

#### **International Journal of Islamic Business and Economics**

Available at http://e-journal.iainpekalongan.ac.id/index.php/IJIBEC

ISSN 2599-3216 E-ISSN 2615-420X

# **Knowledge and Determinants Factors in Selecting to Islamic Rural Banks**

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# Article Info Article History:

# Received: 18 Feb 2019 Accepted: 10 March 2020 Published: 1 June 2020

#### **Abstract**

The aims of this research are fourfold. First, it aims to identify the source of knowledge of the respondents on Islamic rural banks. Second, this research aims to study the factors considered important by the respondents in selecting Islamic rural banks. Third, this research studies the level of knowledge and awareness of the respondents on the products or contracts of Islamic rural banks. Finally, this paper aims to compare the respondents' knowledge and awareness based on gender, education level, and period of banking in Islamic rural banks. We disseminated questionnaire to 285 customers of Islamic rural banks in several cities in West Java, Indonesia. This research uses descriptive and quantitative methods using a t-test. We found that our respondents attained knowledge in Islamic rural banks in college, and the most substantial factor affecting them to choose Islamic rural banking is not sharia compliance. In fact, it is the economic factor. Qardhul Hasan, wadiah, and mudharabah are the three most popular contracts among our research respondents. Finally, the level of knowledge and awareness about these three contracts are not significantly different between male and female, between different education levels, and between the banking periods of the customers.

#### Keywords:

awareness; BPRS; Islamic banking; Islamic rural banks; knowledge

DOI https://doi.org/

10.28918/ijibec.v4i1.1883

JEL: G.21, M.39



#### 1. Introduction

In Indonesia, Islamic bank consists of two categories, namely Islamic commercial bank (bank umum syariah) and Islamic rural bank (bank pembiayaan rakyat Syariah or known as BPRS). BPRS is allowed to run its business after receiving a license from Indonesia Financial Service Authority (OJK). In its operation, BPRS is not allowed to provide financial services related to payment traffic. BPRS cannot either have any branch outside the province of its headquarter, moreover overseas (OJK, 2016). Thus, BPRS acts as the local bank, serving customers with limited financial services such as saving and loans. This aspect is one of the distinct things that differ BPRS from the commercial bank.

The research in Islamic banking is extensive as has been conducted in several countries (Akbar, Shah, & Kalmadi, 2012; Echchabi & Olaniyi, 2012; Hassan, 2009; Islam & Rahman, 2017; Noman, Chowdhury, & Arifuzzaman, 2013; Saini, Bick, & Abdulla, 2011). The topics of those research are mostly related to the practice of sharia-compliant commercial banks. As a derivation of Islamic banking, it is also worth noting that Islamic rural banks play an essential role in the empowerment of society. Thus, studying Islamic rural banks can help us understand better the aspects related to them.

The research focusing on Islamic rural banks has been conducted by several scholars as an effort to understand this Islamic microfinance institution. Fitriah and Buchori, in their study, concluded that the third-party fund of Islamic rural banks is affected by the proportion of profit and loss sharing with its customers (Fitriah & Buchori, 2011). So, increasing the ratio of this profit and loss sharing can be taken as a strategy to increase assets (Isnandar, Firdaus, & Maulana, 2016). In terms of banking efficiency and profitability, most of the Islamic rural banks in Indonesia fell in two categories, namely, those who are highly efficient but less profitable, and those who are less efficient but have high profitability. This result indicates that the efficiency of Islamic rural banks in Indonesia does not correlate with their profitability (Warninda & Hosen, 2015). The efficiency of rural banks affects the number of loans provided to small and medium enterprises (Anwar, Nidar, Komara, & Layyinaturrobaniyah, 2019).

Those previous works have provided some insight into Islamic rural banks. However, little research had been done to explore the side of customers of Islamic rural banks. Therefore, this research is trying to do so by first identifying the source of knowledge of the respondents on Islamic rural banks. Observing these factors allows the managers to have a proper understanding of the effective socialization of Islamic rural banks. Also, with these data, Islamic rural banks are possible to create the right marketing strategy to cater to potential customers. Second, this research aims to study the factors considered necessary by the respondents in selecting Islamic rural banks. The results of this study will provide an understanding of the reasons why respondents chose Islamic rural banks. Third, this research studies the level of knowledge and awareness of the respondents on the products or contracts of Islamic rural banks. Finally, this paper aims to compare the respondents' knowledge and awareness based on gender, education level, and period of banking in Islamic rural banks. Thus, it is expected that this research is expected to shed light, adding a gap in the literature of Islamic rural banks.

