

Sharia global trade and sustainable economic growth: A narrative review of justice principles and ethical business

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ABSTRACT

This study seeks to combine and assess the current body of work on the integration of Shariah principles into international trade and their potential contribution to sustainable economic growth. Utilizing a narrative review approach, this study synthesizes academic papers, books, policy documents, and case studies published between 2018 and 2025. A thematic analysis was conducted to explore the correlation between Shariah principles and such as justice (al-‘adl), transparency (al-shafāfiyyah), the prohibition of riba, gharar, and maysir, and compliance with halal and thayyib standards—and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 8 (inclusive growth), SDG 10 (reduced inequalities), SDG 12 (responsible consumption and production), and SDG 16 (peace, justice, and strong institutions). The findings indicate significant opportunities in the expanding halal market, innovations in blockchain halal supply chains, and the standardization of cross-border halal certification. Furthermore, examples from the Islamic Development Bank (IsDB) and Nestlé demonstrate that Shariah-compliant practices can improve fairness, market access, and social welfare while also highlighting challenges such as regulatory fragmentation, limited global awareness of Islamic economics, and infrastructure shortcomings. This study contributes to the creation of an integrated framework linking Shariah economic principles with SDG goals in international trade policy, providing a conceptual guide for policymakers, trade organizations, and multinational companies. Future research should focus on sector-specific empirical applications, develop quantitative models to evaluate the effects of Shariah-compliant trade on sustainable development outcomes, and investigate technological innovations to align Islamic economic ethics with global sustainability objectives.

Keywords: Shariah-based global trade, Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), Islamic economics, Business ethics, Economic justice

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RESEARCH & PUBLISHING



1. INTRODUCTION

In recent decades, the expansion of global trade has accelerated, presenting numerous opportunities for economic advancement, market integration and international collaboration. However, this growth has intensified concerns regarding ethical governance, social justice, and environmental sustainability (OECD, 2023; World Bank, 2025). Within this framework, Shariah-based commercial principles anchored in justice (al-‘adl), fairness (al-qist), and transparency offer a robust ethical foundation that is both value-centric and applicable in today's commercial landscape (Ahmed & Rashid, 2022b, 2022a; Sudana, 2024). These principles resonate with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly in their objectives of eradicating poverty, fostering responsible production, combating climate change, and diminishing inequality (UNDP, 2023; United Nations, 2024).

The global halal trade is expanding beyond countries with predominantly Muslim populations. These products and services are recognized for their ethical standards and high quality (Ahmad et al., 2024; Mabkhot, 2023; Ramli et al., 2024). The halal market is expected to continue growing due to an increase in Muslim consumers, increased interest from non-Muslims in ethical products, and easier trade processes (IsDB, 2024; ITFC, 2025). However, there are still issues that need to be addressed. These include varied certification systems (Rofi'ah et al., 2024), uneven enforcement of standards in different regions (Abimanyu & Faiz, 2023; Idris et al., 2025), and a lack of focus on environmental, social, and governance (ESG) factors in halal trade (Ghalih & Chang, 2025; Nawaz et al., 2025; Tobing et al., 2024).

Technology can help overcome these challenges. For example, blockchain technology can make halal supply chains more transparent, reduce fraud, and build customer trust (Bosona & Gebresenbet, 2023; Syarofi & Syam, 2025; Yuanitasari et al., 2025). Digital platforms are also accelerating certification and allowing standards to be recognized internationally (Maulina, 2023; Rasyidah et al., 2025; Susanty et al., 2025). However, not all businesses are adopting digital tools equally, especially small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), which are key to halal production and distribution (OIC, 2023; Tangkham, 2025).

Research on halal trade has expanded to cover various aspects, including halal tourism (Battour et al., 2018), halal entrepreneurship (Basir, 2025), and sustainability of halal food (Fakir et al., 2023). Despite this, there is a noticeable lack of comprehensive narrative reviews that bring together the conceptual, regulatory, ethical, and sustainability elements of Shariah-compliant global trade. Most reviews to date have been limited to analyzing quantitative trends or have focused on specific geographic or industry contexts, resulting in a gap in understanding the broader challenges and opportunities for integrating halal trade with global sustainable development goals (Aufi & Aji, 2021; Salsabila et al., 2025).

This research addresses this gap by employing a narrative review (Sukhera, 2022) to systematically gather the diverse elements of Shariah-compliant global trade. The uniqueness of this study lies in its thorough exploration of Shariah principles, global trade practices, certification harmonization, sustainability alignment, and technological enablers, all grounded in current academic and policy literature. The study's contribution is divided into three sections: (1) a thematic synthesis that connects ethical and economic perspectives; (2) a compilation of key reforms to improve Shariah compliance in international trade; and (3) a framework for incorporating SDG targets into the governance of halal trade. This document serves as a comprehensive guide for policymakers, business stakeholders, and researchers committed to fostering a more ethical, transparent, and sustainable global trade system.

The conceptual mechanism linking Shariah principles to trade outcomes in this review is based on the idea that justice (al-‘adl), transparency and trustworthiness (amanah and al-shafāfiyyah), and contractual fairness through the avoidance of riba, gharar, and maysir form a normative basis for ethical exchange in international halal commerce. These principles are translated into practice through governance instruments such as certification harmonization and mutual recognition arrangements, digital traceability systems (including blockchain-enabled verification), and standardized contract structures that support clearer disclosure and fairer risk allocation. When implemented, these governance mechanisms reduce information asymmetries, lower duplication in verification and compliance procedures, and improve supply chain verifiability, thereby reducing transaction costs and clearance delays while increasing confidence among trading partners. The expected outcomes include higher export participation and diversification, improved responsible sourcing and production practices, and strengthened institutional trust, aligned with SDGs 8, 10, 12, and 16.

