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Practice of Buy-and-Sell Contracts and Price Sensitivity in Tanjung Jabung Barat Grocery Stores: A Microeconomic and Fiqh Muamalah Analysis

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Abstract:
Purpose - This study comprehensively investigates how traditional grocery store (warung) owners in West Tanjung Jabung Regency integrate intuitive heuristics of customer price sensitivity with Islamic commercial jurisprudence (fiqh muamalah) to sustain micro-business operations and local supply continuity. Design/methodology/approach – Utilizing a qualitative descriptive research design grounded in multi-site fieldwork, empirical data were gathered from 20 purposively selected store owners operating across diverse commercial contexts including urban high-density neighborhoods, coastal market fringes, rural agricultural plantation zones, and suburban roadside corridors in Tungkal Ilir and Betara Districts. Data collection involved structured semi-structured in-depth interviews, 120 cumulative hours of field observations, and thorough manual ledger document inspection. Finding/Results – Rather than replacing conventional microeconomic rationality, the empirical findings demonstrate that Islamic commercial norms socially and normatively embed merchant heuristics within local community structures. Store owners evaluate customer price responsiveness intuitively through experiential indicators rather than by computing formal elasticity coefficients (|Ed|). For non-essential goods perceived as highly price-sensitive, merchants proactively compress profit margins to preserve customer retention (tasamuh). For basic staple necessities (sembako) characterized by low perceived price sensitivity, merchants refrain from opportunistic price gouging during supply disruptions, relying instead on informal wholesale cost transparency. Routine spot sales default almost universally to unvocalized mutual exchange (akad mu'athah), while informal delayed-payment credit (kasbon) operates primarily as a deferred merchandise sale debt (dayn) rather than a pure altruistic loan (qardh).

Keywords:
Intuitive price sensitivity, Akad mu'athah, Traditional grocery store (warung), Fiqh muamalah, Micro-business resilience, Tasamuh, Sembako, Kasbon / Deferred sale debt (dayn).

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INTRODUCTION

Traditional grocery stores, locally known as warung kelontong, represent a fundamental structural pillar of local retail distribution and informal commerce across semi-urban, rural, and coastal regions in Indonesia (Nursiwan et al., 2022; Wulandari et al., 2024). Far from operating merely as static, point-of-sale commercial nodes, these micro-enterprises function as indispensable social and economic infrastructure that stabilizes daily household consumption baselines (Zulestari et al., 2017). In regions such as West Tanjung Jabung Regency, Jambi Province, traditional store owners bridge the distribution gap between primary wholesale suppliers and lower-income

consumers (Rahman, 2020). Despite the continuous expansion of modern corporate minimarket chains, franchised retail networks, and digital e-commerce platforms (Purwanto & Wahyudi, 2021), traditional store operators sustain their competitive viability primarily through physical proximity, flexible credit arrangements, personalized service, and dense community social capital (Hartati et al., 2023; Sugiyanto, 2020). Operating under severe working capital constraints, lacking formal business management training, and navigating volatile wholesale supply chains (Sari & Hidayat, 2023), micro-merchants rely heavily on adaptive operational heuristics to manage daily cash flow and retain customer loyalty.

In conventional microeconomic theory, commercial actors adjust pricing strategies according to the price elasticity of demand (Ed) to maximize short-term total revenues and enterprise profit (Mankiw, 2021; Pindyck & Rubinfeld, 2018). Concurrently, Islamic commercial jurisprudence (fiqh muamalah) posits that economic transactions must adhere to strict ethical frameworks centered on authentic mutual consent (an-taradin), social equity, and the complete elimination of opportunistic price exploitation (ghabn fahisy) and deceptive ambiguity (gharar) (Rosyadi, 2022; Sahrani & Azhar, 2021). While previous studies acknowledge that small business owners intuitively apply experiential commercial logic (Widiatmika, 2016) and observe informal religious norms (Fauzi & Ansori, 2023), existing literature frequently treats microeconomic profit-maximizing mechanisms and religious ethics as separate, parallel phenomena. Consequently, academic research rarely articulates how intuitive economic decision-making heuristics are socially and normatively embedded within local Islamic commercial environments.

