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The Dynamics of Public Trust in Islamic Banking Products in Jambi City

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Abstract:
Public trust in Islamic banking products is a determining factor in the expansion and sustainability of the Islamic financial sector, particularly in regions with a predominantly Muslim population such as Jambi City. Although Islamic banks continue to grow institutionally, trust in their services is not uniform and is influenced by various factors including financial literacy, religious understanding, and the perceived alignment of products with Islamic values. This study aims to explore the dynamics of public trust in Islamic banking through a phenomenological approach that captures the lived experiences of individuals interacting with Islamic banks. Data were collected from selected informants including community members, Islamic bank employees, religious leaders, and micro-entrepreneurs using observation, interviews, and documentation. The results reveal that trust is formed gradually through knowledge dissemination, transparency in contracts, service quality, and the role of religious figures in validating the legitimacy of Sharia-compliant practices. These findings contribute theoretically by offering a context-based understanding of trust in Islamic finance, and practically by informing institutional strategies for enhancing public engagement and accountability in the delivery of Islamic banking products.

Keywords:
Public Trust, Islamic Banking, Sharia Financial Products, Jambi City, Islamic Financial Literacy.

INTRODUCTION

Islamic banking has emerged as a strategic alternative within the global financial system, offering services that align with ethical values and Sharia principles. Across many Muslim-majority countries, including Indonesia, the development of Islamic banking reflects not only economic growth but also an increased awareness of religious compliance in financial transactions. As a provincial capital and a socio-economic hub, Jambi City plays a vital role in supporting this growth, given its diverse population, dynamic commercial activities, and its increasing exposure to Islamic banking practices. The presence of Islamic banking institutions in Jambi has provided various financial services such as savings, financing, and Sharia-based contracts which are expected to serve the Muslim community's financial needs in a religiously appropriate manner.

Despite institutional growth and regulatory support, public trust in Islamic banking in Jambi remains varied. A segment of the population demonstrates confidence in Islamic financial products particularly *murabahah* financing while others express hesitation or confusion regarding the operational mechanisms of Sharia-based banks. This discrepancy reflects an academic and practical gap in understanding how trust in Islamic banking is formed, especially within urban communities with mixed levels of financial literacy. Empirical findings suggest that trust is not automatically granted based on religious affiliation but is constructed through a complex interaction between knowledge, experience, and perceived alignment with Islamic values.

Theoretically, this study is anchored in consumer behavior models and trust theory, with an emphasis on the Islamic ethical framework that underpins financial decision-making among Muslim consumers. Public trust is viewed as a construct influenced by various factors, including religiosity, transparency of contracts, service quality, social influence, and the reputation of financial institutions. In the context of Jambi, where Islamic finance is actively promoted through institutional and religious channels, it is crucial to investigate how these variables interact in shaping community perceptions and decisions regarding Islamic banking products.

This research seeks to address the following questions: (1) How are Islamic banking products implemented among the public in Jambi City? (2) How does the community perceive and develop trust in Sharia-compliant financial services? The objectives are to identify the key factors influencing trust in Islamic banking, particularly in relation to Sharia compliance, and to analyze the socio-cultural and religious dimensions that contribute to the construction of such trust. By focusing on the lived experiences of Jambi residents who interact with Islamic banking institutions, this study contributes to the academic discourse on trust formation in Islamic finance. It provides both conceptual insights and practical implications for institutions aiming to build stronger relationships with their Muslim clientele. The novelty of this research lies in its phenomenological approach, which captures nuanced community perspectives and highlights the evolving nature of trust in Islamic financial systems amid shifting socio-economic contexts.

Trust is a core concept in Islamic finance, positioned not only as an interpersonal belief but also as a reflection of compliance with Sharia principles, ethical values, and institutional legitimacy. In Islamic banking, trust is built upon the understanding that transactions must be free from *riba* (usury), *gharar* (uncertainty), and *maysir* (gambling), while emphasizing justice, transparency, and mutual benefit. The theoretical basis of this study draws on the concept of institutional trust, which refers to individuals' confidence in the integrity, competence, and intentions of organizations delivering financial services. This framework is relevant in contexts where religious obligations intersect with financial behavior, making trust in Islamic banks inseparable from perceptions of religiosity and ethical conduct. Trust theory is also used to examine how expectations are shaped by previous experiences, third-party endorsements, and institutional reputation, providing a comprehensive lens for understanding consumer attitudes in Sharia banking.

