

ISLAMIC ETHICAL PRINCIPLES AS INTERNAL DETERMINANTS OF SUSTAINABLE HALAL INTEGRITY FOR MALAYSIA'S ONLINE FOOD DELIVERY INDUSTRY

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Abstract: Malaysia's online food delivery (OFD) sector has grown rapidly, yet this growth creates a specific challenge to halal integrity at the last-mile delivery stage. Once food leaves a certified vendor, its halal status depends on platform systems, rider conduct, and real-time handling decisions outside continuous supervision. Existing halal logistics standards provide the procedural foundation, but their application to multi-actor, platform-mediated delivery remains incomplete when the actors responsible for execution lack internal ethical formation. This conceptual paper argues that Islamic Ethical Principles (IEPs) must function as internal determinants of conduct, complementing rather than replacing procedural assurance. Three objectives guide the study: to identify the operational and informational dimensions of the last-mile halal integrity gap in Malaysia's OFD sector; to examine how six selected IEPs, namely *taqwa*, *amanah*, *taharah*, *mas'uliyah*, *qist*, and *ihsan*, function as internal determinants of halal conduct when direct monitoring is limited; and to propose an integrated framework linking procedural assurance, ethical self-regulation, and shared halal responsibility. The study employs qualitative literature synthesis and normative Islamic ethical analysis, supported by documented Malaysian cases. The analysis shows each principle responds to a specific last-mile vulnerability: low supervision, trust-based handling, purity and contamination control, accountability, fairness in information, and excellence beyond minimum compliance. Halal integrity emerges as a shared moral responsibility across vendors, platform providers, riders, and consumers. The proposed framework comprises four levels: the OFD integrity gaps, the combination of external procedural assurance and internalised IEPs, shared halal responsibility across actors, and self-regulating halal conduct producing sustainable halal integrity. The study extends halal logistics literature toward internal ethical formation, operationalises classical principles in platform-based delivery, and offers an integrated basis for OFD halal assurance addressing both gap dimensions.

Keywords: *Halal Integrity, Halal Logistics, Islamic Ethical Principles, Last-Mile Delivery, Online Food Delivery*

Introduction

Malaysia has developed a well-structured halal certification and assurance system, widely recognised as a leading model in the global halal industry (Kamali, 2021; AbdulRahman et al., 2020). Standards such as MS 1500:2019 and MS 2400:2019, alongside JAKIM oversight, provide a framework for halal food handling and supply chain management. Yet the rapid growth of the online food delivery (OFD) sector has introduced a challenge these frameworks were not specifically designed to address. In OFD, halal responsibility does not end at the certified food premise. It continues through platform systems, vendor disclosure, rider handling, delivery bag discipline, and consumer-facing information, across a chain that is mobile, multi-actor, and less continuously supervised than the certified kitchen.

This structural shift creates what this paper terms the last-mile halal integrity gap: the space between formal halal assurance at the point of preparation and actual halal conduct at the point of delivery. The gap operates across two interconnected dimensions. Operationally, halal logistics scholarship has established that halal integrity must be preserved through transportation, storage, segregation, traceability and handling from the point of origin until the product reaches the consumer (Azman et al., 2026; Ali et al., 2017; Zulfakar et al., 2014; Tieman, 2011). In OFD, this requirement becomes more fragile because food in transit moves through delivery routes managed by gig-economy riders, rather than dedicated halal logistics providers with fixed facilities, segregation controls and continuous oversight (AbdulRahman et al., 2020; Abdul Majid & Shamsudin, 2020; Nizar & Zainal Abidin, 2021). Shared delivery bags, real-time handling across multiple orders and limited monitoring during transit create conditions in which contamination, mishandling or misdelivery occur without immediate detection (Demirci et al., 2016; Fathullah Harun et al., 2021; Samori et al., 2023). In this sense, the operational gap is not simply about transport, but about whether halal integrity survives once food leaves the certified premise and enters a dispersed delivery environment.

