly, free will should not be interpreted merely as the absence of direct coercion, because farmers who are formally free to choose buyers but lack realistic market alternatives may not possess meaningful economic freedom.

These findings suggest that strengthening the principle of free will requires improving farmers' market capability and bargaining position. The study indicates that auction systems and collective selling arrangements can provide farmers with greater opportunities to obtain competitive prices, while farmer groups have the potential to strengthen collective bargaining and reduce individual dependence on particular buyers. Building on these findings, practical empowerment strategies may include collective marketing, wider access to price information, stronger farmer cooperatives, improved auction mechanisms, better market connectivity, and access to working capital that does not create excessive dependence on specific middlemen. These measures would help transform formal freedom into more substantive economic freedom by enabling farmers to make genuine market choices based on price, quality, and business interests rather than structural dependency alone.

5. Responsibility and Informal Governance

The principle of responsibility is relatively evident in the social and economic relationships between rubber farmers and middlemen in Langkap Village. When transactional problems arise, the parties generally attempt to resolve them through dialogue, mutual understanding, and family-oriented deliberation. Farmers tend to show responsibility by acknowledging mistakes, maintaining openness, and seeking solutions that preserve trust, while middlemen similarly indicate a willingness to correct errors that occur during transactions. This pattern reflects the Islamic ethical principle of responsibility, which requires economic actors to be accountable for their actions and decisions and to maintain fairness in their relationships with others (Nurmadiansyah, 2021). However, the findings also show that responsibility remains largely personal, situational, and dependent on informal social relationships rather than being supported by a structured accountability mechanism.

These findings suggest that farmer empowerment should not eliminate local values of trust, deliberation, and family-based conflict resolution, as these forms of social capital contribute to maintaining harmonious relationships and reducing open conflict. Instead, such local practices should be strengthened through clearer and more consistent transaction procedures, particularly in areas related to weighing, product quality, and dispute resolution. This recommendation is an analytical implication of the study's finding that responsibility has been practiced at the level of individual awareness but has not yet developed into a more structured and sustainable system. By combining local social capital with clearer business procedures and stronger farmer institutions, the principle of responsibility can move beyond personal ethics and become part of a more accountable and sustainable system of rubber business governance.

6. From Islamic Business Ethics to Sustainable Farmer Empowerment

The findings demonstrate that Islamic business ethics can be developed beyond its conventional role as a normative framework for assessing whether economic behavior is morally acceptable. In this study, the four principles of tawhid, equilibrium, free will, and responsibility provide an integrated foundation for understanding sustainable farmer empowerment. Tawhid can strengthen integrity and ethical commitment by connecting economic activities with spiritual accountability; equilibrium can promote fairness in pricing, weighing, product quality, and relationships between farmers and buyers; free will can support greater bargaining capacity and meaningful market choice; and responsibility can encourage transparency, accountability, and trust in business transactions. This interpretation is consistent with the Islamic business ethics framework used in the study, in which these four principles function not only as moral guidelines but also as foundations for economic decision-making (Nurmadiansyah, 2021).

However, the findings also indicate that ethical principles alone are insufficient to produce sustainable empowerment when farmers continue to face structural constraints such as limited knowledge, technology, capital, processing facilities, market access, and institutional support. The study shows that rubber farmers remain largely dependent on traditional production methods, possess limited capacity for value-added processing, and have not yet fully utilized farmer groups as instruments for collective business development. Therefore, farmer empowerment based on Islamic business ethics should combine moral development with structural economic development. In this sense, Islamic business ethics should not stop at encouraging farmers to behave honestly and responsibly; it should also contribute to creating a business environment in which ethical behavior is economically viable and sustainable. This integration represents an important conceptual implication of the study because it connects Islamic ethical principles with market access, institutional strengthening, value creation, and long-term economic independence.

7. Strengthening Farmer Institutions as an Ethical and Economic Strategy

Farmer groups and cooperatives can play a strategic role in narrowing the gap between Islamic ethical values and the economic empowerment of rubber farmers. The findings show that participation in farmer groups in Langkap Village remains relatively limited, even though farmers who are actively involved report tangible benefits from collective activities. Collective sales can strengthen bargaining power and may enable farmers to obtain more competitive prices, while group-based funds and arisan can provide temporary financial support before harvest or sales. These findings indicate that farmer institutions have the potential to reduce individual dependence on middlemen, improve access to market information, and strengthen farmers' ability to make more independent economic decisions. However, low participation, limited programs, and weak institutional capacity currently restrict the effectiveness of farmer groups as instruments of sustainable business empowerment.

Strengthening farmer institutions could therefore generate both economic and ethical benefits. Collective marketing may reduce dependence on individual buyers, while improved access to price information can help farmers compare market alternatives and make more informed decisions. Farmer groups may also establish shared quality standards, transparent weighing procedures, and collective monitoring to reduce product adulteration and strengthen the credibility of local rubber. In addition, collective financing mechanisms can reduce reliance on informal debt relationships, while farmer groups can function as platforms for Islamic business ethics education, technical training, and product development. From the perspective of Islamic business ethics, these institutional functions can support the implementation of tawhid through integrity and shared moral commitment, equilibrium through fair transactions and quality assurance, free will through wider market choices, and responsibility through stronger accountability in business relationships (Nurmadiansyah, 2021). Thus, strengthening farmer groups and cooperatives should be understood not only as an economic intervention but also as an institutional mechanism for translating Islamic ethical principles into sustainable farmer empowerment.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that rubber farmers in Langkap Village continue to manage their businesses predominantly through traditional practices based on inherited experience, with economic activities largely oriented toward meeting immediate household needs. Innovation in post-harvest processing, product diversification, marketing, and value-added creation remains limited, indicating that farmer empowerment has not yet progressed beyond primary production. From the perspective of Islamic business ethics, farmers' behavior is normatively aligned with the principles of *tawhid*, equilibrium, free will, and responsibility, but their implementation remains partial and inconsistent. *Tawhid* is reflected in farmers' religious awareness and recognition of honesty as a moral obligation, although practices such as mixing rubber with other materials indicate a gap between ethical beliefs and actual behavior. Equilibrium is reflected in efforts to maintain product quality, accurate weighing, and fair prices, yet quality inconsistencies remain. Free will is demonstrated through farmers' formal ability to choose buyers, but this freedom is constrained by limited market access, debt relationships, informal savings arrangements, and dependence on middlemen. Responsibility is evident in farmers' willingness to resolve disputes openly and maintain trust, although accountability mechanisms remain largely informal and have not yet developed into a structured business system.

Overall, the findings indicate that Islamic business ethics have been internalized at the normative level but have not yet fully contributed to increased value added, stronger bargaining power, and sustainable economic independence among rubber farmers. The study therefore suggests that farmer empowerment should be approached in an integrated manner by strengthening farmer groups or cooperatives, improving access to market and price information, expanding post-harvest processing capacity, establishing product quality standards, widening market access, providing alternative financing mechanisms, and delivering practical Islamic business ethics education. These measures are important because the study shows that farmers still face limitations in knowledge, capital, technology, facilities, and institutional support, while farmer groups have not yet functioned optimally as instruments of collective business development. By integrating ethical values with structural economic support, Islamic business ethics can move beyond individual morality and become a foundation for a more equitable, productive, competitive, and sustainable rubber business ecosystem.

REFERENCES

Abrori, M., & Sakinah. (2024). Penerapan etika bisnis Islam dalam praktik mikro usaha Indonesia. *Madinah: Jurnal Studi Islam, 11*(2), 345–357. https://doi.org/10.58518/madinah.v11i2.3085

Aprianto, N. (2020). *Etika dan konsep manajemen bisnis Islam*. Deepublish.

Arikunto, S. (2013). *Prosedur penelitian: Suatu pendekatan praktik*. Rineka Cipta.

Bungin, B. (2013). *Metodologi penelitian sosial dan ekonomi*. Media Group.

Nurmadiansyah, M. T. (2021). *Etika bisnis Islam dan praktek*. Cakrawala Pustaka.

Shihab, M. Q. (2002). *Tafsir Al-Mishbah: Pesan, kesan, dan keserasian Al-*

Qur'an (3rd ed.). Lentera Hati.

Sugiyono. (2018). *Memahami penelitian kualitatif*. Alfabeta.

Sugiyono. (2014). *Metode penelitian kuantitatif, kualitatif, dan R&D*. Alfabeta.

Tantawi, A. R., Jusran, Danial, M. I. R. A., Marhayati, Effran, E., Setyowati, N., Riptanti, E. W., et al. (2024). *Pengantar ilmu pertanian* (W. Yuliani, Ed.). CV Bravo Press Indonesia.

Widjaja, A. (2022). *Fikih muamalah*. Fakultas Syariah dan Hukum UIN Alauddin Makassar.

Yazid, M. (2017). *Fiqh muamalah ekonomi Islam*. Imtiyaz.

Zamzam, H., & Aravik, F. (2020). *Etika bisnis Islam*. Deepublish.