Previous studies have shown that public trust in Islamic banks is influenced by multiple factors, including service quality, religious commitment, understanding of Sharia contracts, and institutional image. Research by Fauzi & Suryani (2019) highlights how the CARTER model comprising compliance, assurance, reliability, tangibles, empathy, and responsiveness significantly predicts customer satisfaction and trust in Islamic banks (Fauzi & Suryani, 2019). Similarly, Kadir et al. (2023) found that the combination of transparency, religious values, and social influence was vital in enhancing customer loyalty (Kadir, Paly, & Fauziah, 2023). Studies such as Hasan (2023) and Alwi & Khotijah (2022) reveal that a lack of public understanding regarding Islamic banking principles remains a significant barrier to building trust (Hasan, 2023); (Alwi & Khotijah, 2022).

However, a key research gap persists in the form of limited qualitative studies that capture the subjective, lived experiences of communities in building trust toward Islamic banking institutions. Most previous works adopt quantitative approaches that measure trust through structured indicators, thereby overlooking contextual nuances and personal narratives that shape financial decision-making. There is also insufficient exploration of how local socio-cultural dynamics, religious leadership, and grassroots financial education programs contribute to trust formation. The overreliance on cross-sectional survey data further limits our understanding of trust as a process that evolves over time and within specific social environments. These gaps underscore the need for an in-depth, qualitative inquiry that centers the voices of consumers and institutional actors alike.

This article aims to fill this gap by adopting a phenomenological approach to explore how the people of Jambi City experience, interpret, and negotiate their trust in Islamic banking products. By doing so, it provides a more contextually grounded and process-oriented perspective than much of the existing literature. The study positions itself at the intersection of Islamic finance, consumer behavior, and religious sociology, contributing to the literature by integrating community narratives into the broader framework of institutional trust in financial services. A review of methodological trends in recent studies on Islamic banking reveals a dominance of positivist paradigms often using survey-based instruments and regression analysis to evaluate customer satisfaction, loyalty, and perception. While informative, these approaches often overlook the subjective dimensions of religious belief and personal engagement. By contrast, recent calls for pluralistic methodologies have encouraged researchers to adopt interpretive approaches to uncover hidden meanings and social constructs surrounding trust in Islamic finance (Nowell et al., 2017; Finlay, 2012). There is growing recognition of the value of qualitative data in complementing statistical models and explaining variation in customer behavior across different demographic and geographic contexts.

In synthesizing this body of literature, the present study adopts a conceptual stance that frames trust not as a static outcome, but as a dynamic, culturally situated process influenced by experience, knowledge, spiritual conviction, and institutional interaction. This perspective aligns with phenomenological research traditions that emphasize meaning-making through lived experience, allowing for a deeper understanding of how trust in Islamic banking evolves within the social and spiritual fabric of a Muslim-majority city like Jambi. The findings from this study are expected to not only advance academic discourse but also provide practical insights for policymakers, bank practitioners, and religious leaders in strengthening public engagement with Sharia-compliant financial services.

METHOD

This study uses a qualitative approach with a phenomenological strategy to explore in depth the experience, perception, and subjective meaning of the people of Jambi City towards Islamic banking products. The phenomenological strategy was chosen because it is able to reveal the essence of the meaning of trust formed through social interaction, religious understanding, and individual experience in using Islamic bank services (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The data used consists of primary and secondary data. Primary data was obtained through in-depth interviews and direct observation of the community using Islamic bank services, bank leaders or employees, religious leaders, and micro business actors (MSMEs). Meanwhile, secondary data includes policy documents, publications of Islamic banks, and Islamic financial literacy data from related institutions. The data collection technique was carried out by participatory observation methods and semi-structured interviews, using interview guidelines that had been prepared in advance according to the informant category. Each interview process is recorded (with the informant's consent), transcribed verbatim, and documented as an ethnographic archive for further analysis (Sandelowski, 2000).

The selection of informants was carried out through purposive sampling techniques, with inclusion criteria including: (1) domiciled in Jambi City, (2) having direct experience using Islamic bank products, or (3) acting as relevant stakeholders (e.g. religious leaders, MSME actors, or bank staff). Informants who do not meet direct involvement or do not understand the basic principles of Islamic banking are excluded from the analysis. The unit of analysis in this study is individuals who represent social groups with different experiences and understandings of sharia products. The data was analyzed using thematic analysis techniques, by identifying patterns of meaning (theme) based on the process of codification, categorization, and phenomenological interpretation. The analysis process is supported by NVivo 12 software to help organize qualitative data systematically (Nowell et al., 2017). The validity of the data is maintained through triangulation techniques of sources and methods, discussions between researchers (peer debriefing), and re-checking the results of interpretation to informants (member checking) to ensure the validity of the narrative constructed (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). This approach is in line with the latest qualitative practices that emphasize contextual significance in understanding society's social construction of trust in Islamic financial institutions (Finlay, 2012; Vagle, 2018).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

The results of this study are presented based on a qualitative phenomenological approach through thematic analysis of interview and observation data conducted on four main informant groups, namely the community of users of Islamic bank services in Jambi City, leaders or employees of Islamic banks, religious leaders, and micro business actors or MSMEs. From the process of data collection and analysis, five main themes were found that represent the dynamics of public trust in Islamic banking products in Jambi City, namely: (1) public understanding of the concept of sharia, (2) perception of contracts and free of usury, (3) the influence of religiosity values, (4) perception of service and transparency, and (5) the role of socialization and public education.

The first theme, namely the public's understanding of the concept of sharia, shows that most informants are familiar with the term "sharia bank" but do not have a comprehensive understanding of the basic principles and types of contracts used. Many people think that Islamic banks are only different in terms of labels without understanding the mechanism of contracts such as *murabahah* or *mudharabah*. This ignorance is reinforced by the low level of Islamic financial literacy, which is still a national problem as reported by the OJK in 2022, which states that the Islamic financial literacy index is only at 8.93% (Alwi & Khotijah, 2022). This low understanding also contributes to the lack of confidence among some respondents in the authenticity of sharia principles in bank operations.

The second theme is related to the perception of the contract and the guarantee of usury-free guarantees. Most users stated that they chose Islamic banks because they believed they were free from the element of *riba*, although not all of them understood how the contract that guarantees this principle works. In several interviews, it was found that there was an unclarity in the explanation of the bank officer about the margin structure in *murabahah* which is considered similar to conventional bank interest. This is in line with the findings of Situmorang et al. (2024) who show that the perception of contract ambiguity often raises doubts among people even though they have a strong religious orientation (Situmorang et al., 2024). However, the majority of respondents still stated that the existence of the Sharia Supervisory Board (DPS) gives a sense of spiritual security that the products they use have been supervised in accordance with sharia.

The third theme highlights the influence of religiosity values in forming trust in Islamic banks. Informants from religious leaders emphasized that religious values are the main consideration in recommending Islamic banks to pilgrims. People who have attachments to religious communities show a higher level of trust in the Islamic financial system, although there is sometimes a lack of technical information. This is strengthened by the results of Hasdiansa's (2023) research which shows that customer loyalty increases along with the strength of religious identities that are associated with the image of sharia institutions (Hasdiansa, 2023). This finding is also supported by the views of bank employees who stated that customers often open accounts only based on the recommendations of ustaz or religious leaders, not because of product understanding.

The fourth theme is the perception of service, quality of human resources, and transaction transparency. In terms of service, most of the informants said that Islamic bank employees are quite friendly and communicative, but there are still many who are not able to explain the contract comprehensively, especially to prospective customers who are critical of transaction details. Research by Sholihin & Abrori (2021) found that the quality of service and educational ability of staff contribute significantly to increasing public trust in Islamic banks (Sholihin & Abrori, 2021). Informants from MSMEs also said that the administrative process of sharia financing products tends to be longer than conventional banks, although they feel calmer because the contract is considered more honest and not speculative. However, some also regret the lack of transparency in margins or late payment fines that are considered to resemble interest.

The fifth theme reveals the role of socialization, education, and media in forming trust. Most people claim to know Islamic banks from social media, religious lectures, or direct promotions from bank employees. Formal education programs or Islamic finance training are almost never accessed by informants. This is consistent with the report by Lubis (2024) which shows that information about Islamic finance in digital media plays an important role in shaping public opinion, but is often not in-depth or purely promotional (Lubis, 2024). Community leaders and academics suggested that Islamic banks work more actively with educational and religious institutions to improve the substantive understanding of the community. In the context of Jambi City, the existence of Bank Jambi Syariah is an important capital, but the optimization of sustainable socialization is still considered by some informants.