Furthermore, empirical qualitative inquiries examining micro-retail dynamics often suffer from two major analytical over-generalizations: (1) Conflating qualitative merchant observations regarding customer switching behavior with formal, mathematically estimated price elasticity of demand coefficients (|Ed|). (2) Assigning complex jurisprudential classifications such as cost-plus profit sales (murabahah) or altruistic benevolent loans (qardh) to informal spot pricing explanations or deferred merchandise sales without validating the actual contractual intent (niyyah) and underlying legal structure (stipulations).

To address these theoretical and methodological gaps, this article presents a qualitative study of traditional grocery stores in West Tanjung Jabung Regency, Jambi Province. The research systematically examines four central analytical questions: 1. How do traditional store owners intuitively perceive customer price sensitivity across different product categories without calculating formal elasticity metrics? 2. How do Islamic commercial principles (fiqh muamalah) and local ethical norms shape merchant pricing, cost transparency, and margin adjustments during wholesale price shifts? 3. How are everyday spot sales and informal deferred payment credit (kasbon) structured, interpreted, and executed within technical Sharia legal frameworks? 4. How do these embedded commercial heuristics vary across distinct operational environments (urban vs. rural) and contribute to perceived business continuity? This study demonstrates that Islamic commercial ethics do not replace conventional microeconomic rationality; instead, economic heuristics are socially embedded within local norms, preventing opportunistic price extraction on basic necessities while legitimizing margin suppression on competitive goods.

METHOD

Research Design and Geographic Context

This study adopted a qualitative descriptive research design utilizing thematic analysis (Miles et al., 2018; Moleong, 2019; Nasution, 2023). Fieldwork was conducted over six consecutive months, from October 2025 to March 2026, across West Tanjung Jabung Regency, Jambi Province. Research was carried out in two distinct districts to capture economic and geographical variation:

a. Tungkal Ilir District is an urbanized coastal commercial center dominated by high-density residential areas, daily wage port laborers, and active retail competition.
b. Betara District is a rural-coastal transition zone characterized by agricultural plantations (oil palm, betel nut, and coconut) with seasonal household cash flow cycles.

Sampling Criteria and Informant Profiles

Informants were selected using purposive sampling based on four explicit inclusion criteria:

a. Continuous operation of an independent traditional grocery store (*warung sembako*) for at least three consecutive years.
b. Primary revenue generated from daily basic necessities and fast-moving consumer goods.
c. Ownership and active daily management by family members without corporate franchising or corporate ownership.
d. Willingness to participate in multi-stage interviews, direct field observation, and ledger document inspections.

To ensure structural coverage, 20 store owners were selected across store scale, geographical location, and customer demographics (Table 1).

Table 1. Demographic and Operational Profile of Informants (N = 20)

Informant ID	District	Location Type	Store Size Class	Years in Business	Primary Customer Base
INF-01 to INF-06	Tungkal Ilir	Urban High-Density	Medium Walk-in	5 – 18 Years	Urban households, daily wage
INF-07 to INF-10	Tungkal Ilir	Coastal Market Fringe	Small Kiosk (<15 sqm)	3 – 12 Years	Fishermen, transient traders
INF-11 to INF-16	Betara	Rural Agricultural	Medium Walk-in (15–30 sqm)	4 – 20 Years	Plantation farmers, agricultural laborers
INF-17 to INF-20	Betara	Suburban Roadside	Small Kiosk (<15 sqm)	3 – 8 Years	Commuters, local villagers

Data Collection Procedures

Data were gathered through three integrated qualitative techniques: in-depth semi-structured interviews with store owners and local shoppers, participant observations of daily transaction dynamics and pricing behaviors, and document analysis of sale records and regional economic reports. This multi-method approach facilitated thorough triangulation, ensuring nuanced insights into consumer price sensitivity, local bargaining practices, and alignment with traditional Islamic commercial principles within West Tanjung Jabung's grocery ecosystem.

Semi-Structured In-Depth Interviews

Interviews lasted between 45 and 90 minutes per session, conducted in Indonesian (Bahasa Indonesia) and local dialects (Tungkal Malay / Jambinese). Discussions followed a standardized

interview guide covering pricing heuristics, responses to wholesale cost fluctuations, informal credit practices (kasbon), transaction execution, and business continuity perceptions. Interviews were audio-recorded with consent and transcribed verbatim. Excerpts were translated into English, ensuring original intent was preserved.