Based on this reasoning, three propositions guide the analytical direction of this review: first, certification harmonization is expected to reduce trade friction by lowering clearance times and compliance burdens; second, the adoption of digital traceability systems is expected to increase SME export intensity and market diversification; and third, variations in certification cost structures are expected to influence the survival and composition of halal-exporting product portfolios over time. These propositions provide a basis for linking Shariah principles to measurable trade outcomes and the broader objectives of Sustainable Development Goals.

2. METHODOLOGY

This study employs a narrative review approach to gather and examine scholarly articles, government reports, and industry assessments related to Shariah-compliant international trade. While systematic reviews adhere to stringent criteria regarding the inclusion and statistical combination of evidence, narrative reviews offer a more adaptable and context-aware synthesis of various evidence types while maintaining academic rigor (Sukhera, 2022). This research strategy is particularly suitable for subjects that cross multiple disciplines, such as Shariah-compliant trade, where the relevant literature includes areas such as economics, law, ethics, sustainability, and technology. A narrative review is advantageous when the objective is to identify conceptual relationships, contextual intricacies, and policy consequences that may not be visible through quantitative meta-analyses (Kurniawan et al., 2025; Nazri et al., 2022; Susanty et al., 2025).

The literature search was performed across various databases, including Scopus, Web of Science, ScienceDirect, and Google Scholar, augmented by official publications from multilateral organizations such as the Islamic Development Bank (IsDB, 2024), the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC, 2023), the International Islamic Trade Finance Corporation (ITFC, 2025), and the United Nations (United Nations, 2024). Some of the keywords used in the search were "Shariah-based trade," "halal global market," "Islamic trade ethics," "halal certification harmonization," "halal and SDGs," and "Islamic trade technology." To make the search results more useful, Boolean operators and truncations (such as "halal* AND sustainab*") were used.

The review focused on sources published between 2018 and 2025, written in English, and addressing at least one thematic dimension of Shariah-based global trade, including ethical principles, regulatory and certification frameworks, sustainability integration, and technological innovation relevant to cross-border halal commerce. Peer-reviewed journal articles and official policy or institutional reports were included to ensure breadth and contextual depth. Studies were excluded if they examined only domestic halal markets with no international trade implications or if they primarily consisted of commentary lacking substantive analytical contributions. Following a PRISMA-style selection procedure, 247 records were identified, 198 remained after duplicate removal, and 48 full texts were assessed for their eligibility. A total of 30 core studies, supplemented by 18 contextual sources, met the final inclusion criteria, with exclusions based on domestic scope or insufficient analytical relevance (Figure 1).

The analysis utilized an iterative thematic coding approach (Braun & Clarke, 2019), in which each chosen source was thoroughly analyzed and categorized into five predefined themes. These themes, informed by the existing literature and refined during the review, included: (1) the concept of Shariah in global trade; (2) regulatory and institutional frameworks; (3) principles of justice and business ethics; (4) the application of Shariah principles and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs); and (5) challenges and opportunities.

This structure helped organize the results and discussion, ensuring that each topic was supported by several sources and that links between themes were noted. The narrative review method does not attempt to make statistical generalizations. Instead, it helps in understanding concepts by combining research findings, theories, and policy perspectives into a clear framework. This framework can guide future research and changes in Shariah-compliant global trade.

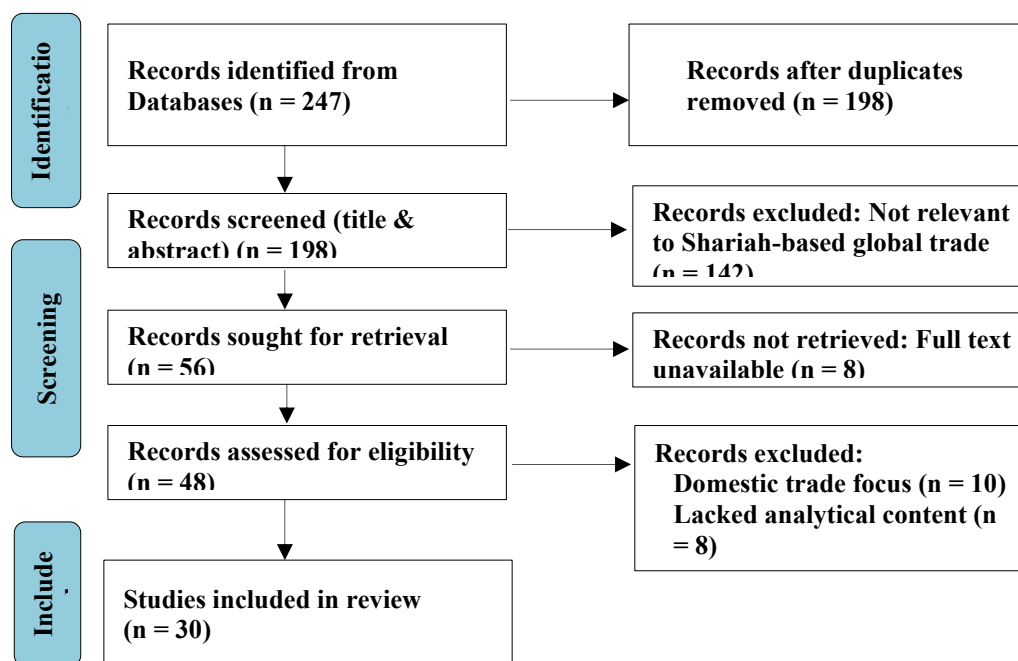


Figure 1. Screening Flow for Narrative Review on Shariah-based Global Trade

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Table 1 presents an Evidence Matrix summarizing the literature evaluated. It comprises 30 primary and supplementary sources that are essential for understanding Shariah-based global trade. These sources originate from various global regions, employ diverse methodologies, and cover a wide range of themes. This compilation ensured the inclusion of both theoretical and empirical research, promoting a comprehensive understanding of the field. Geographically, the studies include global analyses, regional policy assessments (such as those related to OECD countries and OIC member states), and country-specific case studies, with particular emphasis on Malaysia and Indonesia. This diversity provides a holistic view of overarching trends and the specific challenges encountered when applying these trends in different locations.

