SELECTIVE BOYCOTT AS COLLECTIVE ACTION: A QUALITATIVE SYSTEMATIC LITERATURE REVIEW ON SHARIAH LEGITIMACY AND LEGAL BOUNDARIES IN MALAYSIA

Muhammad Ilhamuddin Arsad*
Jabatan Syariah dan Undang-Undang,
Akademi Pengajian Islam,
Universiti Malaya
ilhamuddin.arsad94@gmail.com

***Corresponding author*

ABSTRACT

Selective boycott has emerged as a prominent form of collective action among Muslim communities in Malaysia, particularly in response to geopolitical conflicts, ethical concerns and perceived moral responsibilities. Although boycott practices are commonly framed as expressions of moral protest, their selective application raises complex issues concerning Shariah legitimacy, social justice and legal boundaries. This study undertakes a qualitative systematic literature review based exclusively on library research and guided by the PRISMA framework in order to synthesise scholarly discussions on selective boycott from Shariah and legal perspectives within the Malaysian context. Drawing on Scopus-indexed literature, the review reveals recurring themes that conceptualise selective boycott as a form of collective moral action governed by specific ethical conditions under Shariah, highlight tensions between the pursuit of public interest and the risk of harm arising from selective enforcement and emphasise the relevance of legal boundaries under Malaysian law, particularly in relation to defamation, public order and the protection of individual rights. The findings demonstrate a notable gap between moral motivations and existing normative governance frameworks, underscoring the need for clearer Shariah-informed guidance and greater legal awareness in collective consumer activism. This study contributes to socio-legal and Islamic law scholarship by advancing a conceptual framework for selective boycott practices that are both Shariah-compliant and legally responsible within the Malaysian context.

Keywords: Selective Boycott, Collective Action, Shariah Legitimacy, Islamic Law, Socio-Legal Studies

ABSTRAK

Boikot terpilih (*selective boycott*) telah muncul sebagai satu bentuk tindakan kolektif yang semakin menonjol dalam kalangan masyarakat Islam di Malaysia, khususnya sebagai respons terhadap konflik geopolitik, keprihatinan etika dan tanggungjawab moral yang dirasakan. Walaupun amalan boikot lazimnya dibingkaikan sebagai suatu bentuk protes

moral, sifatnya yang terpilih menimbulkan persoalan yang signifikan berkaitan legitimasi menurut Syariah, keadilan sosial serta batasan undang-undang. Kajian ini menggunakan pendekatan *Systematic Literature Review* (SLR) kualitatif yang berasaskan sepenuhnya kajian perpustakaan dan berpandukan kerangka PRISMA, bagi mensintesis wacana akademik mengenai boikot terpilih daripada perspektif Syariah dan perundangan dalam konteks Malaysia. Berdasarkan analisis terhadap literatur berindeks Scopus, kajian ini mengenal pasti beberapa tema utama yang menggambarkan boikot terpilih sebagai suatu tindakan moral kolektif yang tertakluk kepada syarat etika dan prinsip Syariah, di samping menonjolkan ketegangan antara pertimbangan maṣlaḥah dan risiko mafsadah akibat penguatkuasaan secara terpilih, serta kepentingan mematuhi batasan undang-undang di bawah kerangka perundangan Malaysia, khususnya berkaitan fitnah, ketenteraman awam dan perlindungan hak individu. Dapatan kajian ini mendedahkan kewujudan jurang yang ketara antara dorongan moral dan kerangka tadbir urus normatif sedia ada, sekali gus menegaskan keperluan kepada garis panduan yang lebih jelas berteraskan prinsip Syariah serta peningkatan kesedaran dan literasi undang-undang dalam aktivisme pengguna secara kolektif. Kajian ini menyumbang kepada wacana perundangan Islam dan sosio-perundangan dengan mencadangkan satu kerangka konseptual bagi amalan boikot terpilih yang patuh Syariah dan bertanggungjawab dari sudut undang-undang dalam konteks Malaysia.

Kata Kunci: Boikot Terpilih, Tindakan Kolektif, Legitimasi Syariah, Undang-Undang Islam, Kajian Sosio-Perundangan

INTRODUCTION

Boycott has long been recognised as a form of non-violent collective action whereby consumers deliberately withdraw economic support in order to express moral disapproval and exert pressure on targeted entities. Within academic literature, boycott is not treated merely as an economic decision but as a socially embedded practice that reflects ethical judgment, political consciousness and collective mobilisation against perceived injustice (Friedman, 1985).

