

In the name of Allah, the most gracious, the most merciful

The scope of research in Islamic finance is wide and far-reaching. The industry itself covers various sub-components – including banking, capital markets, *takaful*, microfinance, social finance – each with its own operational complexities and challenges that require research and innovation to enhance their practices and development. As a discipline, Islamic finance intertwines with numerous other areas such as economics, econometrics, governance, accounting and auditing. This gives rise to an extensive bank of research topics. Moreover, given that compliance with Shari'ah and laws and regulations represents a set of core requirements upon which the industry rests, legal studies and the application of Shari'ah in Islamic finance are yet other areas where research is published. Last, but not the least, the Islamic finance industry operates side-by-side with its conventional counterpart in most countries; thus comparative and critical studies on its growth and performance are another important area of research.

In recent years, the COVID-19 pandemic led to a surge of publications on its impact on Islamic finance markets as well as discussion on emerging areas, such as opportunities related to Islamic social finance, environmental, social and governance (ESG) investments and FinTech innovations in Islamic finance. At the moment, the world appears to be gradually moving into recovery mode from the pandemic; yet the Russian–Ukrainian conflict and geopolitical tensions have thrown the global economy into new turmoil with severe impacts such as inflation, energy crises, supply chain disruptions and food security issues. The role of Islamic finance and economics in the current economic situation is presently under discussion.

Volume 14 number 2 of *ISRA International Journal of Islamic Finance* features seven research articles discussing contemporary issues in Islamic finance from various angles. The titles and summaries of these articles are detailed below.

The first article is titled “*Objectives and measures of performance of Islamic microfinance banks in Indonesia: the stakeholders perspectives*” by Taufik Akbar and A.K. Siti-Nabiha. This article seeks to bring new insights on Islamic microfinance banks (IMFBs) in Indonesia. Through in-depth interviews with stakeholders, it finds that the latter viewed the objectives of IMFBs to be more than the search for profits and clients’ economic well-being. They expected the roles of these institutions to also include enhancing spirituality and carrying out *da’wah* (Islamic propagation). As for the measures of performance, they expected IMFBs to focus on bank profitability and growth as well as social well-being.

The second article is titled “*Assessing the effect of organisational commitment on turnover intentions amongst Islamic bank employees*” by Carole Serhan, Nehmeh Nehmeh and Ibrahim Sioufi. This article links human resource behavior to Islamic finance – an area rarely researched in the industry. It specifically examines the effect of employees’ commitment to Islamic banks in Arab countries on their turnover intentions. The study covers the period of lockdown caused by COVID-19 in 2020.



The third article is titled “*Legislative provisions for wasiyyah wājibah in Malaysia and Indonesia: to what extent do they differ in practice?*” by Suhaili Alma’amun, Mohd Khairy Kamarudin, Wan Nadiyah Wan Mohd Nasir, Nasrul Hisyam Nor Muhamad and Riayati Ahmad. This article argues that there are circumstances when potential beneficiaries to a deceased’s estate may not succeed to inheritance. *Wasiyyah wājibah* (obligatory bequest) has been promulgated in many countries to cater for those immediate family members who face inheritance barriers, the aim being to preserve their well-being. This study thus examines and compares the *wasiyyah wājibah* practices in two Muslim-majority countries, Malaysia and Indonesia, by focusing on relevant laws, court cases and regulations.

The fourth article is titled “*Some thoughts on resetting the roles and functions of Shari’ah committees of Islamic banks in Malaysia*” by Mansor Isa, Siew-Peng Lee, Obiyathulla Ismath Bacha and Rubi Ahmad. Although Malaysia has a comprehensive Shari’ah governance framework, research continues on different aspects of Shari’ah governance to further improve the operations of Islamic banks. This article evaluates the current functions of the Shari’ah committees of Islamic banks in Malaysia and makes suggestions on their composition and scope of duties to cater for current market needs.

The fifth article is titled “*Common conceptual flaws in realizing maqāsid al-Shari’ah vis-à-vis Islamic finance*” by Ameen Ahmed Abdullah Qasem Al-Nahari, Abu Talib Mohammad Monawer, Luqman Bin Haji Abdullah, Abdul Karim Bin Ali, Noor Naemah Binti Abdul Rahman and Meguellati Achour. The authors claim that lack of in-depth knowledge in Shari’ah may create confusion among contemporary researchers and practitioners over the *maqāsid al-Shari’ah* (objectives of Islamic law) in financial transactions. Hence, this study reviews classical and modern literature to explore and clarify misconceptions about *maqāsid al-Shari’ah* and their adoption in Islamic finance.

The sixth article is titled “*Who is Homo Islamicus? A Qur’anic perspective on the economic agent in Islamic economics*” by Hafas Furqani and Abdelghani Echchabi. This article examines the nature of the economic agent in Islamic economics, commonly referred to as Homo Islamicus, by deriving the concept from the Qur’an. The aim is to better understand the nature, characteristics, goals and behavior of man as an economic agent, which will help in developing theories of Islamic economics and assist in the further progress of the discipline.

The seventh article is titled “*Adoption of the COSO methodology for internal Shari’ah audit*” by Said Bouharaoua and Fares Djafri. This article focuses on another aspect of Shari’ah governance, namely the internal Shari’ah audit of Islamic financial institutions (IFIs). It aims to examine the internal control framework developed by the Committee of Sponsoring Organizations of the Treadway Commission (COSO) and explores the extent to which it can be adopted by IFIs to enhance their Shari’ah-compliance function.

This year, due to our plan to publish future issues of *ISRA International Journal of Islamic Finance* on a new platform starting in 2023, we regret that we have not been able to accept a plethora of new articles submitted on Emerald’s ScholarOne in the past months. It would not have been possible to complete the publication process of these articles before we leave Emerald’s platform at the end of the year. We intend to reopen submissions on the Journal’s new platform in October/November 2022 and will then welcome new articles *insha Allah*.

As always, we congratulate the authors who published in this issue and wish our readers a pleasant read.

Allah (SWT) is the Bestower of success, and He knows best.

Beebee Salma Sairally

ISRA Research Management Centre, INCEIF University, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia