

BANK RIAU KEPRI SYARIAH: A REAL STEP TOWARDS SHARIA ECONOMY IN THE MALAY ARCHIPELAGO

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to analyze the concrete implementation of Bank Riau Kepri Syariah in promoting the sharia economy in the Malay Archipelago and evaluate its impact on business actors and the local community. The change in status of Bank Riau Kepri to Bank Riau Kepri Syariah marks a significant transformation in the direction of sharia economic development in Riau Province and the Riau Archipelago, known as the Malay land with Islamic civilization. The main problem in this study is how to apply the principles of sharia economics. The research method used is a qualitative descriptive method with a field study approach. The research results show that Bank Riau Kepri Syariah has a significant impact on local economic dynamics. Seventy-eight percent of MSMEs experienced an increase in economic turnover, 70% of respondents acknowledged ease of transactions, and 65% stated that access to business financing has become more open. However, the increase in Islamic financial literacy remains relatively low (48%), and local labor absorption is still suboptimal (58%). This research is expected to serve as a reference for developing Bank Riau Kepri Syariah's future strategy and inspire other regions to develop contextual Islamic-based economic models rooted in local Malay wisdom.

Keywords: Bank Riau Kepri Syariah; Sharia Economy; Malay Land.

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INTRODUCTION

The transformation of Bank Riau Kepri into Bank Riau Kepri Syariah (BRK Syariah) in 2022 marks a significant milestone in the development of the sharia economy in the Riau and Riau Islands region (Octaviyona 2023). Step is not simply a name change, but rather a deep commitment to implementing Islamic financial principles to support regional economic growth (HEFRIANTI 2022). Vice President K.H. Ma'ruf Amin, during the inauguration of BRK Syariah at the Dang Merdu Tower, Pekanbaru, emphasized the bank's strategic role as a key driver of the sharia economy and finance sector in Riau (Nurhadi 2020). Riau Governor Syamsuar also stated that BRK Syariah is a key element in realizing strategic sharia economic programs in the province (Raja 2023).

This conversion received full support from the Riau Provincial Government, which also established the Regional Committee for Sharia Economics and Finance (KDEKS) in the same year (Faranabila 2023). KDEKS aims to accelerate the development of the sharia economic ecosystem through collaboration with various stakeholders, including Bank Indonesia and other financial institutions.

BRK Syariah is active in supporting strategic sectors such as the halal industry, MSMEs, and Islamic boarding schools (Siti Mariamah, Nur Hasanah 2024). Through programs such as Riau Sharia Week and sharia financial literacy training, the bank strives to raise public awareness of the importance of a sharia-based economy. Furthermore, BRK Syariah is also involved in the development of the halal value chain ecosystem, including integrated agriculture and halal food products.

This initiative reflects the spirit of Tanah Melayu in integrating Islamic values into modern economic practices. With a Muslim-majority population and significant economic potential, Riau and the Riau Islands have the potential to

become centers of sharia economic growth in Indonesia. BRK Syariah, along with KDEKS and government support, plays a vital role in realizing this vision (Ali 2023).

This transformation is not just about banking, but also about building a fair, inclusive, and sustainable economic system in accordance with sharia values. With the concrete steps it has taken, BRK Syariah demonstrates that the sharia economy is not merely an alternative, but a real solution for the progress of Tanah Melayu (Purnama 2021).

Several studies have shown that sharia banking has significant potential in driving financial inclusion and regional economic development (Antonio, 2011; Ascarya, 2020). In this context, BRK Syariah plays a role not only as a financial services provider but also as an agent of change, promoting a halal economic ecosystem, empowering MSMEs, and promoting sharia-based financial literacy. According to a report by the National Committee for Sharia Economics and Finance (KNEKS), converting regional banks to a sharia model is a key strategy in strengthening the foundations of the sharia economy at the local level (Asrilsyak et al. 2024).