In Muslim-majority societies, boycott practices often intersect with religious identity and moral responsibility, transforming consumer behaviour into a vehicle for ethical and political expression. In Malaysia, such practices have increasingly been framed within Islamic moral discourse, particularly in relation to global political conflicts, thereby situating boycott as part of broader patterns of Muslim consumption and anti-consumption (Fischer, 2015).

Empirical studies on boycott behaviour in Malaysia indicate that participation is strongly influenced by religious commitment, social norms, and perceived moral obligation rather than purely instrumental economic reasoning. These findings suggest that boycott decisions are shaped by collective expectations and identity-based motivations, reinforcing the view that boycott functions as a form of socially coordinated action rather than isolated individual choice (Abdul-Talib et al., 2016).

Despite its moral appeal, the increasing prevalence of *selective boycott*, where specific corporations are targeted while others with similar affiliations are excluded, raises important concerns regarding ethical consistency and legitimacy. Scholars of political consumerism argue that such selectivity reflects the symbolic nature of consumer activism, which may prioritise visibility and emotional resonance over systematic moral evaluation (Neilson, 2010).

From a Shariah perspective, the legitimacy of boycott is not determined solely by intention but must be evaluated through its consequences, particularly in relation to justice and the avoidance of harm (*ḍarar*). Islamic legal theory emphasises that actions undertaken in the name of moral protest must not result in disproportionate harm to innocent third parties, such as workers or local communities, even when the underlying cause is ethically compelling (Kamali, 2008).

The maqāṣid al-sharīʿah framework further requires that collective actions be assessed based on their contribution to public interest (*maṣlaḥah*) and their potential to prevent greater harm. Contemporary scholars argue that selective moral enforcement, when disconnected from comprehensive impact assessment, risks undermining the very ethical objectives it seeks to promote, thereby challenging claims of Shariah legitimacy (Auda, 2008).

Beyond ethical considerations, selective boycott practices operate within concrete legal boundaries, particularly in plural societies governed by constitutional and statutory frameworks. In Malaysia, collective actions expressed through boycott campaigns intersect with legal principles concerning freedom of expression, protection of reputation and public order, highlighting the need to balance moral protest with legal responsibility (Harding, 2012).

Taken together, these dynamics demonstrate that selective boycott in Malaysia cannot be understood solely as moral activism or consumer behaviour, but must be analysed as a form of collective action situated at the intersection of Shariah norms and legal constraints. This justifies the need for a systematic synthesis of existing scholarship to evaluate the Shariah legitimacy and legal boundaries of selective boycott within the Malaysian context (Ellis et al., 2010).

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK: SELECTIVE BOYCOTT AS COLLECTIVE ACTION

Selective boycott may be conceptualised as a form of collective action in which individual consumer choices are coordinated through shared moral narratives, social pressure, and identity-based mobilisation rather than formal institutional authority. Within the literature on political consumerism, boycott is understood not merely as an expression of personal ethical preference, but as a socially organised practice that seeks to influence corporate or political behaviour by transforming consumption into a site of collective moral contestation (Neilson, 2010). This conceptualisation is particularly relevant in contexts such as

Malaysia, where selective boycott is frequently framed as a moral obligation grounded in religious solidarity, thereby operating simultaneously as ethical protest, social regulation, and informal governance. Understanding selective boycott through the lens of collective action provides a necessary analytical foundation for evaluating its legitimacy, consistency, and normative limits from both Shariah and legal perspectives.

Boycott and Selective Boycott

Boycott is conventionally defined as a collective refusal to engage in economic exchange with a targeted entity in order to exert pressure for moral, political or social change. Within consumer studies, boycott is understood not merely as an economic tactic but as a socially coordinated practice through which consumers transform market participation into a form of ethical and political expression (Friedman, 1985).

Subsequent scholarship has expanded this understanding by situating boycott within the broader framework of political consumerism, where consumption choices are mobilised as instruments of civic participation. From this perspective, boycott represents an alternative avenue for collective action, particularly in contexts where formal political engagement is perceived as ineffective or inaccessible (Neilson, 2010).

Selective boycott refers to a more targeted variant of boycott in which specific corporations or brands are singled out based on symbolic, moral or political considerations, while other entities with comparable affiliations remain unaffected. Scholars argue that such selectivity reflects the symbolic and communicative dimensions of consumer activism, where visibility and emotional resonance often shape mobilisation more than comprehensive ethical consistency (John & Klein, 2003).