Informationally, consumers and riders depend on platform-displayed vendor categories, names and visual labels to assess halal status, yet many of these signals, including Malay or Muslim-sounding vendor names, “No Pork No Lard” tags and “Muslim-Friendly” labels, do not carry verified halal assurance and cannot substitute for JAKIM certification (Haji Bibi et al., 2025; Shahrman et al., 2026; JAKIM, 2020). This creates information asymmetry and *syubhah* at the selection stage, where consumers rely on suggestive platform cues rather than verified halal status. Taken together, the operational and informational dimensions show the last-mile halal integrity gap begins at platform classification and continues through delivery handling. Documented cases of halal delivery failures in Malaysia confirm this gap is operational and informational, not merely theoretical (Husain, 2024; Utusan Malaysia, 2021; The Sun Daily, 2025; Said, 2021). These cases are examined in the review below.

Existing scholarship on OFD has identified cross-contamination risks, shared delivery bags, weak traceability, and the absence of a dedicated OFD halal scheme as key concerns (Samori et al., 2023; Nizar & Zainal Abidin, 2021; Fathullah Harun et al., 2021). These studies clarify the procedural and operational vulnerabilities of OFD. What remains less examined is the internal ethical formation of the actors who make halal decisions in real-time delivery settings. This paper addresses this gap. It argues that halal integrity in Malaysia's OFD sector requires

Islamic Ethical Principles (IEPs) as internal determinants of actor conduct, particularly when procedural oversight is mobile, fragmented, or intermittent. Certification and standards define what halal requires. Islamic ethics shapes why actors act responsibly when direct monitoring is limited.

Three objectives guide the paper: to identify the operational and informational dimensions of the last-mile halal integrity gap in Malaysia's OFD sector; to examine how six selected IEPs, namely *taqwa* (God-consciousness), *amanah* (trustworthiness), *taharah* (purity), *mas'uliyah* (accountability), *qist* (equity) and *ihsan* (excellence), function as internal determinants of halal conduct when direct monitoring is limited; and to propose an integrated conceptual framework linking procedural halal assurance, ethical self-regulation and shared halal responsibility across the delivery chain. The six principles operate within the broader *akhlaq* framework as interconnected internal determinants, with *taqwa* as the primary motivational anchor. The sections that follow address these objectives in turn.

Literature Review

This review covers the procedural, operational, and ethical foundations relevant to the study.

Halal Compliance and the Last-Mile Delivery Gap

Procedural Halal Assurance: Foundations and Limits

Malaysia's halal assurance framework provides a recognised basis for food handling and supply chain integrity. MS 1500:2019 covers halal food general requirements including preparation, handling, and storage, while MS 2400:2019 extends these into halal supply chain activities covering transportation, warehousing, and retailing (Department of Standards Malaysia, 2019a, 2019b). AbdulRahman et al. (2020) document MS 2400's development as a structured halal logistics standard across Southeast Asia. Ahmad Apandi et al. (2018) examined the earlier MS 2400-1:2010 version in haulier operations, showing its function as a risk-mitigating mechanism for halal integrity. Abdul Majid & Shamsudin (2020) confirm that logistics service providers must ensure segregation, contamination avoidance, and proactive supply chain management under this standard. Ustadi et al. (2020) show that halal transportation compliance depends on actor attitude, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control, not standard design alone. The standard provides the requirement. Whether actors follow it depends on who they are and what they value.

OFD introduces a more fluid, rider-dependent environment for which these foundations were not specifically calibrated. Sulaiman et al. (2022), from their study of OFD in Brunei, note that information on OFD within the halal food supply chain remains limited, raising concerns about halal purity during delivery and the need for a framework meeting *halalan tayyiban* requirements. This is not a failure of existing standards. It reflects a translation gap between general halal logistics principles and the platform-mediated, real-time realities of OFD. In OFD, halal integrity depends not only on procedural design but on the actor's ethical judgement when no supervisor is present.

The Last-Mile Halal Integrity Gap: Operational and Informational Dimensions

The *operational dimension* covers handling risks during pickup, transit, bag use, and handover. Three Malaysian cases illustrate this concretely. A family ordered *mee tarik* through an OFD platform but received pork rice, which was consumed by the children before the error was

discovered (Husain, 2024). In a second case, a customer ordering chicken rice via ShopeeFood received pork instead (The Sun Daily, 2025). Both cases show food with a permissible original status reaching the consumer in a form that violates halal integrity, whether through preparation error, wrong delivery, or weak vendor classification at platform level. Nizar & Zainal Abidin (2021) and Ajwad et al. (2025) identify shared delivery bags, unsegregated container use, and difficulty monitoring rider practices as structural operational risks in Malaysian OFD. Ismail & Othman (2022) confirm from the riders' perspective that the grey area of halal compliance is difficult to control because food content information is not always disclosed to riders, even when doubtful substances are present. Samori et al. (2023) note that over 100,000 riders were active during the MCO period, making real-time individual monitoring structurally impossible. Supian (2018) establishes that tools handling halal products must not be shared with those used for non-halal products, and that dedicated handling facilities are necessary to prevent cross-contamination. The operational gap is therefore not simply a matter of rider misconduct. It is a structural condition in which halal conduct depends on individual discipline external monitoring cannot guarantee.