The sources employ a wide spectrum of methodologies, including conceptual papers, theoretical frameworks, empirical surveys, qualitative interviews, mixed-methods approaches, case studies and policy evaluations. This variety highlights the interdisciplinary nature of Shariah-based trade research, which integrates perspectives from economics, law, sociology and political science. The major findings column shows commonly discussed topics such as ethical principles, alignment with the SDGs, technological advancements, regulatory harmonization, and sustainability integration.

The aggregation of evidence outlines a definitive direction for future research. Although the core ethics of Shariah-compliant trade are well established, the task of translating these principles into consistent regulations, cutting-edge technologies, and environmental benchmarks remains a work in progress. These findings reinforce the idea that future development will rely on harmonizing Shariah adherence with more comprehensive ethical trade standards recognized globally.

Table 1. Evidence Matrix of Reviewed Studies on Shariah-Based Global Trade

Author(s) & Year	Country/Region	Methodology	Key Findings
(Ahmed & Rashid, 2022b)	Global	Conceptual Analysis	Outlined justice and ethics in Shariah-compliant trade, highlighting contractual safeguards for fairness.
(Sudana, 2024)	Indonesia	Phenomenological Study	Examined Islamic principles of justice in multicultural business transactions.

(Ramli et al., 2024)	Malaysia	Conceptual/Theoretical	Integrating <i>Maqasid</i> principles with ESG metrics, applied to 30 Malaysian public companies, shows stronger societal and environmental performance.
(Ahmad et al., 2024; Mabkhot, 2023)	Malaysia	Case Study	Halal branding and marketing significantly boost export performance.
(OECD, 2023)	OECD Countries	Economic Report	Analyzed trade opportunities and SPS approval costs for halal products.
(Fakir et al., 2023)	Malaysia	Mixed Methods	Demonstrate integration of halal standards with SDGs in the food industry, while
(Putri, 2025)	Global	Mixed Methods	Focuses on ethical and environmental concerns in sustainable sourcing for halal certification.
(OIC-SMIIC, 2023)	OIC	Standards Framework	Documented progress on the harmonization of halal certification standards.
(Abimanyu & Faiz, 2023)	ASEAN	Policy Analysis	Analyze regulatory and harmonization challenges in ASEAN halal markets.
(Idris et al., 2025)	Asia	Conceptual/Theoretical	Provide a broader historical and future outlook on the halal industry in Asia, including harmonization issues.
(Battour et al., 2018)	Malaysia & Turkey	Empirical Survey	It was found that consumer trust drives halal tourism growth.
(UNDP, 2023)	Global	Policy Report	Discusses inclusivity and sustainability in the digital age. While not Islamic-specific, its principles align with values underpinning Islamic ethics.
(IsDB, 2024)	OIC Members	Institutional Report	Highlights IsDB's role in financing and capacity-building for member countries, including but not limited to initiatives in the halal trade sector.
(ITFC, 2025)	OIC Members	Trade Report	Highlighted ITFC's efforts to harmonize trade and support SMEs.
(Tangkham, 2025)	Thailand/Regional	Policy Review	Identified barriers SMEs face in halal certification adoption.
(Bosona & Gebresenbet, 2023)	Global	Technology Assessment	Demonstrated blockchain's potential in the agri-food supply chain traceability.
(Syarofi & Syam, 2025; Yunitasari et al., 2025)	Indonesia	Case Study	Showed that digital transformation streamlines halal certification for SMEs.
(Nawaz et al., 2025; Tobing et al., 2024)	Global and Indonesia	Technology Assessment	AI tools improve halal compliance monitoring efficiency.
(Rofi'ah et al., 2024)	Indonesia & Malaysia	Policy Review	Compared halal certification acceleration policies in two countries.
(Ghalih & Chang, 2025)	Indonesia/Global	Policy Analysis	Proposed alignment of halal supply chain with global sustainability standards.
(Aufi & Aji, 2021)	Indonesia	Qualitative Interviews	Found gender inclusivity gaps in halal supply chain governance.
(Putri, 2025)	Global	Reviews	Highlighted gaps in sustainability adoption within halal trade policies.
(World Bank, 2025)	Global	Policy Brief	Identified global trade barriers affecting halal exports.

Source: Processed from primary data (2025)

3.1 Sharia Global Trade Concept

The notion of Shariah-based international trade originates from Islam's holistic perspective, which seamlessly integrates ethical, social, and economic elements into a cohesive moral framework. The foundational principles of Shariah-compliant trade are sourced from the Qur'an, Sunnah, ijma' (consensus of scholars), and Qiyas (analogical deduction). Equitable (al-qist), just (al-'adl), and free from harm (dar' al-mafasid) economic transactions are ensured by applying Sharia principles (Ahmed & Rashid, 2022; Sudana, 2024). These principles are

not merely theoretical; they are implemented through specific rules, obligations, and contracts that safeguard everyone's interests and enhance social and economic welfare (Abdul Aziz, 2022; Ramli et al., 2024).

The halal industry has expanded to encompass various sectors, including food, pharmaceuticals, cosmetics, tourism, logistics, and financial services (Ahmad et al., 2024; Mabkhot, 2023; OECD, 2023). This expansion has increased the global appeal of Shariah-compliant trades. Halal means "allowed" under Islamic law. It covers more than just food-related rules. It also includes product quality, ethical sourcing and social responsibility (Fakir et al., 2023). For example, a food with halal certification must not contain banned ingredients. It must also be made, stored, and transported to avoid contamination (OIC-SMIIC, 2023).

Ethical trade is a key component of Shariah global business rules. Islam bans unfair practices such as extreme uncertainty (gharar), usury (riba), and gambling (maysir). It promotes honesty, transparency, and agreement in business (Abimanyu & Faiz, 2023; Idris et al., 2025). These ethical rules align with modern corporate social responsibility (CSR) and sustainability goals. This makes Shariah trade principles relevant not only to Muslim buyers but also to a growing global market looking for ethical products (Battour et al., 2018; UNDP, 2023).

Multilateral organizations, such as the Islamic Development Bank (IsDB, 2024) and the International Islamic Trade Finance Corporation (ITFC, 2025), have helped institutionalize Shariah-based trade by providing OIC member states with financial support, training, and assistance in identifying markets. These initiatives often focus on helping small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) build their skills. SMEs constitute a large part of halal producers worldwide but frequently have trouble fulfilling international certification and quality criteria (Azroh et al., 2025; Tangkham, 2025).

Furthermore, technological advancements, particularly in blockchain and digital certification systems, are increasingly being integrated into Shariah-compliant trade to enhance transparency, traceability, and compliance monitoring (Bosona & Gebresenbet, 2023; Yuanitasari et al., 2025). For example, blockchain-based halal traceability can monitor every stage of a product's journey from the farm to the store, ensuring its authenticity and preventing fraudulent activities (Nawaz et al., 2025; Tobing et al., 2024). This approach is in accordance with Shariah principles for honest transactions and the modern demand for supply chain accountability and transparency.

However, challenges exist in applying Shariah trading principles on a global scale. An important issue is the lack of a standardized halal certification system across countries. Although the Standards and Metrology Institute for Islamic Countries (SMIIC) has developed uniform halal standards, not all nations have adopted them yet. This has resulted in redundant certification processes, increased costs, and barriers to market entry (OIC-SMIIC, 2023; Rofi'ah et al., 2024). Additionally, varying interpretations of Shariah—both between and within jurisdictions—create regulatory complexities that may hinder international trade (Abimanyu & Faiz, 2023; Idris et al., 2025).

Incorporating Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) into Shariah-compliant trade holds significant potential from a sustainability perspective, although it is still in the early stages of development. Shariah principles inherently support environmental protection (hifz al-bi'ah), social justice (adl ijtima'i), and economic fairness (adl iqtisadi). However, practical methods for embedding these values into halal trade governance are still being established (Aufi & Aji, 2021; Ghalih & Chang, 2025). For example, halal-certified agricultural and food companies may need to adopt renewable energy, procure materials sustainably, and minimize waste as part of their certification requirements (Putri, 2025; Fakir et al., 2023).

The Shariah approach to global trade holds a unique position at the crossroads of ethical commerce, cultural identity, and sustainable development. Its relevance is not confined to Muslim-majority areas, as shown by the rising adoption of halal standards by global companies targeting a wide range of consumers (OECD, 2023; World Bank, 2025). By merging ethical principles with practical regulatory and technological measures, Shariah-based trade can play a crucial role in fostering a just and sustainable global economy.

The greatest challenge lies in translating ideals into practical actions, including, among others, is ensuring that the ethical, social, and environmental dimensions of Shariah commerce are integrated into global trade regulations, industry norms, and consumer engagement initiatives. A collaborative effort among governments, industry stakeholders, standard-setting bodies, and civil society is required to achieve this purpose. In addition, continuous academic participation to refine and adapt Shariah-based trade principles in response to evolving global conditions.

3.2 Regulatory and Institutional Frameworks

The governance of Shariah-compliant global trade involves a complex array of rules and institutions operating at the international, regional, and national levels. These frameworks collectively determine the application of Shariah principles in cross-border trade, impacting aspects such as market access, certification standards and consumer trust (Abimanyu & Faiz, 2023; Ahmad et al., 2024; Idris et al., 2025).

The Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) plays a crucial role in uniting its member countries on policy matters. The Standards and Metrology Institute for Islamic Countries (SMIIC) has established consistent halal standards for food, cosmetics, medicine, and logistics within the OIC (OIC-SMIIC, 2023). The objective is to streamline the process for member states to acknowledge each other's certifications, thereby lowering compliance costs and reducing trade obstacles (Rofi'ah et al., 2024). Despite these initiatives, the application of SMIIC standards remains uneven, as numerous countries continue to operate their own national certification systems due to differing interpretations of Shariah or deeply rooted economic interests (Abimanyu & Faiz, 2023; Idris et al., 2025).

Economic groups, such as ASEAN and the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), have also tried to make halal standards more consistent at the regional level, although the results have been mixed. For instance, Malaysia's Department of Islamic Development (JAKIM) is known worldwide as a leader in halal certification. The regional benchmarking system often uses these standards, even though differences in technical specifications and auditing procedures do not operate smoothly between countries in the region (Ahmad et al., 2024; Maulina, 2023).

National frameworks exhibit considerable diversity owing to variations in legal systems, institutional strengths, and the degree of collaboration between religious authorities and trade ministries. For example, in Indonesia, the Halal Product Assurance Agency (BPJPH) operates under the Ministry of Religious Affairs and collaborates with the Indonesian Ulama Council (MUI) for product certification (Putri, 2025). In contrast, Malaysia's JAKIM oversees a centralized certification. In countries where Muslims do not form the majority, such as Japan, Thailand, and Brazil, halal certification is typically overseen by private or non-governmental entities acknowledged by the markets importing the products (ITFC, 2025).

Organizations involved in multilateral development also support Shariah-compliant trade by providing institutional aid. The Islamic Development Bank (IsDB) provides financial assistance and technical expertise to enhance the halal industry's infrastructure. Meanwhile, the International Islamic Trade Finance Corporation (ITFC) assists small and medium-sized enterprises facing certification challenges by facilitating trade and enhancing their capabilities (IsDB, 2024; ITFC, 2025).

The integration of technology into regulatory frameworks is increasingly crucial for simplifying compliance. Blockchain-powered certification technologies facilitate the instant verification of halal status, thereby minimizing the requirement for supplementary paper audits and reducing the likelihood of fraudulent practices (Bosona & Gebresenbet, 2023). Moreover, some supply chains have adopted digital traceability systems that allow for automated validation against certification databases (Nawaz et al., 2025; Tobing et al., 2024; Yuanitasari et al., 2025). However, the effectiveness of these technological innovations depends on regulatory backing and the readiness to embrace digital solutions.

Despite these advancements, regulatory fragmentation remains a significant concern. Numerous certifying organizations have varying standards and auditing methods, which can lead to complications, increased costs, and decreased consumer confidence (OECD, 2023). In addition, the capacity to enforce regulations differs across countries. Some national systems have robust inspection processes, while others primarily depend on self-reporting, raising concerns about the credibility of the certification (Aufi & Aji, 2021; Salsabila et al., 2025).

From a policy standpoint, aligning Shariah-based trade limitations with sustainability frameworks is crucial. By integrating aspects of environmental and social responsibility, such as sustainable sourcing and ethical labor practices, halal standards can enhance their impact on the Sustainable Development Goals (Ghalih & Chang, 2023; UNDP, 2023).

3.3 Business Ethics and Principles of Justice

Justice (al-'adl) and business ethics (akhlaq al-tijarah) are fundamental to the Shariah framework for global trade, functioning as both moral imperatives and operational instructions for economic activity. These principles are fundamentally rooted in Qur'anic injunctions and Prophetic traditions, which continually underscore justice, honesty, and the safeguarding of all parties in commercial dealings (Ahmed & Rashid, 2022a; Chapra, 2016). Shariah-based ethics come from a divine legal-moral system. In contrast, secular trade ethics frameworks come from corporate governance rules or professional standards. This gives them both spiritual authority and social and economic importance (Abdul Aziz, 2022; Ramli et al., 2024).

Justice in trade necessitates equitable treatment for all parties, the prohibition of unjust practices, and the maintenance of a balance between individual profit objectives and the collective welfare (masalahah 'ammah). The Qur'an explicitly condemns deceitful behavior: "Do not withhold from the people the things that are their due, and do not act corruptly on earth" (Qur'an, 26:183). Furthermore, the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) asserted that honest and trustworthy merchants will be "with the Prophets, the truthful, and the martyrs" in the Hereafter (Jami' al-Tirmidhi, Hadith No. 1209). These ethical mandates transcend temporal and geographical limitations, providing a normative framework for both domestic and international trade (Battour et al., 2018).

According to Shariah business ethics, practices such as *riba* (usury), *gharar* (excessive uncertainty), and *maysir* (gambling) are deemed unethical because they involve financial transactions that do not contribute to value creation and may expose individuals to undue risk (Hassan et al., 2022). In the realm of international trade, this principle is applied by formulating contracts that ensure a fair distribution of risks and rewards, with transparent terms that protect all parties from being disadvantaged by unequal access to information. For example, employing clear and enforceable agreements in the global halal trade sector helps prevent disputes and is consistent with both Islamic ethical standards and modern business norms (Abimanyu & Faiz, 2023; Idris et al., 2025).

An essential element of Shariah trade ethics is the concept of trust (*amanah*). It is important for traders to uphold commitments, deliver goods and services as promised, and refrain from engaging in deceptive advertising. In the present environment of complex supply chains, fulfilling this obligation often necessitates rigorous quality control, mechanisms for tracking goods, and transparent communication with both customers and regulatory bodies (Alourani & Khan, 2025; Yuanitasari et al., 2025). A lack of trust can undermine confidence not only in individual companies but also in the entire halal certification system (Rofi'ah et al., 2024).

Modern corporate social responsibility (CSR) frameworks align well with Shariah values, particularly in areas like environmental stewardship, equitable labor standards, and community involvement (UNDP, 2023). However, Shariah-based CSR goes beyond voluntary corporate initiatives by framing these responsibilities as Islamic obligations (*fard kifayah*), thus making them fundamental to the ethical legitimacy of business operations (Ghalih & Chang, 2025). For instance, ensuring that employees in halal-certified facilities are compensated fairly and work in safe conditions is not merely a CSR option; it is a Shariah requirement based on the prohibition of *zulm* (injustice or oppression).

In the global halal industry, the integration of justice and ethics into certification standards is one of the heated debates. Traditionally, halal certification has focused on adherence to religious dietary rules, but there is an increasing movement to incorporate ethical considerations such as sustainability, humane animal treatment, and the prevention of exploitative labor practices (Fakir et al., 2023; Handayati et al., 2024; Putri, 2025). This initiative is in line with the *maqasid al-Shariah*, or the objectives of Islamic law, which include the protection of religion (*hifz al-din*), life (*hifz al-nafs*), intellect (*hifz al-'aql*), offspring (*hifz al-nasl*), and wealth (*hifz al-mal*).