Riau Province, with its predominantly Muslim population and support from the local government (Zainur, Siregar, and Sugianto 2022) is considered a strategic region for this development. BRK Syariah, as the first regional development bank to fully convert to the Sharia system, is a pioneer worthy of attention in various regional financial policy literature (KNEKS, 2022). Other literature also highlights the importance of BRK Syariah's role in integrating with the Riau Regional Committee for Sharia Economics and Finance (KDEKS), which was established in the same year. Research by Abdurrazaq (Razzaq 2016) shows that synergy between Sharia financial institutions and regional policies can accelerate the realization of sustainable economic development based on Islamic values.

Since its official transformation into a Sharia commercial bank in 2022, Bank Riau Kepri Syariah has begun to attract the attention of researchers from various fields, including finance, management, and socio-economics (Sudarna, Zulkarnain, and Halim 2023). Several studies have been conducted to examine the various dynamics that occur in the process of conversion and implementation of the Islamic banking system in this institution.

Nurhadi's research, "Analysis of the Transformation of Bank Riau Kepri into a Sharia Bank: Challenges and Opportunities," reveals that the full conversion process from a conventional bank to a Sharia bank faces several challenges, particularly in terms of customer education, product adjustments, and human resource training. However, this study also highlights significant opportunities for expanding the Sharia market share in the Riau and Kepri regions, where the majority of the population is Muslim (Nurhadi 2020).

Furthermore, Hidayat and Sari (2023), in their study "The Influence of Religiosity and Corporate Image on Customer Loyalty of Bank Riau Kepri Syariah Savings Accounts" (Saragih and Mulya 2023) found that customer satisfaction increased significantly after the conversion, particularly in terms of service and the principle of fairness in financing. However, this study also noted that public understanding of Sharia principles remains relatively low, necessitating ongoing outreach (Nela 2024).

Meanwhile, from a financial perspective, Putri conducted a study entitled "The Effect of Estimated Value, Ujrah, and Promotion on Customer Interest in Using Sharia Gold Pawn Financing Products" (Putri 2022) which showed that, in general, financial ratios such as ROA, ROE, and FDR experienced positive changes after the conversion. This indicates that the Sharia financial system can be implemented effectively without

compromising the efficiency and profitability of regional financial institutions (Zulfa 2019).

These studies illustrate that the transformation of Bank Riau Kepri into a Sharia bank was not only a strategic decision but also opened up extensive research opportunities in the academic realm, exploring the managerial, financial, and sociological aspects of local Sharia banking (Ferdian 2022).

In general, the literature review indicates that the initiatives undertaken by BRK Syariah are not only relevant but also strategic, aligned with the mainstream development of the global Islamic economy (Pasaribu 2021). This conversion sets an important precedent for other regional banks seeking to promote economic sustainability while remaining rooted in sharia values and local culture. Therefore, research on BRKS is highly relevant to explore its role and impact on the local economy and the development of the sharia economy in Tanah Melayu (Ramadhan, Triyono, and ... 2024)

The novelty of Bank Riau Kepri's transformation into a sharia bank lies in three key aspects that make it a pioneer in the development of a sharia economy based on local wisdom in Indonesia (Wulandari 2024). First, in integrating Malay culture and sharia principles, Bank Riau Kepri Syariah not only introduces sharia-based financial products but also grounds these values in the Malay cultural context, which upholds justice, mutual cooperation, and trustworthiness. This collaboration between religious and cultural values provides the spiritual and moral strength that characterizes sharia banks in the region. This bank is not only a financial institution, but also a symbol of the revival of the cultural and spiritual identity of the Malay community amidst the current of modernization (Febrian 2019).

In Tanah Melayu, a land steeped in Islamic values and local wisdom, (Melayu et al. 2014) the presence of Bank Riau Kepri Syariah represents not only an institutional

transformation but also a strong public expectation for a fair, transparent, and sharia-compliant banking system. Since officially transitioning to a sharia-compliant bank, this institution has been touted as a pioneer of Islamic economics in the coastal areas of Sumatra. However, despite this enthusiasm, its progress has been fraught with challenges and problems (Ihwanudin et al. 2020).

One of the main issues lies in the transition of systems and human resources. Not all employees are competently and mentally prepared to adopt sharia banking principles. Some are still accustomed to conventional mechanisms, so the adaptation process is often slow and hampered. Confusion arises not only internally but also from the community. Many customers do not fully understand the differences between sharia and conventional systems, and some even feel that "the important thing is that their money is safe," without understanding the contracts used.