The remainder of this paper is outlined as follows. The second part of this paper outlines the research method, while the third part shows the results and discussions. In this third section, descriptive results and hypothesis testing results are presented. The fourth part puts the conclusions and recommendations.

#### 2. Research Method

This research uses a descriptive and quantitative approach. A descriptive approach was conducted to answer the first, second, and third research hypothesis, while the quantitative approach was done to answer the fourth hypothesis. To answer the fourth hypothesis, we use the t-test. Since there are two types of t-tests, the independent t-test was chosen as it is suitable for the research sample in this research, namely to see the mean difference between the two independent groups (Kim, 2015).

We collected data using a questionnaire, both offline and online versions, distributed to respondents in several cities in West Java Indonesia. The respondents in this research are customers of sharia rural banks using the financial services of the banks, both lending and saving products. The sampling technique used in this research is convenience sampling because we asked the respondents available at the site, amounted to 285 respondents. Convenience sampling is relatively cost-effective and allows researchers to perform faster survey research. This sampling technique has also been used by previous scholars in their studies (Amin, Hamid, Lada, & Baba, 2009; Iskandar et al., 2015; Shaari, Hasan, Ramesh Kumar Moona Haji, & Mior Ahmad Jafri Md, 2013)

To make it possible, we first asked for permission from the management of the banks using formal letters before performing the survey. One month before conducting the survey, we sent the letters to the directors of the Islamic rural banks. Therefore, we found no difficulty in interviewing the respondents inside the bank. Moreover, the situation in the Islamic rural banks was conducive since the number of daily visitors was small. This research was conducted in two months (August – September) in 2018.

#### Design of the questionnaire

In this study, we used a three-section questionnaire where the first section asks the knowledge and understanding of the respondents about the Islamic rural banks. The first question in this section asks the means, which becomes the source of knowledge for the respondents for knowing the Islamic rural banks. We provided ten options that could be selected, either one or more. The second question in the first section asks the understanding of the respondents about the contracts or products available in Islamic banking consisting of nine contracts. In this part, we used the Likert scale using five points (5 = understand strongly, and 1= do not understand at all).

#### Respondents

Table 1 shows the demography of the respondents participating in our research. The number of male (54 percent) and female (46 percent) is quite proportional. Of these two gender groups, one participant (0.35 percent) was 20-25 years old, 34 percent were 26-30 years old, 26 percent were 31-35 years old, 20 percent were 36-40 years old, 11 percent 41-45 years old, and 9 percent were more than 45 years old. It is also shown that 61 percent of respondents graduated from bachelor's degree programs (S1), 22 percent from a diploma program, and 16 percent from high school. None of the respondents graduated from the lower education level. Most of the respondents had an experience of 2-5 years as the Islamic rural bank customers. The rests had an experience less than two years (29 percent) and above five years (25 percent)..

#### 3. Results and Discussions

## Demography of respondents

Table 1 shows the demography of the respondents in our research. Although Islamic rural banks are not only for Muslims, the respondents in this research are coincidentally all

Muslims.

Table 1: Demography of Respondents

ltem	Frequency	Percentage of the total sample
Gender		
Male	153	54%
Female	132	46%
Age		
20-25 years old	1	0%
26-30 years old	96	34%
31-35 years old	73	26%
36-40 years old	58	20%
41-45 years old	32	11%
>45 years old	25	9%
Education		
High School	47	16%
Diploma	64	22%
Undergraduate (S1)	174	61%
Banking Period (as the customer of respective sharia rural bank)		
Less than 2 years	82	29%
2-5 years	131	46%
More than 5 years	72	25%
Religion		
Islam	285	100%

Source: Processed data (2018)