The integration of Shariah-based justice and ethics into trade governance can gauge market differentiation for halal products, especially in non-Muslim majority markets where consumers are increasingly prioritizing ethical sourcing and production transparency (OECD, 2023; World Bank, 2024). Ethical branding that genuinely embodies Shariah values can foster confidence and loyalty across various customer sectors, thereby enhancing market prospects for compliant producers (Ahmad et al., 2024; Mabkhot, 2023).

Uniformly applying these principles across nations can pose a serious challenge. A gap between theory and practice can occur due to variations in Shariah interpretation, insufficient resources for regulatory bodies, and differing levels of ethical enforcement (Aufi & Aji, 2021; Salsabila et al., 2025). To bridge these gaps, it is essential

for scholars, lawmakers, certifiers, and industry leaders to collaborate in establishing ethical standards for halal trade that are both Shariah-compliant and globally accepted.

Incorporating the principles of justice and business ethics within Shariah global trade offers a solid ethical framework that, if consistently applied, can elevate the industry into a formidable advocate for fair and ethical trade practices worldwide. By harmonizing these principles with international trade norms and sustainability targets, Shariah-based trade systems could gain increased credibility and appeal on a global level.

3.4 Shariah Principles and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in Practice

The convergence of Shariah principles with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) presents a feasible pathway for harmonizing ethical trading practices with global development aspirations. The SDGs, which were adopted in 2015, are not religious in nature, but some of their primary objectives, especially eradicating poverty, promoting responsible consumption and production, and ensuring environmental sustainability, align with the *maqasid al-Shariah* (objectives of Islamic law) (Hassan et al., 2022; UNDP, 2023).

The *maqasid al-Shariah* framework has five features: the protection of religion (*hifz al-din*), life (*hifz al-nafs*), intellect (*hifz al-‘aql*), progeny (*hifz al-nasl*), and wealth (*hifz al-mal*) (Chapra, 2016). These objectives closely align with the priorities of the SDGs. For instance, *hifz al-nafs* supports SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-being) by encouraging safe, healthy, and legal consumption. *Hifz al-mal*, on the other hand, supports SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth) by promoting fair and just business practices.

When it comes to global trade based on Shariah, there are many clear areas where the SDGs and Shariah are in line with each other. The first one is on Ethical and Sustainable Production (SDG 12: Responsible Consumption and Production). Trade adhering to Shariah principles prohibits the use of toxic substances, mandates cleanliness and safety in production, and discourages waste. These standards inherently support environmentally friendly consumption practices. Halal certification programs can expand on these ideals by incorporating environmental standards, such as reduced carbon footprints, eco-friendly packaging, and minimized waste (Fakir et al., 2023; Ghalih & Chang, 2025; Putri, 2025).

The second focus is on eradicating poverty and ensuring inclusive economic participation (SDG 1: No Poverty and SDG 10: Reduced Inequalities). Shariah principles aim to reduce economic disparities by advocating for equitable commercial practices and prohibiting exploitative contracts. The Islamic Development Bank (IsDB) and the International Islamic Trade Finance Corporation (ITFC) amplify multilateral initiatives to support small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), particularly in developing nations, by employing Shariah-compliant financing. This approach facilitates broader participation in global markets (IsDB, 2024; ITFC, 2024).

The third topic addresses Gender Equity in Trade Opportunities (SDG 5: Gender Equality). Gender inclusion is a fundamental component of Islamic ethical standards concerning economic participation, as long as it adheres to Shariah guidelines. However, it is sometimes overlooked in trade discussions. Halal industrial value chains can significantly enhance women's roles in areas such as production, certification, and management (Aufi & Aji, 2021; Salsabila et al., 2025).

The fourth aspect concerns climate action and environmental protection (SDG 13: Climate Action). The Qur'an's directive to avoid corruption (*fasad*) on Earth (Qur'an 30:41) supports environmentally friendly commercial practices. Shariah-compliant trade can incorporate renewable energy in production, ensure responsible sourcing of materials, and promote biodiversity conservation (Putri, 2025).

Although there are natural synergies, effectively merging Shariah trade governance with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in practice remains difficult. Presently, most halal certification organizations concentrate on ensuring religious compliance, often neglecting a systematic evaluation of sustainability measures (OECD, 2023). This gap suggests that while halal products might be more ethical compared to non-halal ones, they may not necessarily excel in environmental or societal aspects beyond halal standards. Several pilot initiatives highlight possible ways to address this issue. Sustainability is a key part of Malaysia's Halal Industry Master Plan 2030. The plan contains KPIs that are related to the SDGs in the development of the industry (Ministry of Investment, Trade and Industry, 2023). Some halal-certified agribusinesses in Indonesia have chosen to follow Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) voluntarily to meet both halal and sustainability standards. This has opened up access to high-quality export markets (Rofi'ah et al., 2024). Blockchain-based traceability technologies are being

used to check not only halal status but also compliance with environmental and labor laws across the supply chain (Alourani & Khan, 2025; Yuanitasari et al., 2025).

To broaden these initiatives, it is essential to align policies, given the involvement of numerous stakeholders. Governments can promote sustainable halal production by offering incentives such as tax reductions, improved financing options, or special market access for businesses that comply with both Shariah and SDG criteria. Multilateral organizations can assist by facilitating the exchange of information and the development of skills. Consumers can be engaged through initiatives that link halal purchases to larger sustainability goals. Ultimately, integrating SDGs into Shariah-based trade regulations can enhance the ethical appeal and global market competitiveness of halal products. This approach not only satisfies religious obligations but also positions the halal industry as a proactive participant in the global sustainability movement. By ensuring these connections are transparent and verifiable, Shariah-based trade can serve as a model for ethical and environmentally sustainable business practices that resonate with both Muslim and non-Muslim markets.