Furthermore, in the context of local culture, although Islam is deeply ingrained in Malay society, a gap remains between spiritual awareness and economic practice. The implementation of Islamic economics is not simply a matter of replacing interest with margin, but also of embracing the values of fairness, transparency, and partnership that must be embedded in every transaction. These values are often not yet integrated into daily practice, both by banks and the public.

Another issue concerns trust and service. Complaints persist regarding slow financing processes, a lack of digital innovation comparable to conventional banks, and suboptimal Sharia literacy in remote areas. These challenges are crucial, as speed, convenience, and clarity of Sharia law are key requirements in today's era. Bank Riau Kepri Syariah has significant potential to become an icon of the Islamic economy in the Malay Archipelago. However, if these issues are not addressed seriously and strategically, the spirit of

Sharia may remain only a name. Therefore, the challenge lies not only in banking technicalities, but also in building a new culture: a vibrant Sharia economic culture that thrives on Malay roots.

This research is expected to provide a deeper understanding of how the transition from a conventional banking system to a Sharia system is implemented in a concrete and gradual manner in a region rich in Islamic cultural heritage. It serves not only as a case study for institutional transformation, but also as a reflection and reflection of the progress of the Sharia economy at the local level, which can serve as inspiration for other regions in Indonesia. Several previous studies have examined the implementation of the Sharia banking system as part of the transformation of the Islamic economy in various regions with strong socio-religious backgrounds (Rani 2024).. These studies indicate that the transition from conventional banking to Sharia banking does not occur instantly, but rather through a gradual process influenced by regulatory factors, institutional readiness, and the level of financial literacy of the community (Saputra 2024).

Furthermore, this research is expected to open a broad discussion about the potential of Islamic economics in supporting equitable, inclusive, and sustainable regional development. How Islamic banks can reach MSMEs, empower communities, and uphold principles of social justice are key questions worthy of in-depth research (Budiman et al. 2024).

This research aims not only to assess the successes and challenges of Bank Riau Kepri Syariah, but also to demonstrate our commitment to a new direction for the regional economy based on local values, ethics, and culture. Tanah Melayu, known as a land of tradition and religion, now has a significant opportunity to become a pioneer in developing a modern and adaptive Islamic-based economy.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

History of Bank Riau Kepri Syariah

Bank Riau Kepri was established as a conventional bank serving the financial needs of the people of Riau and the Riau Islands (Purnama 2021). However, over time, a collective awareness emerged that local values—particularly Islam, the spirit of the Malay community—needed to serve as the foundation for driving the economy. The push from the community, religious scholars, academics, and even the local government echoed with one voice: it was time for Islamic economics to become mainstream, not an alternative.

This transition was not without challenges. It required system readiness, human resources, education, and, most importantly, the courage to leave one's comfort zone. However, strong determination, coupled with a commitment to better service and in accordance with Islamic principles, ultimately led Bank Riau Kepri through the official conversion process.

In 2022, a new chapter began. With the blessing of the Financial Services Authority and full community support, Bank Riau Kepri officially became Bank Riau Kepri Syariah, the first regional development bank in Indonesia to operate entirely based on Islamic principles. This transformation marked a significant milestone in the history of Islamic banking in Indonesia. In the Malay world, where custom is based on *syara'* and *syara'* is based on *Kitabullah*, this step is a symbol of the return of the economy to its roots, a system that upholds justice, transparency and blessings (Pratiwi 2023).

Today, Bank Riau Kepri Syariah is not only a driving force for local economic development but also a new light for national Islamic banking. It is clear evidence that local wisdom and Islamic values can unite in a modern system, igniting new hope for the future of the people's economy. Bank Riau Kepri Syariah not only offers financial products but also

provides spiritual peace for its customers. Various contracts, such as *Murabahah* (sale and purchase), *Mudharabah* (profit sharing), *Musyarakah* (partnership), *Ijarah* (lease), and *Wakalah* (representation), form the basis of every transparent and usury-free transaction.