In Muslim societies, selective boycott is frequently framed through religious narratives that link consumption choices to moral accountability and communal solidarity. In Malaysia, studies on Muslim consumption and anti-consumption practices highlight how boycott campaigns are embedded within Islamic ethical discourse, positioning selective boycott as both an expression of piety and a marker of collective identity (Fischer, 2015).

Despite its moral appeal, selective boycott has been criticised for generating ethical tensions, particularly when selective targeting leads to inconsistent moral standards or unintended harm to third parties. The literature cautions that without clear normative criteria, selective boycott risks undermining its own ethical claims by privileging symbolic protest over systematic moral evaluation (Ertaş, 2024).

Collective Action in Shariah Perspective

From a Shariah perspective, collective action is recognised as a legitimate means of promoting moral order and social welfare, particularly through concepts such as amr bi al-maʿrūf wa nahy ʿan al-munkar (enjoining good and forbidding evil). Islamic legal theory, however, emphasises that such collective efforts must be governed by knowledge, proportionality, and ethical restraint (Kamali, 2008).

Classical and contemporary jurists alike stress that collective moral action in Islam is not an unrestricted license for social coercion, but a responsibility bounded by the objectives of Shariah (maqāṣid al-sharīʿah). These objectives prioritise the preservation of religion, life, intellect, lineage and property, thereby requiring any collective intervention to demonstrably serve public interest (maṣlaḥah) (Auda, 2008).

Within this framework, the principle of preventing harm (dafʿ al-ḍarar) occupies a central position in assessing the legitimacy of collective actions. Islamic legal maxims establish that harm must neither be inflicted nor reciprocated, implying that collective actions which result in disproportionate harm to innocents are normatively problematic even if motivated by ethical concerns (Kamali, 2011).

The concept of hisbah further illustrates the regulated nature of collective action in Islam, historically situating moral enforcement within recognised authority structures rather than spontaneous mass mobilisation. Contemporary scholars argue that the erosion of institutional mediation in modern collective actions raises serious questions about legitimacy, accountability, and the risk of vigilantism (Hallaq, 2009).

Accordingly, modern expressions of collective action, such as selective boycott require careful Shariah evaluation to ensure alignment with ethical intention (niyyah), public interest and justice. Scholars emphasise that collective action which lacks clear authority, coherent criteria, and harm assessment risks contravening Shariah principles despite its moral rhetoric (Ellis et al., 2010).

METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a qualitative systematic literature review (SLR) grounded in library-based research to synthesise existing scholarly discourse on selective boycott as a form of collective action within Shariah and legal frameworks in Malaysia. The qualitative SLR approach is particularly appropriate for studies that seek to integrate doctrinal analysis, normative reasoning and socio-legal perspectives, as it enables the structured identification, evaluation and thematic synthesis of relevant literature while maintaining methodological transparency and replicability (Xiao & Watson, 2019).

Research Design

This study employs a qualitative research design in the form of a systematic literature review (SLR) grounded exclusively in library-based research. Qualitative SLR is particularly suited for research that seeks to synthesise conceptual, doctrinal and normative scholarship, as it enables the structured interpretation of meanings, arguments and theoretical positions across diverse bodies of literature rather than the aggregation of statistical outcomes (Xiao & Watson, 2019).

Within the context of legal and socio-legal research, systematic reviews serve an important function in consolidating fragmented scholarship and identifying conceptual patterns that inform normative reasoning. Unlike traditional narrative reviews, SLRs follow explicit methodological stages that enhance transparency, rigour and reproducibility, making them increasingly relevant in doctrinal legal studies and interdisciplinary Islamic law research (Tranfield et al., 2003).

Given the objective of examining selective boycott as a form of collective action through Shariah and legal lenses, a qualitative SLR design allows for the integration of jurisprudential analysis, ethical reasoning and socio-legal perspectives. This approach aligns with the nature of Islamic legal scholarship, which prioritises interpretive reasoning, contextual evaluation and normative coherence over empirical generalisation (Papaioannou et al., 2016).

Data Source and Search Strategy

The primary data source for this study is Scopus, selected due to its extensive coverage of high-quality peer-reviewed journals in law, Islamic studies, social sciences, and ethics. Scopus is widely recognised for its rigorous indexing standards, making it an appropriate database for ensuring the academic credibility and reliability of sources included in a systematic review (Mongeon & Paul-Hus, 2016).

A systematic search strategy was developed using a combination of keywords related to boycott, selective boycott, collective action, Shariah, Islamic law and Malaysia. Searches were conducted within the TITLE-ABS-KEY fields to ensure that only studies with substantive relevance were retrieved, consistent with best practices for systematic searching in qualitative reviews (Kitchenham & Charters, 2007).

To enhance comprehensiveness while maintaining relevance, Boolean operators and truncation techniques were employed and the search was limited to publications between 2001 and 2025. This temporal scope reflects the emergence of contemporary discourse on political consumerism and Islamic ethical consumption, ensuring that the review captures both foundational and current scholarly debates (Papaioannou et al., 2016).

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Clear inclusion and exclusion criteria were established prior to the screening process to ensure methodological transparency and reduce selection bias. Studies were included if they were indexed in Scopus, focused substantively on Malaysia and addressed boycott or related practices with normative, ethical, Shariah, or legal implications (Moher et al., 2009).

Publications were excluded if they merely mentioned Malaysia in passing, lacked peer-review status, or addressed boycott solely from a technical marketing perspective without engaging ethical, legal or socio-cultural dimensions. Such exclusions are consistent

with recommendations that systematic reviews maintain conceptual alignment with research objectives rather than maximising volume of sources (Okoli, 2015).

This screening strategy reflects the nature of qualitative SLRs, where relevance and depth of conceptual contribution take precedence over methodological uniformity. In legal and Islamic studies research, the careful selection of sources is essential to preserve doctrinal coherence and ensure meaningful normative synthesis (Gough et al., 2017).

Data Extraction and Analysis

Data extraction was conducted using a structured extraction framework designed to capture bibliographic details, conceptual focus, theoretical frameworks and normative arguments presented in each study. Structured extraction enhances consistency across reviewed sources and facilitates systematic comparison of key ideas, which is central to qualitative synthesis (Kitchenham & Charters, 2007).

The extracted data were analysed using thematic analysis, an interpretive method that identifies recurring patterns and conceptual themes across qualitative data. Thematic analysis is particularly suitable for synthesising normative and doctrinal literature, as it allows researchers to examine how concepts such as legitimacy, harm and public interest are constructed across different scholarly works (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Themes identified through this process were subsequently interpreted through Shariah principles and socio-legal reasoning, enabling the integration of Islamic jurisprudential norms with legal governance considerations. This interpretive approach aligns with established qualitative analysis practices that emphasise analytical depth, reflexivity and theoretical integration rather than statistical inference (Miles et al., 2014).

FINDINGS: THEMATIC SYNTHESIS

Based on the qualitative analysis of the selected literature, this study identifies four principal themes that characterise the academic discourse on *selective boycott* as a form of collective action within Shariah and legal frameworks in Malaysia. These themes reflect recurring normative, ethical, and legal arguments across disciplines and methodological approaches.

Selective Boycott as Moral and Symbolic Collective Action

The literature consistently conceptualises boycott as a form of moral collective action that operates symbolically, whereby consumers deploy market power to express opposition to perceived injustice. Within the framework of *political consumerism*, boycott functions as a medium of moral communication intended to influence corporate or political behaviour outside formal institutional channels (Neilson, 2010). In its selective form, however, such action is often driven by brand symbolism and emotionally resonant narratives, rendering it more responsive to public perception than to comprehensive ethical assessment.

Shariah Legitimacy and Normative Conditions of Collective Action

From a Shariah perspective, the legitimacy of collective actions such as boycott is not determined solely by intention, but is subject to stringent normative conditions. Jurisprudential and maqāṣid-based literature emphasises that collective action must align with principles of justice (*ʿadl*), informed intention (*niyyah ʿalā al-ʿilm*) and the prohibition of injustice or coercive social pressure (Kamali, 2008). The reviewed studies indicate that boycott may only be regarded as Shariah-compliant when it demonstrably serves the public interest and does not contravene broader Islamic ethical values.

Tension between Maslaḥah and Mafsadah in Selective Boycott Practices

A dominant theme within the literature concerns the tension between maslaḥah (public interest) and mafsadah (harm) arising from selective boycott practices. Although boycott is commonly framed as a pursuit of moral good, several studies highlight unintended consequences, including economic harm to local workers, Muslim franchisees and surrounding communities, which may outweigh the intended ethical benefits (Auda, 2008). Within the maqāṣid al-sharīʿah framework, such imbalance raises serious questions regarding the ethical legitimacy of selective boycott when impact assessments are partial or emotionally driven.