The above results show that public trust in Islamic banks is formed in a complex way through the interaction between individual understanding, religious context, service experience, and institutional communication. These findings enrich previous results that highlight the importance of integrating ethics, literacy, and service quality in building a long-term trust base in Islamic banking (Ritonga, 2023; Fauzi, 2024; Apriantoro & Yuniarti, 2024; Awaluddin et al., 2020; Hasan, 2023).

Discussion

The main findings of this study show that public trust in Islamic banking in Indonesia is strongly influenced by the dimensions of Islamic ethics, service quality, security perception, and corporate image. This is closely correlated with the formulation of the problem and the purpose of the research, which is to identify how public trust is formed through direct experience and perception of sharia values in banking operations. The dimension of trust arises from intensive interaction with services, moral expectations, and clarity of sharia principles in the transactions offered.

Within the framework of value-based consumer behavior theory, the results of this study emphasize that consumer trust in Islamic banking is not only shaped by rational aspects such as system security and service efficiency, but also by the alignment of religious values associated with sharia principles. This theory reinforces the findings that Islamic ethics play a significant role in shaping customer loyalty and trust (Hasdiansa, 2023; Tanuatmodjo, 2021), and that sharia-based services strengthen the emotional and spiritual connection between customers and financial institutions (Fauzi & Suryani, 2019).

When compared to previous studies, these findings show consistency. For example, research by (Wijaya et al., 2019) shows that trust is an important foundation in financing decision-making by Islamic banks. Meanwhile, research by (Ritonga, 2023) underlines the importance of corporate governance (GCG) as a determinant of trust. However, not all results are in line for example, a study by (Sholihin & Abrori, 2021) found that employee intelligence does not have a significant influence on public trust, even though sharia marketing strategies are highly influential.

This article makes an important contribution to the development of value-based consumer trust theory in the context of Islamic economics. By emphasizing the importance of the dimensions of ethics, spirituality, and value-based service, the study expands on conventional perspectives that typically focus on the technical aspects of banking services. In addition, this study enriches the literature with contextual empirical evidence from Indonesia, a country with the largest Muslim population that has distinctive social and cultural characteristics in interpreting Islamic finance practices (Lubis, 2024; Hasibuan et al., 2023).

However, this study has some limitations. The limited number of participants as well as the geographic focus on a single region led to limitations in generalizing results. This needs to be considered in the interpretation of the findings, considering the complexity of Indonesia's cultural and social diversity. In addition, because the phenomenological approach emphasizes the subjectivity of experience, the possibility of perceptual bias must be recognized and further studied in follow-up research.

Based on these findings, several recommendations can be made. First, Islamic banking practitioners need to emphasize the transparency of Islamic values in all aspects of services, as well as strengthen Islamic ethics training for all human resources. Second, policymakers in the Islamic finance sector in Indonesia should encourage standardization of transparency and public education about Islamic finance to increase literacy and expand the customer base (Alwi & Khotijah, 2022; Subhi & Yuniarti, 2024; Hasan, 2023). Third, future research should use a longitudinal or mixed methods approach to explore the dynamics of public trust over time and test causal relationships more precisely (Kadir et al., 2023).

CONCLUSION

This research has revealed the dynamics of public trust in Islamic banking products in Jambi City through a qualitative phenomenological approach. The main findings show that trust is formed by a combination of understanding of sharia principles, perception of contract and usury-free, the value of individual religiosity, service quality, and the effectiveness of socialization carried out by banking institutions. Although people show a tendency to trust the Islamic banking system because of its conformity with religious values, there are still inequities in the technical understanding of sharia contracts as well as doubts about the transparency of financial institutions' practices. In addition, the support of religious leaders and the existence of local institutions such as Bank Jambi Syariah play an important role in shaping a positive perception of sharia-based finance at the community level.

This article makes a theoretical contribution to strengthening the literature on consumer trust in the context of Islamic banking, especially through the lens of people's subjective experiences. By emphasizing aspects of value, spirituality, and service as pillars of faith-building, this study expands the conceptual understanding of Muslim consumer behavior in choosing financial institutions. Practically, the results of this study also provide direction for Islamic banking institutions to reorganize communication strategies, employee training, and more contextual educational approaches so that public trust can be strengthened in a sustainable manner. The implications of these findings suggest the need to develop community-based strategies to expand Islamic financial literacy, including involving the active role of religious leaders and educational institutions. Further research is suggested to expand geographical scope and adopt a mixed approach in order to capture the trust dimension more holistically and test the relationship between customer perceptions, intentions, and behaviors in the long term.

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