The *informational dimension* concerns how halal status is disclosed and classified on OFD platforms. A third Malaysian case is instructive. A foodpanda rider proactively contacted a customer to disclose that the restaurant's workers were all non-Muslim. The customer's initial response was “Eh? Tapi nama Melayu” (but the name sounds Malay), revealing they had relied entirely on the vendor's name as a proxy for halal status (Said, 2021). This case shows a specific platform information failure: a vendor name carrying a halal-signalling impression while providing no verified information about actual food handlers, sourcing practices, or halal compliance. It also shows Muslim riders themselves recognise and act on ethical responsibility even without a formal system compelling them to do so. Haji Bibi et al. (2025) found consumers frequently misinterpret “No Pork, No Lard” labels as equivalent to halal certification. Shahrman et al. (2026) confirmed that “Muslim-Friendly”, “No Pork No Lard”, and “Serve No Pork” labels create consumer confusion and cannot substitute for verified certification. Hazimah et al. (2024) show “No Pork No Lard” branding shapes Muslim purchase intention without providing genuine halal assurance, while Ismail et al. (2026) note from a *muamalat* perspective that unverified labels contradict Islamic requirements for truthful market conduct. The informational gap is not a peripheral concern. It is a structural condition undermining the Muslim consumer's ability to exercise responsible halal selection.

From a fiqh perspective, both dimensions create conditions of *syubhah* (doubt). Fathullah Harun et al. (2021) call for proper Islamic training for food providers and delivery personnel, noting that a good understanding of Shariah principles increases confidence for both providers and consumers. The Irsyad Fatwa of 2017 already addressed the ethical position of Muslim riders delivering non-halal food. Mazri & Man (2021), in their fiqh analysis, concluded it is unlawful for a Muslim rider to knowingly deliver food whose non-halal status is confirmed, and that income derived from delivering mixed halal and non-halal orders is *makruh*. Rider moral judgement in OFD is therefore a recognised matter in Islamic jurisprudential discourse, not merely an operational preference. The two dimensions of the last-mile gap converge at a single point: both depend on actors who carry halal responsibility as a moral obligation, not only as a procedural requirement. Table 1 summarises this convergence.

Table 1: The Last-Mile Halal Integrity Gap - Dimensions, Risks, and Internal Ethical Response Needed

Gap Dimension	Operational Risk in OFD	Compliance-Only Limitation	Internal Ethical Response Needed
Operational	Cross-contamination; shared bags; misdelivery; difficulty monitoring rider practices at interval stops (<i>Nizar & Zainal Abidin, 2021; Supian, 2018; Ismail & Othman, 2022</i>)	SOPs define separation requirements but cannot monitor real-time conduct; rider scale makes individual traceability structurally impossible	Actors need internal discipline to handle food carefully, preserve separation, report doubt, and avoid careless conduct when direct monitoring is limited
Informational	Vendor names and surrogate labels (“Muslim-Friendly”, “No Pork No Lard”) create false halal impression without verified status (<i>Haji Bibi et al., 2025; Said, 2021; Shahrman et al., 2026</i>)	Platform listing does not differentiate JAKIM-certified from unverified claims; consumers rely on names and visual labels as halal proxies	Actors need truthful disclosure, accurate halal classification, responsible platform information, and careful consumer selection based on verified halal status

Source: Authors.

Table 1 completes the first objective by consolidating the two gap dimensions, their risks, and the internal ethical response each requires. The gap identified here is behavioural before it is procedural, so the remainder of the review turns to the Islamic ethical tradition supplying the internal formation this behaviour requires.