Authority, Governance and the Limits of Informal Moral Enforcement

Shariah and socio-legal scholarship also foregrounds issues of authority and governance in collective action. Concepts such as *hisbah* and *amr bi al-maʿrūf* have historically operated within recognised institutional authority rather than through unregulated mass mobilisation. Contemporary studies suggest that selective boycott initiatives undertaken without clear guidelines or legitimate authority risk devolving into informal moral enforcement, potentially leading to abuse of social pressure and infringement of individual rights (Hallaq, 2009).

Legal Boundaries and Rights-Based Concerns under Malaysian Law

From a legal standpoint, the literature underscores that boycott as collective expression does not exist in a normative vacuum. In the Malaysian context, boycott campaigns intersect with legal principles governing freedom of expression, protection of reputation and public order. Legal analyses caution that where boycott is accompanied by unverified factual allegations or excessive social coercion, such actions may transgress lawful boundaries and expose participants to litigation risk (Harding, 2012).

Synthesis of Themes

Overall, the thematic synthesis demonstrates that selective boycott in Malaysia operates at a complex intersection of moral motivation, Shariah legitimacy and legal constraint. While the literature recognises boycott as a legitimate tool of ethical protest and solidarity, the absence of consistent evaluative criteria and recognised authority creates a normative gap

between moral intention and actual societal impact. These findings reinforce the need for a more principled and structured framework for assessing selective boycott as a form of collective action.

DISCUSSION

This qualitative systematic literature review set out to examine *selective boycott* as a form of collective action through the lenses of Shariah legitimacy and legal boundaries in the Malaysian context. The thematic findings provide important insights into how selective boycott is conceptualised, justified and contested within existing scholarship, thereby addressing the study's research questions and clarifying its contributions to Islamic law and socio-legal discourse.

Selective Boycott as Collective Action

The first research question concerned how selective boycott is conceptualised as a form of collective action within the literature. The findings demonstrate that scholars consistently frame boycott not as isolated consumer behaviour, but as coordinated moral action driven by shared narratives, identity and social pressure. This supports the view that selective boycott functions as an informal mechanism of social regulation rather than a purely voluntary market choice. However, the selective nature of such action, where certain corporations are targeted while others remain unaffected, reveals its symbolic and communicative character, raising questions about consistency and principled decision-making. By framing selective boycott explicitly as collective action, this study advances conceptual clarity in a field where boycott is often discussed descriptively rather than analytically.

Shariah Legitimacy and Normative Evaluation

The second research question examined the Shariah basis for legitimising selective boycott. The synthesis shows that Shariah legitimacy is not grounded solely in moral intent or political solidarity, but is contingent upon compliance with normative conditions such as justice (ʿadl), informed intention (*niyyah*), proportionality and avoidance of harm (ḍarar). The literature reveals a consistent emphasis on maqāṣid al-sharīʿah as the evaluative framework through which collective action must be assessed. Importantly, the findings indicate that selective boycott becomes normatively problematic when it prioritises symbolic protest over comprehensive ethical assessment, thereby undermining its claim to Shariah legitimacy.

Maslaḥah–Mafsadah Tension and Unintended Harm

Addressing the third research question, the findings highlight a recurring tension between *maslaḥah* and *mafsadah* in selective boycott practices. While boycott is frequently justified as serving public interest or moral good, the literature draws attention to its unintended consequences, particularly economic harm to local workers, franchisees and dependent communities. This tension is especially salient in the Malaysian context, where targeted

corporations often operate through local franchises employing Muslim workers. The synthesis reinforces the maqāṣid-based principle that ethical action must be judged by outcomes as well as intentions and that selective boycott may fail this test when harm is externalised to uninvolved parties.

Authority, Governance and the Limits of Moral Enforcement

The fourth research question explored how authority and legal boundaries shape the legitimacy of selective boycott. The findings demonstrate that both Shariah and socio-legal scholarship emphasise the importance of recognised authority and governance mechanisms in collective moral action. Classical Islamic concepts such as *hisbah* presuppose institutional oversight and accountability, whereas contemporary selective boycott campaigns often operate without formal authority. This lack of governance creates risks of moral coercion, vigilantism and rights infringement. From a legal perspective, the literature further underscores that boycott campaigns intersect with laws governing freedom of expression, defamation and public order, placing clear limits on informal moral enforcement.

Theoretical and Normative Contributions

This study makes three principal contributions to the literature. First, it reconceptualises selective boycott as a form of collective action subject to ethical and legal constraints, rather than as discretionary consumer activism. Secondly, it integrates Shariah normative principles with socio-legal analysis, demonstrating how maqāṣid al-sharīʿah provides a coherent framework for evaluating contemporary collective practices. Thirdly, it exposes a significant normative gap between moral motivation and governance structures, highlighting the need for clearer guidelines and institutional engagement in regulating selective boycott.

Implications for Scholarship and Practice

The discussion suggests that future scholarship should move beyond descriptive accounts of boycott towards more structured normative evaluation. For practitioners and religious authorities, the findings underscore the importance of articulating principled guidance that balances moral protest with harm prevention and legal compliance. For policymakers, the study highlights the need to address the regulatory grey area in which selective boycott operates, particularly in digitally mediated collective action.

A CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK FOR SHARIAH-COMPLIANT AND LEGALLY BOUNDED SELECTIVE BOYCOTT

The development of a conceptual framework is necessary to address the normative gap identified in the literature between moral motivation and the governance of selective boycott as collective action. While existing studies acknowledge boycott as a legitimate form of ethical protest, they rarely provide a structured evaluative model that integrates Shariah principles with contemporary legal constraints. Conceptual frameworks in

qualitative synthesis play a critical role in organising complex normative concepts, clarifying analytical relationships and translating abstract principles into coherent evaluative criteria applicable to real-world practices (Jabareen, 2009).

Normative Foundation (Maqāṣid al-Sharīʿah)

The proposed framework is grounded in maqāṣid al-sharīʿah as the primary normative foundation for evaluating selective boycott, positioning collective consumer action within the broader objectives of Islamic law rather than isolated moral sentiment. Contemporary maqāṣid scholarship emphasises that ethical legitimacy in Islam derives from the preservation of fundamental interests such as religion, life, intellect, lineage and property, and that any collective action must be assessed according to its real-world consequences rather than its symbolic appeal alone (Auda, 2008). Accordingly, selective boycott is conceptually valid only when it demonstrably advances public interest (*maṣlaḥah*) without undermining these foundational objectives.

Ethical Preconditions (Niyyah, ʿAdl, and Knowledge)

At the ethical level, the framework requires that selective boycott be governed by informed intention (*niyyah ʿalā al-ʿilm*) and justice (*ʿadl*), rejecting impulsive or emotionally driven mobilisation. Islamic legal theory consistently holds that moral actions lacking adequate knowledge or fairness may constitute injustice even when pursued for ostensibly righteous causes (Kamali, 2008). Within this framework, selective boycott must therefore be preceded by reasonable verification of claims, consistency in moral standards, and proportionality in response, ensuring that ethical conduct is not reduced to performative activism.

Harm Assessment (Maslaḥah–Mafsadah Balancing)

A central component of the framework is systematic harm assessment, operationalised through balancing *maṣlaḥah* against *mafsadah*. Islamic jurisprudence recognises the prevention of harm (*dafʿ al-ḍarar*) as a core legal maxim, requiring that collective actions avoid transferring harm onto uninvolved or vulnerable parties (Kamali, 2011). Applied to selective boycott, this principle necessitates scrutiny of downstream economic effects on local workers, franchisees and communities, thereby challenging boycott practices that externalise moral costs while claiming ethical superiority.

Authority and Governance (Limits of Informal Moral Enforcement)

The framework further incorporates authority and governance as essential constraints on collective action, drawing from classical Islamic concepts such as *hisbah* which historically operated under recognised institutional oversight. Contemporary Islamic legal scholarship warns that moral enforcement divorced from authority risks devolving into coercion, vigilantism and social fragmentation (Hallaq, 2009). As such, selective boycott within this framework is normatively constrained by the absence or presence of legitimate guidance

from recognised religious or regulatory institutions, reinforcing accountability and ethical discipline.

Legal Boundedness (Rights, Order, and Accountability)

Finally, the framework integrates legal boundedness by situating selective boycott within the constitutional and statutory order of Malaysia, where collective expression must coexist with the protection of rights, reputation and public order. Socio-legal analysis underscores that moral protest does not override legal responsibility, particularly where boycott campaigns involve allegations, pressure tactics or reputational harm (Harding, 2012). A Shariah-compliant boycott is therefore also a legally responsible one, recognising that ethical legitimacy collapses when collective action violates lawful boundaries.