#### Source of knowing Islamic rural banks

We also asked the respondents about the sources where they earned knowledge of Islamic rural banks. For this question, respondents were allowed to answer more than one answer. Among the nine statements we provided, the top three sources are their experience of taking Islamic economics or banking at college, their company's decision to use Islamic rural bank services, and conventional media such as newspapers, magazines, and television. Most of the respondents (17%) answered that they had ever taken at least a course in Islamic finance or economics class at college/university. This fact is in line with the previous result shown in table 1, where most of our respondents are categorized as educated people. In fact, according to Statistical Center Bureau, most of the Indonesian population aged fifteen years old above have a lower education level where those who can enter college degrees are only about 11 percent (Badan Pusat Statistik, 2018).

As most of the respondents graduated from undergraduate and diploma programs, it can be said that the participants in our research are educated persons. This result is similar to (Shome, Jabeen, & Rajaguru, 2018), where most of the respondents had a college degree.

Their exposure to Islamic compliance is higher than those who do not have education at the university level.

Table 2: Source of knowing Islamic rural banks

How did you know the Islamic rural banks?	Frequency	Percentage of the total sample	Rank
I have ever studied Islamic economics/banking at a			
class/subject	73	17%	1
The company I work for has an account at Islamic			
rural bank	67	16%	2
I knew Islamic economics/banking from newspaper,			
magazine, television	63	15%	3
I have ever studied Islamic economics/banking from			
ustadz (Islamic preacher)	62	15%	4
I knew Islamic economics/banking from social media	55	13%	5
One of my friends has an account at Islamic rural bank	35	8%	6
I knew Islamic economics/banking from other media	30	7%	7
I knew Islamic economics/banking from the marketing			
of Islamic rural bank	25	6%	8
One of my family members has an account at Islamic			
rural bank	11	3%	9

Source: Processed data (2018)

### Important factors in selecting Islamic rural banks

Islamic banks, either commercial or rural banks, are believed to be the solution for those who are concerned about sharia compliance banking. Regarding this notion, using a five-point Likert scale, we provided 14 factors that may be chosen by our respondents. Of these 14 factors, two of them are related to Islamic-ness. Surprisingly, these two factors are not even in the top rank. The first five factors considered by our respondents are not related to sharia compliance. The result of this research is not in line with (Ltifi, Hikkerova, Aliouat, & Gharbi, 2016), stating that the customers of Islamic banking in Tunisia are mostly concerned with sharia compliance.

As shown in Table 3, their main reasons for selecting Islamic rural banks are attractive incentives or prizes, the recommendation of others, excellent staff services, the ability to survive during the crisis, and innovativeness of Islamic rural banks' products. These top five factors have the highest scores, indicating that our respondents are those who already ponder the professional aspect of Islamic banks. In the past, customers of Islamic banks chosen Islamic banks because of the sharia compliance aspect. However, our descriptive results indicated that this idea has shifted where the customers pay close attention to other aspects.

Table 3: Factors in selecting Islamic rural banks

No	What makes you select Islamic rural banks?	Average	Rank
		score	
1	Attractive incentives / prizes	3,57543	1
2	Recommendation of family / friends / business partners	3,42857	2
3	Good staff services	3,37894	3
4	The ability to survive during a crisis	3,36140	4

5	Innovative products	3,35087	5
6	High returns	3,34736	6
7	Good CSR programs	3,26408	7
8	Religious employees	3,26315	8
9	Location is nearby	3,17894	9
10	Good marketing staff	3,17543	10
11	Sharia compliance	3,15789	11
12	Ability to solve financial needs	3,11578	12
13	A safe place to store money	3,10877	13
14	Personal knowledge	3,07368	14

Source: Processed data (2018)

Knowledge and awareness of the products or contracts of Islamic rural banks In this research, we also try to measure the level of knowledge and awareness of the respondents about the contracts used in Islamic rural banks. Also, using the five-point Likert scale, we asked the respondents to rate their knowledge on nine contracts. The results are shown in Table 4 as follows:

