

Qawlan Ma'rūfan as a Mediating Variable in the Ethical Production and Distribution Practices among MSME Actors

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the mediating role of qawlan ma'rūfan in fostering ethical production and distribution among MSME actors. Ethical behavior is essential for consumer trust and business sustainability. Rooted in Islamic economics, qawlan ma'rūfan reflects honest, wise, courteous, and responsible communication. Using a quantitative design, data were collected from 154 Muslim MSMEs via structured questionnaires and analyzed through SEM with SmartPLS. The findings show that qawlan ma'rūfan significantly enhances ethical practices and mediates transparent communication, integrity, and social responsibility. The study contributes to Islamic business ethics and offers practical insights for MSMEs and policymakers to embed values of divine blessing, trust, and sustainability.

1. Introduction

Qawlan ma'rūfan has become a fundamental principle in shaping honest, clear, and ethical communication practices among MSME actors, thereby fostering more ethical and sustainable patterns of production and distribution (Khaled et al., 2022). This principle contributes significantly in three key areas. First, It enhances transactional transparency by encouraging MSMEs to openly share pricing, quality, and production details, fostering trust, loyalty, and mutual respect (Rudawska, 2018). Second, it encourages welfare-oriented business practices by ensuring fair treatment of workers, suppliers, and partners, including proper wages and timely payments (Qizwini & Perkasa, 2024). This leads to the formation of a harmonious and equitable business ecosystem (Razak et al., 2024). Third, it supports sustainable growth by using ethical communication to strengthen relationships, foster long-term collaboration, and expand market reach (Brown, 2020). These three dimensions demonstrate that qawlan ma'rūfan is not merely a moral imperative in communication, but also a strategic approach to building ethical, trustworthy, and resilient business operations.

Research on *qawlan ma'rūfan* to date can be categorized into three primary domains: business ethics, education, and communication. In the field of business ethics, studies have focused on the application of Islamic values and ethical communication principles within business practices (Laajalahti, 2018). For instance, (Asif & Akhlaq, 2024) explored Islamic communication ethics and the implementation of Sharia principles in the business sector, while (Keppo et al., 2022) emphasized the value of honesty in professional information sharing. In education, *qawlan ma'rūfan* serves as a guideline for academic and social interactions, as explored by various scholars (Tanjung & Abdullah, 2025), who explored the relevance of Qur'anic communication in modern learning processes. Meanwhile, in the communication domain, several scholars such as (Zuhri et al., 2023) have explored Islamic communication ethics, yet few link *qawlan ma'rūfan* to ethical production and distribution. This gap suggests untapped potential in promoting fair business practices. Thus, this study seeks to address that gap and offer fresh contributions to Islamic economic discourse.

In examining the role of *qawlan ma'rūfan* in promoting ethical production and distribution, this study adopts two main theoretical frameworks: the Theory of Islamic Communication Ethics and the Theory of Trust in Supply Chains. The Theory of Islamic Communication Ethics emphasizes that good, honest, and courteous communication plays a crucial role in fostering fair and transparent business relationships, thereby preventing manipulative practices within production and distribution processes (Munajat et al., 2024; Nidzom, 2022). Meanwhile, the Theory of Trust in Supply Chains (Collier & Sarkis, 2021) highlights the importance of building trust among producers, distributors, and consumers to establish a healthy and sustainable economic ecosystem (Collier & Sarkis, 2021; A. Rashid et al., 2025). Through the application of ethical and integrity-based communication enables supply chain actors to collaborate harmoniously, minimize information asymmetry, and ensure fair, responsible distribution (Ojo et al., 2025). These theories underpin *qawlan ma'rūfan* as an Islamic communication principle that promotes an ethical, transparent, and just economic system.

In general, This study addresses a research gap by examining the role of *qawlan ma'rūfan* in promoting ethical production and distribution. It explores how this principle mediates transparent communication, business integrity, and social responsibility. The research focuses on MSMEs, a strategic yet underexplored sector in the context of Islamic ethical frameworks. As the first of its kind, it investigates *qawlan ma'rūfan's* mediating function within this context. Findings show that ethical communication enhances relationships between businesses and consumers. The study offers both theoretical and practical insights for sustainable and just business practices.