Direct Field Observation

Researchers completed 120 cumulative hours of systematic observation across morning and evening peak operating hours (06:00-09:00 and 16:00-20:00). Observations focused on physical exchange mechanics (akad mu'athah), non-verbal buyer reactions to price announcements, merchandise arrangement, and real-time recording of informal credit. Field notes were transcribed immediately after each observation session.

Document Analysis

Physical transaction artifacts were systematically reviewed including informal credit ledgers (catatan kasbon), supplier wholesale receipts, and inventory logbooks to empirical test financial behavior. This documentation verified short-term credit arrangements, debt repayment regularity, and markup structures. Triangulating these records provided concrete evidence of how local pricing dynamics, profit margin management, and informal credit networks operate within community-based retail settings.

Data Coding, Analysis, and Research Rigor

Qualitative data were analyzed using the systematic thematic analysis framework of Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2018). Transcripts and observational field notes were processed in three steps:

a. First-order open coding to capture empirical statements and observable behaviors.
b. Second-order thematic categorization grouping codes into conceptual sub-themes.
c. Abstraction into theoretical dimensions linking empirical findings to microeconomic heuristics and fiqh muamalah concepts.

To ensure coding reliability, two researchers coded the qualitative dataset independently. Discrepancies were resolved through team reconciliation, achieving an inter-coder agreement rate exceeding 90%. Theoretical saturation was evaluated systematically: after analyzing the 16th interview, no new conceptual codes emerged; four additional interviews confirmed full saturation across all sub-groups.

Methodological rigor was maintained through data source triangulation (interviews, field observations, and ledger analysis). Informant feedback (member checking) was conducted with four participants to confirm descriptive accuracy. Institutional ethical clearance was obtained from the FEB Ethics Board (Ref: 048/KEP-FEB/2025), with written or verbal recorded consent secured from all participants.

Data were analyzed using the systematic qualitative framework of Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2018), moving inductively from raw transcript excerpts to structured codes, categories, and theoretical themes. Table 2 illustrates the transparent analytical coding structure used in this study.

Table 2. Analytical Coding Structure Framework

First-Order Open Codes	Second-Order Sub-Themes	Aggregate Theoretical Dimensions
"Customers jump to other shops over Rp 500"; "Snack buyers switch brands easily"; "Keep soft drink margins thin"	Perceived High Price Sensitivity in Non-Essential Goods	Intuitive Price Sensitivity Calculus
"Rice must be bought regardless of price"; "Cooking oil demand stays constant"; "Explain supplier price hikes first"	Perceived Low Price Sensitivity in Staples & Cost Transparency	Ethically Bounded Inelastic Pricing
"Silent handing over of money and goods"; "No formal verbal statement needed"; "Price tag is visible"	Silent Mutual Consent Mechanics (Mu'athah)	Sharia Contractual Operationalization
"Allowing trusted neighbors to pay later"; "No extra fee on debt"; "Recording in manual ledger"	Interest-Free Informal Credit (Kasbon / Qardh)	Social Capital & Liquidity Buffering
"Surviving during crop price drops"; "Maintaining steady daily cash flow"; "Keeping repeat customers"	Dimensions of Operational Resilience	Micro-Business Resilience

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This empirical analysis demonstrates how traditional micro-retailers in West Tanjung Jabung seamlessly integrate intuitive economic heuristics with ethical *Fiqh Muamalah* principles. By examining price sensitivity, transaction structures (akad mu'athah), informal credit (*kasbon as dayn*), and regional variations across urban and rural operating environments, this section highlights four core resilience mechanisms ranging from margin compression to social capital that sustain business continuity against modern commercial pressures.

Results

Intuitive Price Sensitivity and Bounded Pricing Behavior

Field data demonstrate that traditional store owners possess sophisticated experiential heuristics regarding customer price sensitivity, even though they do not use formal academic terminology or compute mathematical elasticity coefficients.