**Table 4: Knowledge and awareness** 

		Average	
No	Contracts	score	Rank
1	Qardhul Hasan	3,589473	1
2	Wadiah	3,578947	2
3	Mudharabah	3,575438	3
4	Rahn	3,449122	4
5	Musyarakah	3,445614	5
6	Murabahah	3,364912	6
7	Istisna	3,228070	7
8	Bai Salam	3,143859	8
9	Ijarah	3,049122	9

Source: Processed data (2018)

Table 4 shows that the top three contracts, which are the most familiar among our respondents are qardhul hasan, wadiah, and mudharabah contracts. Qardhul hasan, also known as a beautiful loan, is a free-interest loan provided by the Islamic banks, either private or government-owned banks. In his research, (Firmansyah, 2016) stated that governmentowned banks tend to have a higher rate of qardhul hasan than private banks. Qardhul hasan is believed to be effective in providing financial assistance to those who are in need, such as farmer or the poor (Rahman, 2010; Saqib, Zafar, Khan, Roberts, & Zafar, 2015; Widiyanto, Mutamimah, & Hendar, 2011). In order the interest-free loan be qualified as gardhul hasan, it must have ten requirements, namely the item of gard is halal, the item in the gard was acquired through permissible way, sincere intention to please Allah, no commitment of lender to harass the debtor, no extra or decrease over the principal, no proviso for any other contract for the accomplishment and termination of the former, no stipulation of debtor to provide any kind of facility to the creditor except if it has been the common between them, must not be advanced for the aims which oppose values of sharia, must not be advanced intentionally to anyone aiming to utilize the money for causing destruction, and there should be relaxation and no punishment If the debtor is in a real economic difficulty and does not have anything to pay back the credit (Abdullah, 2016).

Wadiah is a contract where the banks act as the custodians of the customers' fund. The customers deposit their money in the banks without expecting to earn any returns. The banks provide services in the form of custody and others and charge the customers only for these services, not to earn return or profit. This contract is merely a contract of trust (amanah) where the trustee should protect the deposited fund and is not allowed to take any benefit of it (Hassan, 2009).

Mudharabah is a contract where the owner of the capital (shahibul maal) entrusts his or her funds to the entrepreneur (mudharib) who has skills in conducting business, and they share the profits from this cooperation (Hassan, 2009). In the case of saving where mudharabah contract is used, the bank acts as the mudharib, and the depositor acts as the shahibul maal. Conversely, in the context of financing, the banks play a role as the shahibul maal, and the debtor or businessman requiring funds plays a role as the mudharib. Aside from the banking industry, mudharabah contract is also used in the stock market where shareholders or investors act as the shabibul maal, and the issuing firms act as mudharib utilizing the fund for the business purpose. Between these two parties, there is a profit and loss sharing mechanism that resembles the mudharabah contract (Alam, Akbar, Shahriar, & Elahi, 2017).

### **Hypothesis testing**

Knowledge and awareness based on gender

Using t-test in Microsoft Excel data analysis tool pack, we performed a t-test to examine whether there is a difference between the two gender groups (male and female) about the understanding of the top three contracts of Islamic rural banks, namely qardhul hasan, wadiah and mudharabah as shown in table 4. To do this, we first converted the ordinal data to be internal data using the method of successive internal (MSI), also in Microsoft Excel. Thus the following alternative hypotheses in this first hypothesis testing can be formulated as follows:  $H_1$ : there is a difference in knowledge and awareness about qardhul hasan contract between male and female respondents.

 $H_2$ : there is a difference in knowledge and awareness about wadiah contract between male and female respondents.

 $H_3$ : there is a difference in knowledge and awareness about mudharabah contract between male and female respondents.

The calculation result shows that the p-value of the first hypothesis is 0,283. As this p-value is larger than alpha of 5%, it can be stated that the  $H_1$  is rejected, and  $H_0$  is accepted. Thus, there is no difference in knowledge and awareness about *qardhul hasan* contract between male and female respondents. The p-value of the second hypothesis is also larger than alpha of 5%, namely 0,375. Thus it can be stated that there is no difference in knowledge and awareness about *wadiah* contracts between male and female respondents. A similar result is also obtained for the third hypothesis as its p-value is larger than alpha of 5%, i.e., 0,697. Thus it can be said that there is no difference in knowledge and awareness about *mudharabah* contract between male and female respondents.