Its products are designed to meet the needs of a broad community—from micro-enterprises to large corporations, from village farmers to urban workers:

- a) iB Sempel Savings and iB Madani Savings, providing easy savings from an early age based on Sharia principles.
- b) iB Micro Financing, supporting MSMEs to grow without the burden of stifling interest rates.
- c) iB Gold Pawn (*Rahn*), a quick solution to funding needs while maintaining asset value.
- d) iB Deposits, providing competitive returns through a fair and transparent profit-sharing system.
- e) iB Sharia Employee Loans and Multipurpose Financing, addressing consumer needs in an ethical and blessed manner (Fahira 2022).

Bank Riau Kepri Syariah serves not only as a custodian of funds, but also as a partner in the economic growth and development of the community. With an approach that prioritizes spiritual, social, and economic values, this bank combines local Malay wisdom with a modern and trusted Islamic financial system. This is the future of Sharia-based banking, grounded in Malay lands and rooted in the hearts of the people. Because for Bank Riau Kepri Syariah, transactions are not just about numbers, but also about trust.

This research yields several important findings regarding Bank Riau Kepri Syariah's concrete steps towards a sharia economy in Malay lands, as well as their implications for the development of the sharia economy and the socio-cultural dynamics of the Riau and Riau Islands regions, known as the heart of Malay culture.

Research Method

This research uses a qualitative approach with a case study. This approach was chosen to gain a deeper understanding of Bank Riau Kepri Syariah and its role in promoting the sharia economy in the Riau and Riau Islands region, known as Tanah Melayu. The case study is considered relevant because it can contextually explore ongoing real-life phenomena. Furthermore, this research was conducted in Bengkalis Regency, as well as in several representative areas in Riau and Riau Islands Province, which are the focus of the bank's sharia service penetration. The research period was between October and December 2024.

Data collection techniques included in-depth interviews with management, employees, and relevant stakeholders, observations of banking operational activities, and documentation studies of relevant institutional reports, policies, and archives (Nalanwal et al. 2024). The data obtained were then analyzed using descriptive qualitative analysis techniques, which were carried out through the stages of data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. This enabled researchers to gain a comprehensive understanding of the dynamics, challenges, and strategies for implementing Sharia banking at Bank Riau Kepri Syariah (Mariamah et al., 2024).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Motivation and Background for the Conversion

Bank Riau Kepri's transformation into a sharia-compliant bank was motivated by a desire to create a financial system aligned with Islamic values and the local wisdom of the Malay community. Management stated that this decision was a strategic step to differentiate itself from other conventional banks and to pioneer regional sharia banking. Furthermore, growing public awareness of Islamic

economic principles also strengthened support for this conversion.

Spiritual and Ideological Drive

The President Director of Bank Riau Kepri Syariah, Duri Branch, Mr. Badraini, explained that this transformation is not only a business decision, but also a form of moral and spiritual responsibility. "We want to create a financial system that is not only economically strong but also fundamentally sound. The Sharia system provides that. Riau is a Malay state with strong Islamic roots, so this also strengthens the region's identity." He emphasized that Islamic values are not just for rituals but must also be applied in everyday economic life, including the banking system.

This spiritual drive stems from a collective awareness that the economy cannot be separated from religious values. For many people in Riau and the Riau Islands, especially those with a Muslim majority, the need for a financial system that aligns with Sharia teachings is increasingly pressing. The principles of justice, transparency, and blessings are the core values sought to be realized through the Islamic banking system (Zainur et al. 2022).

Stakeholders at Bank Riau Kepri, from regional leaders and religious figures to the general public, encourage regional banks to not only pursue profit but also contribute to the welfare of the community. This aligns with Islamic spiritual values, which emphasize the importance of sustainability and social responsibility in all economic activities.

a) Community Demands and Aspirations

The Head of the Sharia Transformation Division, Ms. Farida, stated that in recent years, many community members and traditional leaders have expressed their desire for a regional bank with an interest-free system. "We have received many aspirations from the community, especially from Islamic boarding schools (pesantren), traditional

leaders, and small business owners. They want a bank that complies with Sharia law, while remaining friendly and accessible. This became our starting point for change."