Theoretical Background

In analyzing the role of *qawlan ma'rūfan* in promoting ethical production and distribution, this study employs two principal theoretical frameworks: the Islamic Communication Ethics Theory and the Trust Theory in the Supply Chain. These theories serve as the foundation for deriving research variables, formulating hypotheses, and interpreting empirical findings. The Islamic Communication Ethics Theory emphasizes the importance of honesty, justice, responsibility, and politeness in all forms of communication. These principles are highly relevant in a business context, requiring entrepreneurs to convey accurate information, avoid deception and harmful practices, and uphold fairness in transactions (Munajat et al., 2024; Nidzom, 2022). Meanwhile, the Trust Theory in the Supply Chain highlights the significance of trust among actors within the supply chain, including suppliers, producers, distributors, and consumers. Such trust is fostered through transparency, consistency, and the fulfillment of business commitments (Collier & Sarkis, 2021; A. Rashid et al., 2025). From an Islamic perspective, trust also encompasses the values of amanah (trustworthiness), honesty, and adherence to halal and tayyib principles. Together, these theories complement one another in explaining how ethical communication reinforces business relationships, fosters a sustainable business environment, and supports ethical production and distribution in accordance with Islamic values.

***Qawlan ma'rūfan* and the Encouragement of Ethical Production and Distribution**

In the context of economic activity, ethical communication plays a crucial role in shaping fair and sustainable business practices. The concept of *qawlan ma'rūfan*, which encompasses politeness, honesty, and wisdom in communication, reflects core Islamic values that are highly relevant to production and distribution processes. Business actors who apply this principle tend to cultivate relationships grounded in mutual trust and justice, which in turn motivates the development of quality products and transparent distribution mechanisms (Ramadiansyah et al., 2024). Ethical communication also helps reduce the risk of misconduct in trade, such as hoarding or the concealment of critical transactional information (C. A. Rashid, 2022). Therefore, *qawlan ma'rūfan* functions as both an interactional guide and a normative tool for ethical supply chain governance, promoting harmony, accountability, and spiritual value in the business ecosystem. Based on this rationale, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H1: *Qawlan ma'rūfan* has a significant effect on the encouragement of ethical production and distribution.

Transparent Communication and *Qawlan ma'rūfan*

In the realm of social and economic relations, transparent communication is regarded as a fundamental element in fostering interactions grounded in ethical

values and honesty (Y. Lee, 2022). Open, truthful, and clear communication is believed to create an environment conducive to ethical engagement, aligning closely with the principles of *qawlan ma'rūfan*, which emphasize speech that is kind, respectful, and wise. In business practices, when entrepreneurs communicate transparently, the likelihood of misunderstandings and harmful behavior is significantly reduced (Shi, 2025). Within this framework, *qawlan ma'rūfan* guides communication to promote justice, fairness, and spiritual value, with transparency key to shaping ethical behavior. Based on this conceptual foundation, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H2: Transparent Communication has a significant influence on *Qawlan ma'rūfan*.

Business Integrity and *Qawlan ma'rūfan*

Business integrity, reflected in honesty, consistency, and accountability, is a fundamental pillar of ethical conduct in organizational practices (Bozhenko, 2021). Within this ethical framework, integrity is believed to influence how business actors communicate and interact with others, including the application of *qawlan ma'rūfan*, a principle of Islamic communication that emphasizes speech that is kind, respectful, honest, and wise. Entrepreneurs with a high level of integrity are more likely to engage in ethical and dignified communication in their business dealings, thereby fostering trust and enhancing the quality of business relationships (Buyondo, 2024). Accordingly, business integrity plays a strategic role in promoting the internalization of *qawlan ma'rūfan*, which contributes to the development of fair, civil, and sustainable business practices. Based on this argument, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H3: Business integrity has a significant influence on *qawlan ma'rūfan*.