3.5 Challenges and Opportunities

The proliferation of Shariah-based international trade offers substantial opportunities, despite being accompanied by enduring challenges. This sector is bolstered by the rising demand for halal products and services. Nevertheless, it encounters structural, regulatory, and technological barriers that could limit its full potential. To ensure continued growth in the industry, it is crucial to address these challenges while leveraging new opportunities.

Five areas are where the main problems are. The first problem is that regulations are not clear. One of the biggest problems is that halal certification criteria vary by location. Many governmental and private certifying bodies have different technical standards, auditing procedures, and Shariah interpretations. This makes things less efficient, costs more, and makes cross-border trade more difficult (OIC-SMIIC, 2023; Rofi'ah et al., 2024). The Standards and Metrology Institute for Islamic Countries (SMIIC) has created unified standards. However, they are not required to be followed, which means that market access is still inconsistent (Idris et al., 2025).

The second issue is the inconsistent adherence to and enforcement of rules. In some nations, halal certification is rigorously enforced, while in others, limited resources hinder effective auditing and supervision (OECD, 2023). This inconsistency can undermine trust in a brand, particularly in export markets where verification options are scarce (Aufi & Aji, 2021; Salsabila et al., 2025).

Thirdly, there is a deficiency in technology. While blockchain and digital traceability technologies are gaining traction, their adoption is not universal. Numerous small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) lack the necessary digital infrastructure and technical expertise to integrate these solutions into their routine operations (Alourani & Khan, 2025; Yuanitasari et al., 2025). As a result, the potential for enhanced transparency and fraud prevention remains underutilized due to its limited implementation.

The fourth challenge is the limited integration of sustainability measures. Most halal certification programs focus solely on religious compliance and do not systematically incorporate environmental or social sustainability criteria (Fakir et al., 2023; Handayati et al., 2024). This omission could hinder the halal sector's contribution to broader global objectives like the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and reduce its competitiveness in ethically conscious markets (Ghalih & Chang, 2025). The final issue is related to trade policy and geopolitical constraints. Trade disputes, protectionist measures, and shifting geopolitical dynamics can have an impact on halal trade. For instance, export restrictions or tariff hikes in key commodity sectors could affect halal supply chains, particularly in the agri-food industry (World Bank, 2024).

Despite facing some challenges, there are five notable opportunities. Firstly, the halal market is experiencing global expansion. By 2028, the halal economy worldwide is anticipated to reach \$3 trillion, fueled by the demand for ethical and high-quality products from both Muslim and non-Muslim consumers (ITFC, 2024; OECD, 2023). This upward trend offers substantial prospects for halal businesses looking to export, especially in industries such as food, cosmetics, pharmaceuticals, and tourism. Secondly, there is potential for collaborative efforts. Initiatives by OIC-SMIIC, ASEAN, and the GCC to harmonize halal certification processes could streamline trade and open up new markets. Mutual recognition agreements (MRAs) between certifying bodies can ease and lower the costs of cross-border trade (Ahmad et al., 2024). The third opportunity is in technological advancements. The adoption of digital certification, blockchain traceability, and AI-driven compliance monitoring can significantly enhance the

efficiency and reliability of halal supply chains. Those who embrace these technologies early can secure a competitive edge and strengthen their market standing (Nawaz et al., 2025; Tobing et al., 2024).

The fourth point involves integrating SDGs with ESG standards. By incorporating sustainability and ethical governance into halal certification, producers can satisfy the increasing global demand for products that are both environmentally and socially responsible. Aligning halal standards with Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) criteria can attract ethical investors and access premium markets (Putri, 2025; Ghalih & Chang, 2025). The fifth point is the expansion of niche markets. Beyond traditional halal products, emerging sectors such as halal fintech, halal e-commerce platforms, and halal-certified organic products present substantial growth prospects. These industries benefit from adherence to Shariah principles and alignment with modern trends in health, wellness, and ethical consumerism (Aufi & Aji, 2021).

To solve problems and take advantage of Shariah-based global trade, many groups need to work together. Governments should make rules more consistent and improve their regulatory skills. Businesses should invest in new technologies and eco-friendly practices. International organizations should help share knowledge, create standards, and resolve disputes. The halal trade sector is at a key point. It can either be held back by division and failure to connect with global goals, or it can set a global standard for ethical and sustainable business. The path chosen will decide the sector's economic success and its ability to meet the moral and social goals of the Shariah framework.

The integration of the thematic insights discussed above forms a coherent conceptual pathway that links Shariah principles, governance mechanisms, friction-reduction channels, and trade and sustainability outcomes. This pathway is summarized in Figure 2, *illustrating how core Shariah principles (justice, transparency, and contractual fairness) inform governance mechanisms such as certification harmonization, digital traceability systems, and standardized contract structures. These mechanisms reduce trade frictions related to information asymmetry, duplication of verification processes, and clearance uncertainties, thereby improving SME export performance and aligning with SDGs 8, 10, 12, and 16. Jurisdictional heterogeneity and SME digital readiness act as boundary conditions that influence the effectiveness of these mechanisms.* This framework differs from previous halal-governance and ESG-integration reviews by explicitly modeling the causal chain from Shariah principles to governance levers, identifying measurable friction channels, and linking each mechanism to empirical strategies for testing (difference-in-differences, event study, and panel IV designs).