As these three hypotheses ( $H_1$ ,  $H_2$ , and  $H_3$ ) are rejected, we conclude that the level of awareness and knowledge of both gender groups about the Islamic financial products is the same. There is no indication that male respondents are more superior to the female respondents, vice versa. These results motivated us to compare the knowledge and awareness based on education level, as shown in the next section.

Knowledge and awareness based on the education level

The difference in knowledge and awareness based on education level was tested using the t-test. We compared the respondents with a bachelor's degree (S1) and non-bachelor degree holders. The following alternative hypotheses in this second part of hypothesis testing can be formulated as follows:

H<sub>4</sub>: there is a difference in knowledge and awareness about qardhul hasan contract between bachelor degree and non-bachelor degree respondents.

 $H_5$ : there is a difference in knowledge and awareness about wadiah contract between bachelor degree and non-bachelor degree respondents.

*H*<sub>6</sub>: there is a difference in knowledge and awareness about mudharabah contract between bachelor degree and non-bachelor degree respondents.

The calculation result shows that the p-value of the fourth hypothesis is larger (0,167) than an alpha of 5%, indicating the rejection of this fourth hypothesis. So we can say that there is no significant difference in knowledge and awareness about *qardhul hasan* contract between bachelor degree and non-bachelor degree respondents. The p-value of the fifth hypothesis (0,058) is slightly larger than the alpha of 5%, so the fifth hypothesis is also rejected. Thus, there is no difference in knowledge and awareness about *wadiah* contract between bachelor's degree and non-bachelor's degree respondents.

Knowledge and awareness based on banking period

Also employing a t-test in Microsoft Excel, we tested the difference in knowledge and awareness among our respondents based on their banking period. We hypothesized that those who have longer banking experience would have a better understanding of the products or contracts of Islamic rural banks. Thus, our hypothesis in this third part is as follows:

H<sub>7</sub>: there is a difference in knowledge and awareness about qardhul hasan contract between respondents who have a banking period of less than one year and those who have an experience of more than one year.

H<sub>8</sub>: there is a difference in knowledge and awareness about wadiah contract between respondents who have banking period of less than one year and those who have an experience of more than one year.

H<sub>9</sub>: there is a difference in knowledge and awareness about mudharabah contract between respondents who have a banking period of less than one year and those who have experience of more than one year.

The calculation result shows that the respondents do not have a different level of knowledge and awareness for the three contracts in Islamic banking. The seventh, eighth, and ninth hypotheses are rejected as their p-values are larger than the alpha 5%, namely 0,444, 0,941 and 0,617, respectively. Therefore, we can say that there are a comparable knowledge and awareness about the Islamic contracts between those who are relatively new to Islamic rural banking and those who are not, meaning have more experience in this banking. This fact may appear to the surface because the respondents might have already experience of Islamic banking. Thus, their understanding of the terminologies in Islamic banking is not significantly different.

# 4. Conclusion

Most of the respondents in our research are categorized as educated customers of Islamic rural banking for they have a university degree. Most of them also had ever taken the course or subject in Islamic banking or economics, making them more familiar with the contracts and

every aspect of Islamic rural banking. This research also found that the most substantial factor affecting the respondents to choose Islamic rural banking is surprisingly not sharia compliance. They tend to see the attractive incentives or prizes offered by Islamic rural banking. Thus, it seems that the economic factor has been the primary driven in choosing Islamic rural banks. Recommendation of family, friends and business partners, as well as good service of staff of Islamic rural banking, are the critical factors in their consideration. These results, hence, contribute to the theoretical field of the Islamic microfinance institutions, whereby the sharia aspect does not always become the primary consideration in selecting an Islamic financial institution. The customers of Islamic microfinance institutions, specifically in Indonesia, may have different motivations from the customers of Islamic banks in selecting Islamic institutions. We can also conclude that *qardhul hasan*, *wadiah*, and *mudharabah* are the most popular contracts among our research respondents. The level of knowledge and awareness on these three contracts are not significantly different between male and female, between different education levels, and between banking experiences of the customers. These results imply that there should be no segregations or variations of strategies for targeting the current markets because they relatively have similar banking preferences.

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