Social Responsibility and *Qawlan ma'rūfan*

rs to make positive and sustainable contributions to society and the surrounding environment. Consistent implementation of social responsibility is believed to foster the development of ethical and integrity-driven business character (Guo et al., 2025). In this context, social responsibility is considered to influence the application of *qawlan ma'rūfan*, an Islamic communication principle emphasizing courteous, honest, and wise speech. Entrepreneurs who actively engage in social responsibility tend to adopt open, inclusive, and ethical communication in their business interactions (Awad & Martín-Rojas, 2024). The *qawlan ma'rūfan* approach promotes goodwill and trust, strengthening fair business-community relations, with social responsibility enhancing its effectiveness in practice. Based on this conceptual framework, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H4: Social responsibility has a significant influence on *qawlan ma'rūfan*.

Qawlan ma'rūfan as a Mediator

This study positions *qawlan ma'rūfan* as a mediating variable linking transparent communication, business integrity, and social responsibility with ethical production and distribution. As an Islamic communication principle emphasizing honesty, politeness, and wisdom, it enhances trust and reduces conflict in business interactions (As'ad et al., 2025). Entrepreneurs who apply value-based communication tend to uphold ethical conduct and social awareness. *Qawlan ma'rūfan* fosters a transparent and just business environment while supporting equitable distribution practices. It serves not only as speech etiquette but as a mechanism for embedding Islamic ethics into economic systems (Asutay & Yilmaz, 2021). Thus, *qawlan ma'rūfan* strengthens the ethical linkage between organizational values and sustainable business outcomes. Based on this perspective, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H5: *Qawlan ma'rūfan* mediates the relationship between:

1. Transparent Communication and the Encouragement of Production and Distribution.
2. Business Integrity and the Encouragement of Production and Distribution
3. Social Responsibility and the Encouragement of Production and Distribution.

Conceptual Model of Study

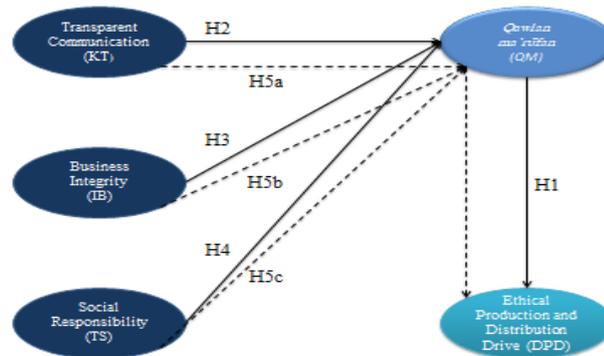


Figure 1. Conceptual Model of Study

This study presents a model where ethical production and distribution (DPD) is the dependent variable, influenced by transparent communication (KT), business integrity (IB), and social responsibility (TS) as independent variables. *Qawlan ma'rūfan* (QM) acts as a mediating variable. KT, IB, and TS promote the internalization of QM, which guides ethical business behavior. The model highlights QM's role in translating ethical values into accountable DPD practices.

2. Method

The designed questionnaire for validating the conceptual model of the study is divided into two main sections. The first section provides a brief overview of the study's purpose, gives instructions for completing the questionnaire, and collects socio-demographic information such as age, marital status, occupation, education, and income of the respondent. The second section, which is crucial for model development, employs a multiple-choice item scale using a five-point Likert Scale ranging from "Strongly Disagree" (1) to "Strongly Agree" (5). This section consists of a total of 15 questions, addressing various aspects: "Ethical Production and Distribution Drive" (DPD) - 3 questions, "*Qawlan ma'rūfan*" (QM) - 3 questions, "Transparent Communication" (KT) - 3 questions, "Business Integrity" (IB) - 3 questions, and "Social Responsibility" (TS) - 3 questions.

The data collection process took place over a three-month period, starting from the beginning of February and concluding at the end of April in 2025. During this period, the questionnaires were distributed to Muslim entrepreneurs operating in the MSME sector in South Sulawesi, Indonesia. The convenience sampling technique was utilized for selecting participants. These questionnaires were administered through the online platform Google Form and were shared using the messaging application WhatsApp. Ultimately, a total of 154 fully completed responses were collected and recorded on the Google Forms platform, forming the established sample size. Importantly, this number aligns with the recommended guideline provided by (Hair, Jr et al., 2010), Which suggests that the sample size for multivariate analysis should be at least ten times the number of research instruments used. This requirement has been satisfactorily met, as affirmed by the works of (Kyriazos, 2018), and (Schermelleh-Engel et al., 2003).