For non-essential secondary goods such as packaged snacks, carbonated beverages, instant coffee, and branded toiletries merchants observe high customer price sensitivity. Customers display immediate switching behavior or product substitution when minor price increases occur. As explained by INF-03 in Tungkal Ilir:

"If I increase the price of packaged tea or instant noodles by even IDR 500, customers complain immediately or buy from the neighboring store. When wholesale prices rise, I compress my profit margin first rather than raising retail prices right away."

To retain customer traffic and protect sales volume, store owners maintain low markups (3%-5%) on non-essential goods.

Conversely, basic staple necessities (sembako) such as rice, cooking oil, granulated sugar, and 3 kg LPG cylinders are perceived as having low customer price sensitivity. Demand remains constant because households require these items daily. INF-12 in Betara noted:

"When the wholesale price of rice rises, people still buy because they must eat. But I cannot

raise prices arbitrarily just because they need it. I show them the receipt from the distributor so they see I am taking only a small margin."

Table 3. Product Category, Perceived Price Sensitivity, Pricing Strategy & Margin, Fiqh Muamalah Framework

Product Category	Perceived Price Sensitivity	Pricing Strategy & Margin	Fiqh Muamalah Framework
Basic Staples (*Sembako*)	Perceived Low Sensitivity (Inelastic Perception)	Stable margins; cost-disclosure pass-through of supplier hikes	*Akad Mu'athah* + Ethical Transparency (Informal Cost Disclosure)
Secondary Goods (Snacks/Toiletries)	Perceived High Sensitivity (Elastic Perception)	Margin compression; competitive price matching	Akad Mu'athah based on *An-Taradin* and *Tasamuh*

Rather than exploiting low price sensitivity to maximize profit, traditional store owners constrain their pricing behavior. When wholesale costs increase, merchants communicate these increases transparently, often displaying distributor receipts.

This practice reflects informal ethical transparency rather than a formal murabahah contract. In classical fiqh, murabahah is a specific cost-plus sales contract requiring explicit agreement on initial acquisition costs and profit margins (Ascarya, 2016; Hasan, 2018). In spot retail, showing distributor receipts functions as an ethical mechanism to eliminate information asymmetry, avoid accusations of price gouging (ghabn fahisy), and preserve mutual consent (rida) (Pratama, 2020; Rozalinda, 2017).

Jurisprudential Re-Evaluation: Akad Mu'athah, Deferred Sales (Dayn), and Qardh

Observational data indicate that daily transactions in traditional warung environments default almost universally to akad mu'athah the unvocalized mutual exchange of goods and money (Fauzi & Ansori, 2023). In practice, consumers select merchandise displaying clear, visible price tags and seamlessly hand cash or show QRIS digital payment screens to store owners. Merchants then accept payment through a subtle nod, a simple gesture, or brief verbal confirmation.

While classical Islamic jurisprudence traditionally emphasized explicit verbal offer and acceptance (shighat), both classical scholars and contemporary legal literature confirm that physical, conduct-based exchange backed by transparent pricing fully establishes valid mutual consent (an-taradin) (Ismail, 2021; Sahrani, 2019). This implicit agreement validates micro-retail transactions under Islamic commercial law without burdening routine daily trade with rigid formal recitations. Modern digital adapters like QRIS integrate smoothly into this ancient legal framework, demonstrating how akad mu'athah flexibly bridges traditional neighborhood commerce with modern technology while maintaining strict adherence to Sharia principles of consent and fairness.

Table 4. Transaction Type, Empirical Reality Observed, Correct Fiqh Classification

Transaction Type	Empirical Reality Observed	Correct Fiqh Classification
Spot Cash Sales	Silent exchange of goods and cash/QRIS	Akad Mu'athah
Credit (*Kasbon*)	Merchandise taken now, paid later at regular retail price (manual ledger)	Deferred Sale (*Bai' Ajil)* / Deferred Sale Debt (*Dayn*)

A crucial jurisprudential distinction emerges regarding informal customer credit (kasbon). Previous literature often labels kasbon as qardh (an altruistic, interest-free cash loan) (Amalia, 2023; Mubarok, 2018). However, empirical analysis shows that kasbon in warung operations represents a deferred merchandise sale (bai' ajil) resulting in a deferred sale debt (dayn).

Customers take physical goods and agree to settle the financial obligation later typically on weekly or monthly paydays. Merchants do not disburse cash loans; they defer payment collection on delivered goods.

Importantly, 18 out of 20 store owners reported charging no interest, service fees, or higher retail prices to credit customers. Debt balances are recorded in manual ledgers (catatan kasbon) accessible to customers. Because no price markup is added for delayed settlement, the transaction remains free of riba (interest/usury) and complies with Sharia principles governing deferred sales (Ascarya & Yumanita, 2018; Janwari, 2016).

This zero-interest extension of credit transforms routine commercial debt into an ethical mechanism of mutual aid (ta'awun), shielding low-income households from predatory lending practices (Ascarya, 2022). Merchants view kasbon not as a profit-maximizing financial instrument, but as a socio-religious responsibility that fosters neighborhood trust and customer retention (Chapra, 2020). By absorbing the opportunity cost and default risks of deferred payments without altering baseline retail prices, store owners maintain absolute price parity between cash and credit buyers. Consequently, these informal credit structures uphold the principle of equitable risk-sharing while ensuring compliance with Islamic financial ethics in daily micro-retail operations (Farooq, 2019).

Contextual Cross-Case Analysis across Operating Environments

An empirical examination of traditional grocery stores (warung) in West Tanjung Jabung demonstrates that commercial behavior and pricing heuristics are not uniform; rather, they are deeply shaped by spatial, socio-economic, and environmental conditions. To fully understand how micro-retailers navigate consumer price sensitivity and apply Fiqh Muamalah principles in practice, it is necessary to examine how these operational mechanics vary across distinct operating environments.

This contextual cross-case analysis evaluates four representative operational contexts within the region: Urban High-Density areas (Tungkal Ilir), Coastal Market Fringes (Tungkal Ilir), Rural Agricultural zones (Betara), and Suburban Roadsides (Betara). Each environment presents a unique blend of structural factors ranging from the proximity of corporate minimarket competition to seasonal cash flow cycles tied to agriculture and fishing. By systematically comparing these location types across key dimensions such as primary customer demographics, perceived price elasticity, informal credit (kasbon) dependence, and wholesale cost transparency this section reveals how traditional merchants flexibly adapt their business heuristics. Far from operating under rigid, abstract rules, store owners dynamically align their pricing strategies, risk absorption, and ethical practices with the specific economic realities and social capital structures of their immediate communities.

Table 5. Context Dimension, Urban High-Density (Tungkal Ilir), Coastal Market Fringe (Tungkal Ilir), Rural Agricultural (Betara), Suburban Roadside (Betara)

Context Dimension	Urban High-Density (Tungkal Ilir)	Coastal Market Fringe (Tungkal Ilir)	Rural Agricultural (Betara)	Suburban Roadside (Betara)
Primary Customer Base	Urban households, wage earners	Fishermen, transient traders	Agricultural plantation workers	Road commuters, local villagers
Price Sensitivity Perception	High sensitivity on secondary goods; moderate on staples	High sensitivity across all categories due to daily income	Moderate sensitivity; income tied to harvest cycles	High sensitivity on convenience items
Informal Credit (*Kasbon*) Usage	Low to moderate (10%-20% of sales); short duration	High (30%-40%); tied to fishing trips	High (40%-60%); settled monthly or after harvest	Very low (<5%); limited to immediate neighbors
Wholesale Cost Transparency	Verbal explanation during price hikes	Display of wholesale price boards	Sharing supplier receipts and harvest price contexts	Rare; relies on posted price tags
Competitive Pressures	High (modern minimarkets nearby)	Moderate (local market competition)	Low to moderate (few alternative stores)	Moderate (neighboring kiosks)

Urban vs. Rural Variations

In urban Tungkal Ilir (INF-01 to INF-06), store owners face direct competition from modern retail chains. Consequently, they compress profit margins on secondary goods and adopt digital QRIS payments. Kasbon credit is restricted to a small circle of long-term neighborhood residents.

In rural Betara (INF-11 to INF-16), household cash flow depends on agricultural harvest cycles (e.g., oil palm, betel nut, and coconut). Store owners extend kasbon credit to 40%-60% of their customer base as a deferred sale debt (dayn). During low harvest yield or depressed commodity prices, merchants maintain steady prices, absorbing delayed repayments to preserve neighborhood solidarity (ukhuwah) and retain their long-term customer base.