CONCLUSION

This qualitative systematic literature review demonstrates that selective boycott in Malaysia operates at a complex intersection of moral motivation, Shariah legitimacy and legal constraint and cannot be adequately understood as a purely voluntary consumer practice. The synthesis of existing scholarship reveals that while boycott is widely recognised as a form of ethical protest, its selective application raises persistent concerns regarding justice, proportionality and unintended harm. Viewed through the maqāṣid al-sharīʿah framework, selective boycott is normatively defensible only when it advances public interest without undermining foundational legal and ethical objectives, thereby reinforcing the centrality of outcome-based evaluation in Islamic legal reasoning (Auda, 2008).

From a scholarly perspective, this study contributes to Islamic law and socio-legal literature by reconceptualising selective boycott as a form of collective action subject to normative regulation, rather than as discretionary moral expression. By integrating Shariah principles with contemporary legal analysis, the study addresses a significant gap in the literature where ethical intention is often prioritised over governance, accountability and harm assessment. This contribution aligns with broader calls within Islamic legal scholarship to move beyond abstract moral claims towards structured evaluative frameworks grounded in justice, knowledge and social responsibility (Kamali, 2008).

The findings carry important policy implications for religious authorities, civil society actors, and regulators in Malaysia. In particular, the absence of clear institutional guidance on selective boycott creates a normative vacuum that allows moral mobilisation to occur without consistent standards or accountability mechanisms. From a governance perspective, greater engagement by recognised religious institutions in articulating principled guidelines, aligned with both Shariah objectives and positive law, could mitigate risks of moral coercion, misinformation and social fragmentation, while preserving the ethical intent of collective protest (Harding, 2012).

Finally, this study underscores the need for future policy and research initiatives to treat selective boycott as a regulated ethical practice rather than an unbounded moral response. Conceptual frameworks, such as the one proposed in this study, can serve as

practical tools for policymakers and scholars in assessing the legitimacy of emerging forms of digitally mediated collective action. Further research is encouraged to operationalise these frameworks through comparative analysis, empirical case studies and interdisciplinary collaboration, thereby strengthening the normative governance of ethical protest in plural legal contexts (Jabareen, 2009).

REFERENCES

Abdul-Talib, A. N., Abd-Latif, S. A., & Abd-Razak, I. S. (2016). A study on the boycott motivations of Malaysian non-Muslims. Journal of Islamic Marketing, 7(3), 264-287.

Arsad, M. I. (2024). Akad yang Dilaksanakan dalam Aplikasi Foodpanda: Satu Tinjauan. Journal of Law and Governance, 5(1), 90-100.

Arsad, M. I. (2024). Mentafsir Kekayaan Bumi: Analisis Perundangan Islam Terhadap Pengekstrakan Minyak Dan Etika Alam Sekitar. Journal of Law and Governance, 6(1), 1-16.

Arsad, M. I. (2024). Orphan Welfare Programs: A Comparative Analysis Using Imam Shafie's Framework And Talfiq. Journal of Law and Governance, 4(1), 1-11.

Arsad, M. I., & Abd Aziz, M. H. (2023). Navigating Heresy And Maqasid Al-Shariah: A Comprehensive Study Of Responses To Si Hulk's Teachings In Malaysia. Jurnal Maw'izah, 6(1), 29-40.

Arsad, M. I., & Hussin, M. N. M. (2020). Pelanggaran Etika Peguam Syarie: Kajian Di Negeri Selangor: Syarie Lawyers' Ethical Violations: A Study in State of Selangor. Journal of Shariah Law Research, 5(1), 55-74.

Arsad, M. I., & Jamaludin, M. H. (2024). Balancing Faith And Gaming: Exploring Zakat, In-Game Purchases And Ethical Considerations. Journal of Law and Governance, 6(1), 31-39.

Arsad, M. I., Jamaludin, H., & Samudin, S. A. (2024). Pendekatan Syariah dalam Menggalakkan Amalan Hijau melalui Dana Zakat: Satu Kajian Awal: Shariah Approach in Promoting Green Practices through Zakat Fund: A Preliminary Study. Al-Basirah Journal, 14(2), 54-67.

Arsad, M. I., Jamaludin, M. H., & Samudin, S. A. (2024). Pentadbiran Zakat Pasca Kes Nik Elin: Implikasi Perundangan Terhadap Keberkesanan Sistem Zakat Malaysia. Asian Journal of Law and Governance, 6(4), 74-83.