The analysis employed the Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (SEM-PLS) technique with SmartPLS software version 4.0.8.9 (Ringle, C. M., Wende, S., and Becker, 2022). The SEM-PLS data analysis occurred in two phases. The initial phase focused on the measurement model analysis, involving validity and reliability assessment. For convergent validity, factor loading scores above 0.7, composite reliability (CR) exceeding 0.7, and average variance extracted (AVE) surpassing 0.5 were considered (Hair et al., 2014). Discriminant validity was evaluated through cross-loading and the Fornell-Larcker criterion. Cross-loading was confirmed when indicators had higher values compared to other variables' indicators (Chawla & Joshi, 2019). The Fornell-Larcker criterion was met when squared AVE-based correlations exceeded correlations among other variables (Chawla & Joshi, 2019). Reliability was assessed using Cronbach's alpha scores, with values above 0.6 indicating acceptable reliability (Gottens et al., 2018).

Satisfying these criteria in the measurement model was essential before hypothesis testing, which was then followed by the structural model analysis. The latter required a statistically significant weighted p-value < 0.05 and an R-square value of 0.75 (strong), 0.50 (moderate), 0.25 (weak), or 0.90 (overfit). Adjusted R-square values beyond 0.25 and 0.50 indicated predictive significance (Hair et al., 2014; Sarstedt & Cheah, 2019). F-square values of 0.02 (small effect), 0.15 (medium effect), and 0.35 (large effect) were determined based on (Hair et al., 2014).

3. Results and Discussion

Results

Demographic Profile of Respondents

This study involved 154 respondents from the MSME sector with diverse demographic profiles. Female participants slightly outnumbered males, comprising 53.2% compared to 46.8%. The majority were aged between 18–27 years (80.5%), followed by 28–37 years (10.4%), 38–47 years (7.1%), and 48–57 years (2%). In terms of marital status, 78.6% were unmarried. Regarding education, 63% held a senior high school diploma or equivalent, and 30% had a bachelor's degree. Most respondents worked in informal sectors (68.2%), 22.1% were self-employed or traders, and 67.5% reported irregular or uncertain income.

Table 1. Demographic Profile of the Respondents

Criteria/Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender		
Male	72	46.8%
Female	82	53.2%
Age		
18–27 years	124	80.5%
28–37 years	16	10.4%
38–47 years	11	7.1%
48–57 years	3	1.9%
Marital Status		
Married	33	21.4%
Unmarried	121	78.6%
Educational Background		
Senior High School or Equivalent	97	63.0%
Diploma	1	0.6%
Bachelor's Degree (S1)	46	29.9%
Master's Degree (S2)	5	3.2%
Others	5	3.2%
Occupation		
Teacher/Lecturer	0	0.0%
Civil/Private Employee	8	5.2%
Military/Police	2	1.3%
Entrepreneur/Trader	34	22.1%
Farmer	5	3.2%
Others	105	68.2%
Monthly Income		
Rp 5 million – Rp 7 million	23	14.9%

> Rp 7 million – Rp 10 million	9	5.8%
> Rp 10 million – Rp 15 million	12	7.8%
> Rp 15 million	6	3.9%
Irregular/Other	104	67.5%

Source: Primary data processed in 2025.

Measurement Model Assessment

Table 2 confirms the validity and reliability of all constructs. Cronbach's Alpha and composite reliability (rho_A and rho_C) for EPD, BI, TC, QM, and SR exceeded 0.70, indicating strong internal consistency. Convergent validity was achieved, as all AVE values surpassed 0.50. Thus, the instrument is both statistically valid and reliable.