Furthermore, Shariah principles provide the normative foundation for ethical exchange, while governance levers operationalize these principles into certification practices, digital traceability, and contract standardization. The reduction in information asymmetry and verification burdens improves market confidence, lowers transaction costs, and enhances export performance. The influence of these mechanisms varies across jurisdictions and SME technological capacity, underscoring the need for both institutional cooperation and capacity-building to realize the full potential of Shariah-based global trade.

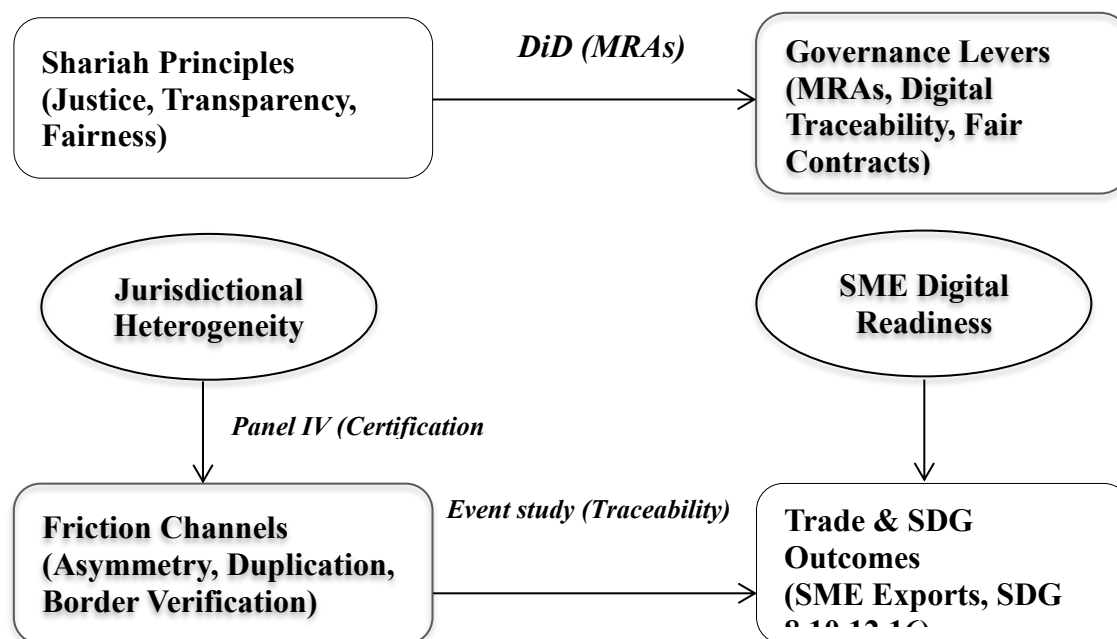


Figure 2. Shariah-to-Trade-to-SDG Conceptual Framework

4. CONCLUSION

This study examined the ethical foundations, regulatory structures, technological developments, and sustainability considerations shaping Shariah-based global trade. The review demonstrated that Shariah principles of justice, transparency, and fairness provide both a moral foundation and a practical framework for promoting equitable and responsible international commerce. When translated into governance mechanisms such as certification harmonization, mutual recognition agreements, digital traceability systems, and standardized contractual arrangements, these principles can reduce information asymmetries, enhance supply chain integrity, and strengthen trust between producers, regulators, and consumers.

However, the realization of these potential benefits depends on several enabling conditions. Regulatory fragmentation remains a major obstacle, as halal certification standards and auditing procedures vary widely across jurisdictions. Differences in institutional capacity and interpretation of Shariah contribute to inconsistencies in enforcement and market access. Additionally, many small and medium-sized enterprises lack the digital infrastructure and financial resources necessary to implement traceability and certification technologies. Embedding environmental and social sustainability criteria into halal certification frameworks remains uneven, indicating the need for more coherent integration with global sustainability standards.

These findings carry several policy implications. Governments, certification bodies, and multilateral organizations can support the halal industry by expanding mutual recognition arrangements, investing in digital verification infrastructure, and designing affordable and accessible certification pathways for SMEs. Enhancing consumer awareness of ethical and sustainability values inherent in Shariah-based products can also strengthen market positioning, especially in non-Muslim markets where demand for ethical goods is rising. Policymakers can further promote alignment with sustainability objectives by integrating environmental stewardship, fair labor practices, and responsible sourcing into halal certification criteria.

The review also suggests directions for future research. The propositions outlined here can be empirically tested using methods such as difference-in-differences to assess the impact of harmonization reforms, event studies to evaluate the adoption of digital traceability, and panel-data models to examine how certification costs influence market participation and product survival. Comparative research across regions with different regulatory capacities and interpretations of Shariah would deepen understanding of institutional diversity. Finally, sector-specific studies of emerging halal industries such as pharmaceuticals, cosmetics, logistics, and digital services would help clarify the

broader economic significance of Shariah-compliant trade. However, despite some limitations in the literature base and geographic concentration of sources, this review shows that Shariah-based global trade holds substantial potential to contribute to a more ethical, transparent, and sustainable global economic system when supported by coordinated policy action, technological innovation, and continued scholarly engagement.

Ethical approval

The Declaration of Helsinki's ethical guidelines were followed during this investigation.

Informed consent statement

Not Applicable

Authors' contributions

AB contributed to conceptualized the research idea, developed the narrative review protocol, conducted the literature search and screening, performed the thematic analysis, and prepared the initial manuscript draft. NK provided overall supervision, guided the methodological framework, contributed to the interpretation of the findings, and critically reviewed and refined the manuscript for intellectual rigor. Both authors read and approved the final version of the manuscript and accept responsibility for the integrity and accuracy of the work in its entirety.

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No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

Data availability statement

The data in this study can be obtained upon request from the corresponding author for privacy concerns.

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