Negative and Contradictory Case Analysis

Although most store owners adhere to community ethics, negative cases were observed. During supply disruptions of cooking oil, two urban kiosks charged higher markups to transient non-resident customers while maintaining standard prices for regular neighbors. When questioned, one owner (INF-08) stated:

"Regular neighbors sustain my store every day, so I keep their price fair. For strangers passing through during a shortage, I charge market price to cover my replacement cost."

This case illustrates that ethical price constraints are reinforced by local social capital and long-term customer relationships, rather than operating as uniform, abstract constraints applied equally to all buyers.

EnvironmentsPerceived Micro-Business Resilience Mechanics

Rather than demonstrating direct statistical causality, qualitative data identify four primary perceived mechanisms through which embedded pricing heuristics and Sharia ethics support micro-business continuity:

Table 6. Resilience Mechanism, Operational Focus, Underlying Embedded Logic

Resilience Mechanism	Operational Focus	Underlying Embedded Logic
1. Sales Volume Stability	Margin compression on secondary goods	Retains price-sensitive buyers; mitigates competition from modern retail
2. Customer Retention	Cost transparency on basic staples	Eliminates suspicion of price gouging; preserves mutual agreement (*rida*)
3. Relational Liquidity	Interest-free deferred payment (*kasbon*)	Maintains household purchasing power during local income downturns
4. Inventory Capital Protection	Pallet elevation & FIFO inventory rotation	Protects stock against tidal flooding (*rob*) and prevents food waste

1. Sales Volume Stability

Suppressing margins on elastic secondary goods acts as a strategic buffer, preventing customer migration toward modern minimarkets while maintaining steady daily inventory turnover. In traditional micro-retail ecosystems, consumers demonstrate high price sensitivity toward non-essential secondary commodities. When local merchants intentionally compress profit margins on these elastic goods, they effectively eliminate the price advantage traditionally held by corporate retail chains. This pricing strategy preserves essential store foot traffic and prevents customer loss to modern minimarkets, ensuring that neighborhood residents continue to use the traditional shop as their primary purchasing destination.

Maintaining foot traffic generates crucial cross-selling opportunities across the store's entire product catalog. High transaction volumes on inelastic, core everyday staples such as rice, cooking oil, and sugar offset the narrower margins accepted on secondary items. By optimizing sales velocity rather than individual unit markups, merchants achieve sustained inventory turnover, reduce holding costs, and minimize stock obsolescence. Ultimately, this strategic balance between elastic margin suppression and inelastic volume generation stabilizes aggregate revenue streams, providing micro-enterprises with long-term financial resilience across volatile economic cycles.

2. Customer Retention via Social Capital

Transparent cost disclosure on basic staples during supply shocks preserves customer trust (rida), securing a loyal customer base that resists competitor promotions. When wholesale acquisition costs surge due to inflationary pressures or supply chain disruptions, micro-retailers prioritize open communication over opportunistic price gouging. By candidly explaining margin constraints and wholesale price increases to neighborhood buyers, store owners cultivate a deep sense of mutual empathy and shared fairness. In Islamic commercial ethics, achieving genuine mutual satisfaction (an-taradin) relies on eliminating information asymmetry and deceptive pricing practices. This radical price transparency transforms routine commercial transactions into enduring social bonds built on reciprocal respect. Consumers recognize that the merchant is absorbing partial profit losses to buffer the community against economic hardship, which fosters strong brand equity and emotional loyalty. Consequently, when modern retail chains or hypermarket competitors launch aggressive promotional campaigns, neighborhood residents remain steadfastly loyal to local merchants. This socially embedded trust acts as a formidable non-price barrier to entry, insulating traditional micro-retailers from predatory corporate competition while securing long-term revenue

stability.

3. Relational Liquidity Buffering

Extending interest-free deferred payment credit (kasbon) during seasonal income drops sustains household consumption baselines. In agricultural and coastal micro-economies, household cash flows fluctuate drastically due to seasonal harvests, adverse weather conditions, or macroeconomic shocks. During these lean periods, local micro-retailers serve as informal community liquidity providers by granting zero-interest credit for essential commodities. While accumulating high accounts receivable temporarily strains the merchant's operational cash recovery and working capital, store owners do not view this practice through a narrow short-term financial lens. Instead, kasbon is conceptualized as a strategic investment in relational capital and neighborhood welfare.

By absorbing default risks and financial illiquidity without levying penalty fees or interest markups, merchants ensure that vulnerable families maintain access to daily subsistence goods. In return, this compassionate credit mechanism generates deep moral obligation and unwavering customer retention. Once seasonal incomes recover, households prioritize settling their accumulated kasbon balances before making purchases elsewhere. This informal credit network transforms potential bad debt into an enduring mechanism for customer lock-in. Ultimately, relational liquidity buffering strengthens social cohesion, protects local food security, and guarantees the long-term viability and competitive resilience of traditional retail enterprises within the neighborhood ecosystem.

4. Inventory Capital Protection

In coastal areas vulnerable to seasonal tidal flooding (rob), store owners use elevated wooden pallets and First-In, First-Out (FIFO) stock rotation to safeguard perishable goods from environmental degradation. These practical supply chain strategies serve a dual purpose: ensuring business continuity and fulfilling socio-religious imperatives regarding asset stewardship. In fiqh muamalah (Islamic commercial jurisprudence), preventing stock spoilage directly aligns with the fundamental higher objective of Shariah (maqasid al-shariah) concerning the preservation of property (hifzh al-mal) and the explicit prohibition of food waste (ida'at al-mal) (Awwaliyah & Nugroho, 2019; Bowersox et al., 2020).

Elevating stock above flood levels mitigates physical capital loss during high-tide events, while First-In, First-Out (FIFO) rotation ensures older inventory liquidates before expiring. Economically, this safeguards working capital and minimizes shrinkage in high-risk settings. From an Islamic jurisprudence perspective, negligent management leading to avoidable waste breaches trust (amanah) and constitutes financial irresponsibility. Consequently, combining physical adaptations with systematic inventory management enables micro-retailers to maintain supply chain resilience, optimize profit margins, and fulfill ethical mandates regarding property preservation (hifzh al-mal).

Discussion

The empirical findings of this study offer critical insights into the real-world operational logic of traditional grocery stores (warung) in West Tanjung Jabung, highlighting a sophisticated synthesis of intuitive microeconomic heuristics and Islamic commercial jurisprudence (Fiqh Muamalah). While formal economic literature often characterizes micro-entrepreneurs in developing regions as operating with sub-optimal, informal financial practices, this discussion demonstrates that their pricing behaviors, credit mechanisms, and physical risk adaptations form an embedded, highly rational system designed to achieve long-term socio-economic resilience.

Microeconomic Rationality and Intuitive Elasticity Bounds

A central finding of this research is that traditional store owners possess a refined, experiential understanding of price elasticity of demand (|Ed|), despite lacking formal academic training or calculating quantitative coefficients. Microeconomic theory dictates that profit maximization occurs where marginal revenue equals marginal cost, with markups inversely proportional to price elasticity. The empirical data show that merchants instinctively apply this rule by separating goods into two distinct categories: elastic secondary goods (e.g., snacks, instant coffee, toiletries) and inelastic basic staples (sembako).

For secondary goods, merchants maintain tight markups (3%–5%) and absorb wholesale price increases through margin compression. They recognize that consumers face low switching costs and exhibit immediate substitution behavior toward neighboring kiosks or modern minimarkets. Conversely, for inelastic basic staples like rice and cooking oil, demand remains stable regardless of price fluctuations. However, instead of exploiting this inelasticity through monopolistic pricing as pure neoclassical economic models might predict merchants deliberately constrain their markup behavior. This bounded pricing behavior illustrates that micro-retailers operate under dual constraints: market forces and an unwritten ethical contract with their immediate community.

Jurisprudential Re-Evaluation: Beyond Classical Legal Formality

From the perspective of Fiqh Muamalah, the daily operational realities of traditional warung challenge rigid, literalist interpretations of Islamic commercial contracts. Neoclassical Sharia finance literature frequently attempts to fit informal practices into idealized classical frameworks, often misclassifying everyday transactions.