Table 2. Validity and Reliability Test Results

Variabels	Cronbach's alpha	Composite reliability (rho_a)	Composite reliability (rho_c)	Average variance extracted (AVE)
Ethical Production and Distribution Drive (DPD)	0.871	0.876	0.921	0.795
Business Integrity (IB)	0.844	0.845	0.906	0.762
Transparent Communication (KT)	0.863	0.868	0.916	0.785
<i>Qawlan ma'rūfan</i> (QM)	0.932	0.932	0.956	0.880
Social Responsibility (TS)	0.866	0.866	0.918	0.789

Source: Primary data processed by using SmartPLS 4, 2025.

Table 3 shows that all indicators have outer loading values above 0.70, confirming strong contributions to their respective latent constructs. DPD1–DPD3 recorded loadings between 0.872 and 0.917, while indicators for IB, KT, QM, and TS ranged from 0.844 to 0.948. These results confirm convergent validity. Thus, all indicators in the model are statistically valid.

Table 3. Outer Loadings

Variables	Ethical Production and Distribution Drive (DPD)	Business Integrity (IB)	Transparent Communication (KT)	<i>Qawlan ma'ru>fan</i> (QM)	Social Responsibility (TS)
DPD1	0.885				
DPD2	0.917				
DPD3	0.872				
IB1		0.844			
IB2		0.878			
IB3		0.895			

KT1	0.896	
KT2	0.867	
KT3	0.894	
QM1		0.948
QM2		0.920
QM3		0.946
TS1		0.893
TS2		0.884
TS3		0.888

Source: Primary data processed by using SmartPLS 4, 2025

Table 4 confirms discriminant validity based on the Fornell-Larcker Criterion, where the square root of AVE exceeds inter-construct correlations. For instance, DPD's diagonal value (0.892) is higher than its correlations with IB, KT, QM, and TS. Similar patterns are found across all constructs. Thus, each construct is empirically distinct and the model meets discriminant validity standards.

Table 4. Fornell-Larcker Criterion

Variables	DPD	IB	KT	QM	TS
Ethical Production and Distribution Drive (DPD)	0.892				
Business Integrity (IB)	0.841	0.873			
Transparent Communication (KT)	0.767	0.772	0.886		
<i>Qawlan ma'ru>fan</i> (QM)	0.866	0.816	0.749	0.938	
Social Responsibility (TS)	0.864	0.798	0.705	0.840	0,888

Source: Primary data processed by using SmartPLS 4, 2025.

Table 5 shows R-Square values of 0.751 for DPD and 0.778 for QM, indicating that 75.1% and 77.8% of their variances are explained by the model. Adjusted R-Square values (0.749 for DPD, 0.774 for QM) show minimal difference, confirming model stability. These high values reflect strong predictive power. Thus, the model is structurally sound and robust.

Table 5. R-Square and Adjusted R-Square Values

Variables	R-square	R-square adjusted
Ethical Production and Distribution Drive (DPD)	0.751	0.749
<i>Qawlan ma'ru>fan</i> (QM)	0.778	0.774

Source: Primary data processed by using SmartPLS 4, 2025.

Table 6 reveals that QM has the largest effect on DPD with an f-square of 3.008, indicating a strong impact. Social Responsibility (TS) also shows a large effect on QM ($f^2 = 0.349$). Business Integrity (IB) and Transparent Communication (KT) influence TS with medium (0.106) and small (0.062) effects, respectively. All variables contribute meaningfully to the structural model.

Table 6. F-Square Values

Variables	DPD	IB	KT	QM	TS
Ethical Production and Distribution Drive (DPD)					
Business Integrity (IB)				0.106	
Transparent Communication (KT)				0.062	
<i>Qawlan ma'ru>fan</i> (QM)	3.008				
Social Responsibility (TS)				0.349	

Source: Primary data processed by using SmartPLS 4, 2025.

Structural Model Assessment

Table 7 reports significant path relationships based on t-statistics and p-values. Transparent Communication (KT) significantly affects QM ($\beta = 0.189$; $t = 2.388$; $p = 0.018$), and Business Integrity (IB) also impacts QM ($\beta = 0.291$; $t = 3.454$; $p = 0.001$). Social Responsibility (TS) has the strongest influence on QM ($\beta = 0.474$; $t = 5.963$; $p = 0.000$). QM significantly affects DPD ($\beta = 0.866$; $t = 27.589$; $p = 0.000$), affirming its mediating role. All pathways are statistically significant and structurally meaningful. These findings underscore the relevance of Islamic communication values and social responsibility in shaping ethical MSME practices.

Table 7. SEM-PLS: Direct Effect Testing Results

Relationship / Variable	Original sample (O)	Sample mean (M)	Standard deviation (STDEV)	T statistics (O/STDEV)	P values
H1 <i>Qawlan ma'ru>fan</i> (QM) -> Ethical Production and Distribution Drive (DPD)	0.866	0.866	0.031	27.589	0.000
H2 Transparent Communication (KT)-> <i>Qawlan ma'ru>fan</i> (QM)	0.189	0.197	0.079	2.388	0.018
H3 Business Integrity (IB)-> <i>Qawlan ma'ru>fan</i> (QM)	0.291	0.289	0.084	3.454	0.001
H4 Social Responsibility (TS) -> <i>Qawlan ma'ru>fan</i> (QM)	0.474	0.468	0.080	5.963	0.000

Source: Primary data processed by using SmartPLS 4, 2025.

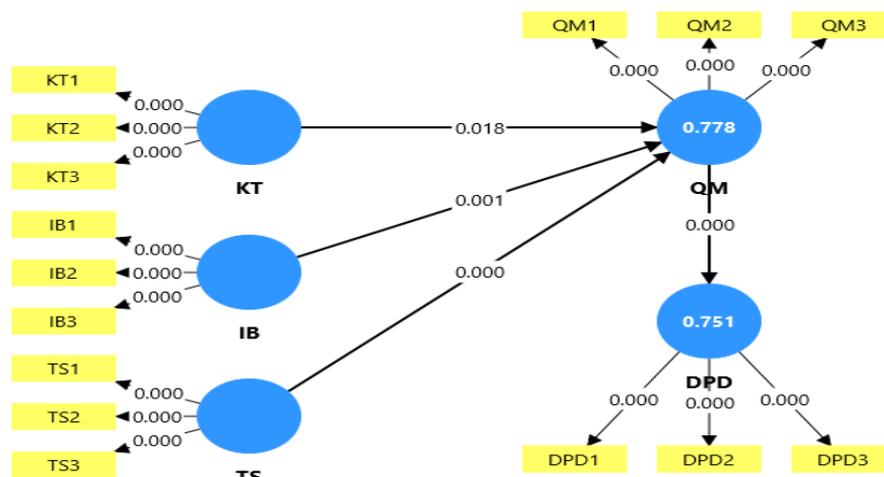


Figure 2. Output of the structural model testing

Table 8 presents mediation analysis results, confirming *Qawlan ma'rūfan* (QM) as a significant mediator between independent variables and DPD. The $KT \rightarrow QM \rightarrow DPD$ path is significant (0.164; $t = 2.364$; $p = 0.019$), showing transparent communication supports ethical conduct via QM. The $IB \rightarrow QM \rightarrow DPD$ path (0.252; $t = 3.352$; $p = 0.001$) indicates integrity strengthens Islamic communication. $TS \rightarrow QM \rightarrow DPD$ (0.411; $t = 5.953$; $p = 0.000$) shows the strongest mediation effect. All paths meet statistical thresholds. These findings confirm that QM translates ethical and social values into responsible business behavior, reinforcing a sharia-compliant production and distribution system.

Table 8. SEM-PLS: Indirect Effect Testing Results

	Relationship / Variable	Original sample (O)	Sample mean (M)	Standard deviation (STDEV)	T statistics (O/STDEV)	P values
H5a	Transparent Communication (KT)-> <i>Qawlan ma'ru>fan</i> (QM) -> Ethical Production and Distribution Drive (DPD)	0.164	0.171	0.069	2.364	0.019
H5b	Business Integrity (IB)-> <i>Qawlan ma'ru>fan</i> (QM) -> Ethical Production and Distribution Drive (DPD)	0.252	0.251	0.075	3.352	0.001
H5c	Social Responsibility (TS)-> <i>Qawlan ma'ru>fan</i> (QM) -> Ethical Production and Distribution Drive (DPD)	0.411	0.405	0.069	5.953	0.000

Source: Primary data processed by using SmartPLS 4, 2025

Discussion

The analysis revealed that transparent communication, business integrity, and social responsibility significantly influenced *qawlan ma'rūfan*. Transparent communication (coefficient = 0.189; $p = 0.018$) emphasizes the role of honesty in delivering accurate business information. Business integrity (coefficient = 0.291; $p = 0.001$) enhances the credibility of communication through consistent moral adherence. Social responsibility (coefficient = 0.474; $p = 0.000$) fosters ethical dialogue driven by empathy and social concern. Furthermore, *qawlan ma'rūfan* had a strong effect on ethical production and distribution (coefficient = 0.866; $p = 0.000$). It functions as a key driver in promoting fairness, collaboration, and accountability within the supply chain. These findings are grounded in Islamic Communication Ethics Theory and Trust Theory in the Supply Chain.

The empirical findings align with several previous studies that highlight the integration of Islamic ethical values in business communication. For example, (Ahmad et al., 2023) explores Islamic accountability, emphasizing fairness, transparency, and ethical responsibility in economic practices, and proposes a framework to strengthen governance and societal well-being. Similarly, (Priadi & Thariq, 2023) underscored that integrity and effective communication are critical to ethical business leadership and sustainable performance. (Raimi, 2017) study on CSR practices in the Ibero-American hospitality industry show that social responsibility enhances business relations through empathetic, Islamic-aligned communication. Furthermore, (Eisele et al., 2024) emphasized the moral responsibility in business communication—honesty, accuracy, and justice—directly impacts production and distribution quality. Collectively, these studies reinforce the empirical evidence that *qawlan ma'rūfan* serves as a vital ethical bridge between internal values and operational outcomes in Islamic business contexts.

From a normative perspective, these findings are supported by the Qur'an and Hadith. Surah Al-Baqarah: 263 emphasizes *qawlan ma'rūfan* as the foundation of respectful interaction. Surah Al-A'raf: 33 reinforces transparent communication through its prohibition of concealing the truth. A Hadith from Tirmidhi associates honest and trustworthy merchants with the Prophets and martyrs, highlighting the centrality of business integrity in Islam. Social responsibility is underscored in Surah Al-Ma'un: 1-3 and the Hadith stating that the best people are those most beneficial to others. These sources confirm *qawlan ma'rūfan* as a concrete ethical communication principle that drives just and ethical economic behavior.

The analysis presented in Table 4.10 confirms that *qawlan ma'rūfan* significantly mediates the indirect influence of transparent communication, business integrity, and social responsibility on the encouragement of ethical production and distribution. The indirect effect of transparent communication through *qawlan ma'rūfan* is 0.164 ($p = 0.019$), business integrity is 0.252 ($p = 0.001$), and social responsibility is 0.411 ($p = 0.000$). These results suggest that ethical communication based on Islamic principles functions not only as a moral guideline but also as a strategic tool to foster trust and cooperation among business actors. From the perspective of supply chain trust theory, *qawlan ma'rūfan* strengthens emotional

bonds and long-term commitment, which in turn facilitates a fair and sustainable production and distribution process within the MSME sector.

These findings are consistent with prior studies emphasizing the critical role of ethics in business practices. For instance, (Ananda, 2022) found that transparent communication encourages MSMEs to implement ethical production and distribution practices in order to build trust amid market competition. Similarly, (Rajendran et al., 2024) This highlights the importance of business integrity among MSMEs, as reflected in ethical practices that strengthen trust and halal supply chain integrity. (Wei et al., 2025) emphasized that social responsibility enhances stakeholder trust and business stability, while (Munajat et al., 2024) research underscored the role of ethical communication in strengthening trust and performance within supply chains. Collectively, these studies affirm that *qawlan ma'rūfan*, as a mediating variable, effectively links moral values with practical strategies to enhance ethical production and distribution among MSMEs.