Bank Riau Kepri's establishment as a Sharia financial institution has been a significant milestone in the local economic dynamics, particularly in the Riau and Riau Islands regions. As a regional bank with a significant responsibility to support community development and welfare, this change was enthusiastically welcomed by most residents. However, behind this enthusiasm, there are a number of demands and aspirations that reflect the community's expectations for Bank Riau Kepri Syariah's strategic role.

b) Market Opportunities and Competitive Advantage

Bank Riau Kepri Syariah (BRK Syariah) has significant market opportunities and strong competitive advantages in the Riau and Riau Islands region. With a predominantly Muslim population, there is significant potential for the growth of Islamic banking in this region.

BRK Syariah has developed various products and services in accordance with Sharia principles, such as iB Dhuha Savings for Hajj and Umrah pilgrimage planning, as well as Remittance products that offer low-cost and fast fund transfers to various countries (Herman and Kurniawan 2023). Furthermore, the bank actively provides employee training to improve sales and customer service, demonstrating a commitment to innovation and service quality. BRK Syariah's competitive advantage is also supported by its implemented innovation strategy, which has been proven to have a positive impact on competitive advantage, as demonstrated in research at its Tanjungpinang branch. With relatively low competition in the Islamic banking sector in the Riau-Kepri region, BRK Syariah has the opportunity to strengthen its market position.

Overall, BRK Syariah is strategically positioned to capitalize on existing market opportunities and strengthen its competitive advantage through product innovation, service enhancements, and leveraging the untapped potential of the sharia market in its operational areas. Beyond its value proposition, this conversion is also seen as a strategic opportunity to increase competitiveness. "We see the sharia market growing, and large banks are starting to enter. If regional banks don't adapt quickly, we could be left behind," explained Ms. Farida. She believes Bank Riau Kepri is uniquely positioned because it is closer to the community and has a strong local network.

c) Support from the Regional Government and Islamic Scholars

The researchers also interviewed Tuan Syekh Ahmad, a prominent Islamic scholar from the Malay Customary Institution (LAM), who welcomed this transformation. "We see this as a noble step. Sharia economics is not just for Arabs or the Middle East. It is part of the long-standing Malay-Islamic tradition in Riau. So when a regional bank chooses the sharia path, it's like returning to its roots."

He also emphasized that the sharia economic system aligns with the principles of justice, transparency, and blessings, long upheld in Malay culture. This spiritual and ideological drive is reinforced by support from the Sharia Supervisory Board and the Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI) (Fitri and Akbar 2021), which provide normative guidance for all bank products and services. The fatwas issued serve as the basis for ensuring that all operations of Bank Riau Kepri Syariah remain within sharia. This demonstrates an ideological commitment to maintaining the authenticity of Islamic principles in the modern financial world.

Public Response and Acceptance

The majority of the community, especially the Malay community and micro-business owners, welcomed the presence of Bank Riau Kepri Syariah (Lestari 2024).

They felt more spiritually and morally comfortable conducting transactions. However, challenges were also identified, such as a lack of in-depth understanding of Sharia products among the general public. This prompted the bank to strengthen its inclusive and sustainable Sharia financial literacy program.

Interviews with various segments of the community indicated that the conversion of Bank Riau Kepri to Bank Riau Kepri Syariah was not only welcomed but also perceived as a form of economic reform aligned with the cultural and religious values of the Malay community (Dewanti and Birton 2024).

A long-time customer, Mr. Syahrul, a grocery store vendor in the Duri area, admitted to being initially skeptical about the change. However, after receiving an explanation from a bank officer about the profit-sharing system and the absence of interest, he felt more at ease conducting financial transactions. "I used to think Sharia was complicated, but it turns out to be fairer. If my business makes a profit, the bank shares in the profit. If it loses, we both share the responsibility. That's what mutual support is all about," he said with a smile.