First, the universal reliance on akad mu'athah (unvocalized mutual exchange) reflects the dynamic adaptability of Islamic jurisprudence. Classical legal texts traditionally required explicit verbal offer and acceptance (shighat). However, in modern spot micro-retail whether involving cash or digital QRIS payments the physical, conduct-based exchange backed by visible price tags establishes unquestionable mutual consent (an-taradin). This finding reinforces contemporary jurisprudential views (Ismail, 2021; Sahrani, 2019) that Fiqh Muamalah prioritizes substantive agreement over procedural formalism.

Second, this study provides a crucial jurisprudential re-evaluation of informal customer credit

(kasbon). While prior literature predominantly categorizes kasbon as qardh (an altruistic, interest-free money loan) (Amalia, 2023; Mubarok, 2018), our empirical evidence demonstrates that kasbon is fundamentally a deferred merchandise sale (bai' ajil) resulting in a deferred sale debt (dayn). Store owners do not disburse cash; they deliver physical goods while deferring payment collection until agreed-upon paydays or harvest cycles. Because 18 out of 20 surveyed merchants maintain absolute price parity between cash and credit buyers charging zero interest, administrative fees, or credit markups the transaction remains strictly compliant with Sharia prohibitions against riba (usury). This zero-interest extension of credit transforms routine trade debt into a vital instrument of mutual assistance (ta'awun), shielding low-income agricultural and fishing households from predatory, high-interest informal lenders.

Spatial Contextualization and the Social Capital Anchor

The cross-case analysis across urban (Tungkal Ilir) and rural (Betara) environments highlights that economic heuristics are deeply contextual and anchored in localized social capital. In urban high-density settings, where corporate minimarkets exert strong competitive pressures, merchants utilize digital payments and margin compression to preserve volume. In contrast, in rural agricultural settings, cash flow is inherently cyclical. Here, merchants extend kasbon credit to 40%–60% of their customer base, effectively acting as informal community liquidity buffers during off-peak harvest periods.

Importantly, the negative case analysis where urban kiosks charged higher markups to transient strangers during cooking oil shortages while maintaining fixed prices for regular neighbors reveals the underlying operational logic of ethical pricing. Moral constraints in micro-retail are not abstract, universally applied dogmas. Instead, they are reinforced by social capital, reciprocal obligation, and long-term customer relationships. Fair pricing and cost disclosure function as non-price barriers to entry, earning customer loyalty (rida) that modern, standardized retail chains cannot easily replicate.

Maqasid al-Shariah and Micro-Business Resilience

Finally, the physical adaptation measures observed in coastal zones such as pallet elevation and First-In, First-Out (FIFO) stock rotation bridge supply chain management with higher Islamic ethical mandates. In Fiqh Muamalah, protecting inventory against tidal flooding (rob) and preventing food spoilage directly aligns with Maqasid al-Shariah (the higher objectives of Islamic law), specifically the preservation of property (hifzh al-mal) and the prohibition of wasteful negligence (ida'at al-mal).

Ultimately, traditional grocery stores in West Tanjung Jabung sustain their market viability not through high financial capital or formal corporate strategy, but through relational capital, ethical transparency, and localized risk-sharing. By integrating intuitive microeconomic elasticity rules with the moral imperatives of Fiqh Muamalah, these micro-enterprises achieve an enduring socio-economic resilience that ensures both commercial continuity and community welfare.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that traditional grocery store owners in West Tanjung Jabung Regency operate within a system where microeconomic heuristics are socially and normatively embedded in Islamic commercial ethics. Merchants assess customer price sensitivity intuitively rather than computing formal elasticity coefficients (|Ed|).

Sharia principles function as normative boundaries: preventing opportunistic price extraction on basic necessities through cost transparency, while legitimizing margin compression on competitive secondary goods through mutual consent (an-taradin) within akad mu'athah transactions.

Jurisprudentially, routine spot sales default to akad mu'athah, whereas informal credit (kasbon) operates primarily as a deferred merchandise sale debt (dayn) rather than an altruistic cash loan (qardh). These embedded practices support perceived business continuity across sales volume stability, customer retention, relational credit buffering, and inventory protection.

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