The ethical dimension of *qawlan ma'rūfan* is firmly rooted in Islamic scripture. Surah Al-Baqarah 2:263 praises kind speech over charity that causes harm, while Surah Al-Mutaffifin 83:1–3 condemns fraud, reinforcing business integrity. Surah Al-Hadid 57:7 underscores the social responsibility tied to wealth as a divine trust. The Hadith from Tirmidhi places honest merchants among prophets and martyrs, elevating ethical conduct in trade. These references show that transparency, integrity, and responsibility conveyed through *qawlan ma'rūfan* are both spiritually rewarding and practically effective. Thus, Islamic communication ethics strengthens the foundation of ethical and sustainable business practices. It acts as a core pillar for building morally resilient economic systems.

4. Conclusion

This study confirms that *qawlan ma'rūfan* serves as a significant mediating variable in the relationship between transparent communication, business integrity, and social responsibility on the encouragement of ethical production and distribution practices among MSME actors. The high coefficient values, both in direct and indirect effects, indicate that ethical, courteous, and moral communication plays a pivotal role in shaping business practices rooted in Islamic principles. These findings reinforce the relevance of the Islamic Communication Ethics Theory and Trust Theory in the Supply Chain as robust theoretical frameworks that explain how trust and moral values contribute to the establishment of just, responsible, and sustainable production and distribution systems.

Furthermore, the results are supported by prior empirical studies and are deeply grounded in the teachings of the Qur'an and the Hadith of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). Core values such as trustworthiness (*amanah*), honesty, social concern, and transparency—embodied in the concept of *qawlan ma'rūfan*—are not merely personal ethical guidelines but fundamental pillars for building productive and blessed business ecosystems. Therefore, integrating Islamic communication values into MSME business practices in Indonesia is crucial and

should be strengthened through training, education, and supportive policies, so that production and distribution processes are not only economically efficient but also socially and spiritually meaningful for the wider community.

Based on the study's findings, it is recommended that MSME actors receive ongoing training focused on applying *qawlan ma'rūfan* in daily business communication. Local governments, Islamic financial institutions, and educational bodies should integrate Islamic communication ethics—such as honesty (*ṣidq*), trustworthiness (*amanah*), transparency, and social responsibility—into empowerment programs. Additionally, Sharia-compliant training modules should be developed based on the specific contexts of MSMEs to build a productive, competitive, and spiritually grounded business ecosystem. Future research is encouraged to examine the role of *qawlan ma'rūfan* across broader business sectors by incorporating cultural perspectives and local wisdom.

Author's Contribution

Muh. Rahman (First Author): Designed the research framework, developed the methodology, and conducted the data collection.

Syaparuddin Razak (Second Author): Supervised the overall study, contributed to the theoretical strengthening, and refined the data analysis and interpretation.

Jumriani (Third Author): Assisted in the literature review, manuscript editing, and ensured clarity and consistency throughout the paper.

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Declaration of Competing Interest

The author declares that there is no conflict of interest.

Ethical Approval

Ethical approval No patient-identifying parts in this paper were used or known to the authors. Therefore, no ethical approval was requested.

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Appendix

Tabel: Questionnaire

No.	Variable	Measurements	Scale (Likert)
1	Transparent Communication (KT)	1. I market my products with clear descriptions and without misleading information. 2. I conduct sales and collaborations fairly and without discrimination. 3. I am honest about the price and quality of the products I sell.	1 - 5
2	Business Integrity (IB)	4. I avoid ambiguous transactions that may harm others. 5. I continuously strive to improve and enhance the quality of my products. 6. I uphold honesty in my daily business practices.	1 - 5
3	Social Responsibility (TS)	7. I participate in social activities that benefit the wider community. 8. I strive to reduce waste generated by my business to help preserve the environment. 9. I support community empowerment through my business activities.	1 - 5
4	Ethical Production and Distribution Drive (DPD)	10. I produce goods properly to ensure smooth production and distribution processes. 11. I am transparent about my production and distribution methods so that consumers are well informed. 12. I ensure that my production and distribution practices do not harm the community.	1 - 5
5	<i>Qawlan Ma'ru>fan</i> (QM)	13. I always speak politely to ensure smooth collaboration in production and distribution. 14. I make sure all information I provide is easy to understand and not misleading. 15. I maintain good relationships with partners to facilitate production and distribution activities.	1 - 5