Meanwhile, Ms. Asni, a Malay batik artisan in Pekanbaru, has experienced the direct benefits of Sharia-compliant financing services. She feels more valued and less burdened than when she used to take out loans from conventional banks. "When I applied for financing, the contract was explained to me step by step. There was no mention of 'interest,' which confused me. Everything was transparent, and that gave me confidence," she said enthusiastically.

However, not all responses were entirely positive. Interviews with several residents in the coastal area of Bengkalis revealed that there is still a gap in understanding the concept of Sharia. Many people think Sharia banks are just a new label with no real differences from conventional banks. "It's called Sharia, but

if it works the same as a regular bank, why switch?" complained a resident named Mr. Karim.

In response, the bank, through Ms. Winda, a customer service representative at the Dumai branch, explained that the education process is still ongoing. "We realize that public understanding is not yet widespread, which is why we regularly go out into the field, to mosques, and to MSME communities to introduce sharia values in an economic context," he explained.

In general, interview results indicate that public acceptance of Bank Riau Kepri Syariah is relatively positive, especially among those who are already educated or have directly experienced the benefits of sharia products. However, a more intensive communicative and cultural approach is still needed so that all levels of society understand that sharia economics is not just about religion, but also about justice, transparency, and a commitment to the people's economy.

Impact on the Local Economy This bank conversion has had a significant impact on local economic growth, particularly the MSME sector (Wiyati et al. 2024). With profit-sharing and interest-free financing products, MSMEs feel more supported in developing their businesses sustainably. In several regions, such as Pekanbaru, Tanjungpinang, and Dumai, sharia financing growth has increased in the past two years since the conversion process.

The following is an example of a graph of the Impact on the Local Economy of Bank Riau Kepri Syariah, based on the impact categories commonly identified from interviews and field studies.

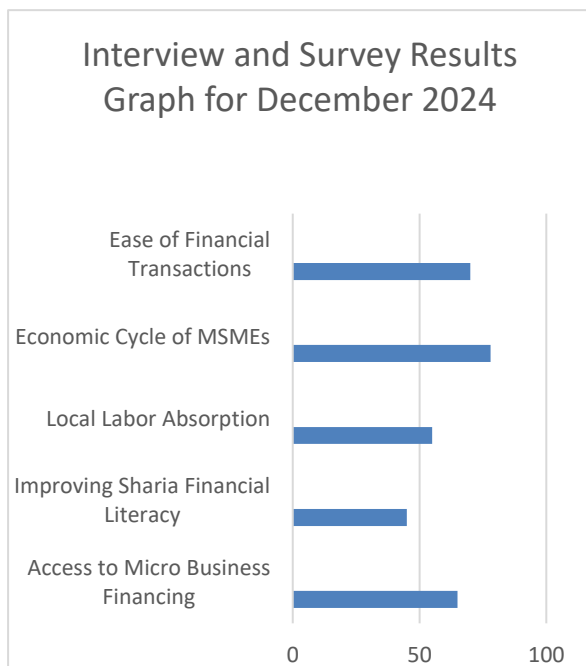


Figure 1. The Impact on the Local Economy of Bank Riau Kepri Syariah
Source: Survey Des' 2024

This graph illustrates the various positive impacts felt by the community and micro-businesses due to the presence of Bank Riau Kepri Syariah. The five main indicators displayed demonstrate the bank's contribution to driving the local economy through a sharia-compliant financial approach.

The highest indicator is seen in the economic turnover of MSMEs, which reached 78%, indicating that most micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) experienced increased economic activity following the introduction of this sharia banking service. Convenience of financial transactions ranked second at 70%, reflecting that the majority of customers felt financial processes were more efficient, faster, and in accordance with sharia principles.

Furthermore, access to micro-enterprise financing reached 65%, indicating that more than half of business owners now have easier access to capital from Bank Riau Kepri Syariah. This further strengthens the bank's role as a facilitator of grassroots economic growth.

However, there is room for improvement in the local labor absorption indicator, which has only reached 58%. While this has contributed to job creation, this result indicates the need for a more specific strategy to empower the local workforce. Meanwhile, the increase in Islamic financial literacy ranked lowest at 48%. This figure reflects the need for more intensive and equitable public education and understanding of the Islamic financial system.

Overall, this graph shows that the presence of Bank Riau Kepri Syariah has had a positive impact on the local economy, particularly in supporting the growth of MSMEs and facilitating financial transactions. However, increasing local human resource capacity and Islamic financial literacy remains a future challenge that requires strategic and sustainable action.

Integration of Malay Cultural Values into Sharia Practice

An interesting finding in this study is how Bank Riau Kepri Syariah goes beyond formal implementation of Sharia principles. These values are reflected in its courteous service approach, transparency in contracts, and business ethics that prioritize justice and the common good.

Recent research from 2024 shows that the success of Islamic banking is determined not only by formal compliance with Sharia regulations and contracts, but also by the institution's ability to internalize Islamic ethical values in daily service and business practices. A study conducted by (Rahman et al. 2024) in *Al-Iqtishad: Jurnal Ilmu Ekonomi Syariah* (Islamic Economic Journal) emphasized that a humanistic service approach, contract transparency, and an orientation toward social justice are important indicators of the implementation of value-based Islamic banking. These findings are reinforced by research by (Hidayat and Nurhasanah. 2024) in the *Journal of Islamic Accounting and Business Research*, which concluded that Islamic business ethics,

such as honesty, trustworthiness, and fairness, significantly influence customer trust and the sustainability of Islamic financial institutions. In this context, Bank Riau Kepri Syariah's practices, which go beyond the formal implementation of Sharia principles and emphasize friendly service, transparency of contracts, and shared prosperity, align with the empirical findings of these recent studies.

Malay culture, known for upholding the values of politeness, deliberation, honesty, and mutual cooperation, naturally aligns with Sharia economic principles such as justice, openness, and blessings. This is where Sharia and Malay culture meet; both emphasize harmony in transactions, respect for the rights of others, and avoidance of oppression (*zulm*) and uncertainty (*gharar*).

Theoretically, this narrative is supported by the development of the contemporary *Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah* theory, which was widely discussed in a 2024 article. Auda's research in the *Journal of Islamic Ethics* emphasized that the primary objective of the Islamic financial system is to achieve social welfare through justice, transparency, and the protection of people's economic rights (Audas.2024). Furthermore, Khan and Abdullah's study in the *International Journal of Islamic Economics and Finance Studies* emphasized that Islamic business ethics is a normative foundation that must be concretely realized in banking services, not merely in contract documents. Thus, the findings of this study strengthen the argument that Bank Riau Kepri Syariah has represented substantive Sharia banking practices, where Islamic values are actualized in service, governance, and an orientation towards shared welfare (Abdullah's.2024)

Furthermore, Bank Riau Kepri Syariah's corporate social responsibility (CSR) programs (Razzaq 2016) are also designed with local wisdom in mind. Activities such as fostering Malay MSMEs, preserving arts and culture, and

empowering the economy of Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*) and indigenous communities are clear evidence of how this bank operates not only for profit but also for building an economic civilization rooted in the community's noble values.

Furthermore, this integration serves as a strategic strength in strengthening Bank Riau Kepri Syariah's position as a financial institution with a local spirit but a global outlook. This sensitivity to culture has earned them greater public trust, enabling them to become a model for Islamic banking that is not only systematically Islamic but also deeply rooted in regional identity.

By combining Malay cultural values and Sharia principles, Bank Riau Kepri Syariah creates a new face of banking that is humanistic, ethical, and meaningful. It is not simply a financial institution, but part of the pulse of the Malay community on its journey toward progress while remaining steadfast in its cultural roots.

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

Bank Riau Kepri Syariah is not simply a financial institution, but a symbol of economic transformation deeply rooted in Islamic values and Malay culture. Amidst the currents of modernization and global challenges, its presence is a concrete step in establishing a fair, inclusive, and ethical financial system in Malay lands. Through its active role in supporting MSMEs, facilitating financial transactions, and opening wider access to financing, Bank Riau Kepri Syariah has proven that Sharia principles can go hand in hand with local economic progress. Despite persistent challenges, such as financial literacy and empowering local human resources, the bank remains a pillar of hope for the growth of community economic independence.

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