Arsad, M. I., Jamaludin, M. H., & Samudin, S. A. (2024). Zakat As A Tool For Social Justice: An Analytical Study Of Usul Fiqh Principles And Their Application In Islamic Criminal Law: Zakat Sebagai Instrumen Keadilan Sosial: Analisis Pada Prinsip Istihsan Dan Aplikasinya Dalam Undang-Undang Jenayah Islam. al-Qanatir: International Journal of Islamic Studies, 33(6), 169-181.

Arsad, M. I., Manap, M. A., & Rahman, N. R. A. A. (2024). Evaluating the Impact of Hospitality Service Quality on Legal Compliance and Customer Loyalty: A Case Study in Malacca (No. halshs-04871272).

Arsad, M. I., Manap, M. A., & Rahman, N. R. A. A. (2025). Employee Perspectives on Legal Compliance and Its Impact on Service Quality in the Hospitality Industry. Asian Journal of Law and Governance, 7(1), 17-24.

Arsad, M. I., Manap, M. A., & Rahman, N. R. A. The Development, Management and Governance of Halal Tourism: Shariah Compliance, Stakeholder Engagement and Digital Integration.

Arsad, M. I., Zaini, M. Z., Hashim, N. A. N. M., Manap, M. A., & Rahman, N. R. A. (2025). Digital Zakat Fitrah Payment: Fatwa Legitimacy, Institutional Challenges and Societal Adaptation in Malaysia. Global Journal Al-Thaqafah, 16-30.

Auda, J. (2008). Maqasid al-Shariah as philosophy of Islamic law: a systems approach. International Institute of Islamic Thought (IIIT).

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. Qualitative research in psychology, 3(2), 77-101.

Ellis, M., Emon, A. M., & Glahn, B. (Eds.). (2012). Islamic law and international human rights law. Oxford University Press.

Ertaş, Ç. (2024). Tasting Politics? The Relationship Between Neoliberalism, Political Consumerism, and the Slow Food Movement. Journal of Tourismology, 10(2), 195-205.

Fischer, J. (2015). Muslim consumption and anti-consumption in Malaysia. Tidsskrift for Islamforskning, 9(2), 68-87.

Friedman, M. (1985). Consumer boycotts in the United States, 1970–1980: Contemporary events in historical perspective. Journal of consumer affairs, 19(1), 96-117.

Gough, D., Thomas, J., & Oliver, S. (2017). An introduction to systematic reviews. 1-352.

Hallaq, W. B. (2009). An introduction to Islamic law. Cambridge University Press.

Harding, A. (2012). Malaysia: Religious pluralism and the constitution in a contested polity. Middle East Law and Governance, 4(2-3), 356-385.

Jabareen, Y. (2009). Building a conceptual framework: philosophy, definitions, and procedure. International journal of qualitative methods, 8(4), 49-62.

John, A., & Klein, J. (2003). The boycott puzzle: Consumer motivations for purchase sacrifice. Management science, 49(9), 1196-1209.

Kamali, M. H. (2008). Maqāṣid Al-Sharīāh Made Simple. International Institute of Islamic Thought (IIIT).

Kamali, M. H. (2011). Islamic family law reform: problems and prospects. Icr Journal, 3(1), 37-52.

Kitchenham, B., & Charters, S. (2007). Guidelines for performing systematic literature reviews in software engineering technical report. Software Engineering Group, EBSE Technical Report, Keele University and Department of Computer Science University of Durham, 2.

Miles, M. B., Huberman, A. M., & Saldana, J. (2014). Qualitative data analysis: A methods sourcebook.

Moher, D., Liberati, A., Tetzlaff, J., & Altman, D. G. (2009). Preferred reporting items for systematic reviews and meta-analyses: the PRISMA statement. Bmj, 339.

Mongeon, P., & Paul-Hus, A. (2016). The journal coverage of Web of Science and Scopus: a comparative analysis. Scientometrics, 106(1), 213-228.

Neilson, L. A. (2010). Boycott or buycott? Understanding political consumerism. Journal of Consumer Behaviour, 9(3), 214-227.

Okoli, C. (2015). A guide to conducting a standalone systematic literature review. Communications of the association for information systems, 37.

Papaioannou, D., Sutton, A., & Booth, A. (2016). Systematic approaches to a successful literature review. Systematic approaches to a successful literature review, 1-336.

Tranfield, D., Denyer, D., & Smart, P. (2003). Towards a methodology for developing evidence-informed management knowledge by means of systematic review. British journal of management, 14(3), 207-222.

Xiao, Y., & Watson, M. (2019). Guidance on conducting a systematic literature review. Journal of planning education and research, 39(1), 93-112.