Islamic Ethics and the Moral Architecture of Halal Conduct

Islamic ethics provides the internal moral architecture for halal conduct because it links human action to divine accountability, social trust, and collective welfare. Beekun (1997) defines Islamic ethics as a set of moral principles distinguishing right from wrong based on Qur'anic guidance and prophetic tradition. Unlike compliance systems grounded solely in external reward or sanction, Islamic ethics generates internal motivation rooted in *taqwa*, *niyyah* (intention), and *ibadah* (worship). For a Muslim worker, commercial activity is not merely a contractual obligation. It is an act of worship, and its execution reflects the actor's moral relationship with Allah. Saeed et al. (2001) articulate this foundation clearly: Islamic marketing ethics reframes commercial conduct from profit-centred exchange to value-oriented responsibility, where justice, equity, and consumer welfare become moral conditions of market practice rather than optional virtues. Within the Malaysian standards setting, Nazri et al. (2018) show this architecture works in practice: guiding principles anchored in *tawhid* and *maqasid al-Shariah* were derived from classical sources and translated into Muslim-friendly service standards, moving Islamic ethics from doctrine into codes of conduct.

This moral foundation extends directly to halal food integrity. Mustaffa (2017) establishes that *halalan tayyiban*, the Qur'anic standard for food that is both permissible and wholesome (Qur'an 2:172; 5:88), requires not only the absence of prohibited ingredients but also truthful sourcing, pure handling, clean preparation, transparent representation, and protection of consumer welfare. Kamali (2021) confirms that Shariah governs the entire production and handling chain, not only the ingredient list. A rider who mixes halal and non-halal food in the same bag, a vendor who misrepresents status on a platform, and a platform that allows ambiguous halal labelling are all committing acts that compromise *halalan tayyiban*, even if no formal rule explicitly prohibits their specific action. The ethical obligation runs deeper than the procedural rule.

Hashi (2016) identifies three dimensions of Islamic ethical formation: good character (*al-fitrah al-salimah*), good intention (*niyyah hasanah*), and adherence to Shariah principles. All three are necessary for ethical conduct to be sustained independently of external monitoring. In the OFD context, good character means a rider who handles food carefully because care is part of their moral identity, not because they fear a penalty. Good intention means a vendor who discloses uncertain halal status because honest dealing is a religious duty, not merely a marketing strategy. Adherence to Shariah means both are guided by a framework larger than company policy. This three-dimensional formation is what makes Islamic ethics an internal determinant rather than a procedural supplement. OFD scholarship has documented the vulnerabilities and Islamic ethics scholarship has articulated the principles, yet the two literatures have rarely met at the point where they matter most, the last mile. The sections below connect them.

Methodology

This paper is conceptual and employs qualitative literature synthesis combined with normative Islamic ethical analysis, an approach suited to developing new theoretical understanding through the critical integration of existing knowledge (Jaakkola, 2020). The synthesis draws on published sources across halal logistics, Islamic business ethics, Islamic work ethics, OFD practice and halal supply chain management, together with Malaysian halal standards, JAKIM guidance documents, and Qur'anic and Prophetic sources. The design serves the three objectives in sequence: documentary analysis identifies the last-mile gap, normative ethical analysis examines the six principles, and conceptual integration produces the framework.

The materials were examined in four stages: familiarisation, identification of recurring halal integrity issues in OFD, mapping of Islamic Ethical Principles against these vulnerabilities, and integration into a unified framework. Selection of the six principles followed four criteria: explicit grounding in Qur'anic and Prophetic sources, consistent recognition within Islamic business and work ethics scholarship, alignment with *halalan tayyiban*, and operational relevance to last-mile vulnerabilities. To strengthen contextual interpretation, a key informant interview with a halal manager at a JAKIM-certified logistics provider (Anaspekri, personal communication, March 2024), arranged through formal institutional correspondence with Bekal by Foodpanda, clarified the translation gap between existing standards and OFD practice. According to the informant, MS 2400 Part 1 was developed with haulier and container-based logistics as its primary reference context, so several of its requirements translate only partially to OFD operations even though OFD activity falls within its general scope, and no dedicated OFD halal certification scheme currently exists in Malaysia.

The analysis rests on two analytical positions. First, procedural halal assurance, while necessary, is not self-executing: standards and SOPs define expected conduct but cannot determine how actors behave in every real-time delivery situation. Second, IEPs operate as internal determinants, shaping the moral motivation behind conduct rather than only visible compliance with rules. The last-mile gap is therefore treated as a human conduct problem rather than a standard design problem, so the study positions IEPs as the internal complement to procedural assurance.

Conceptual Framework

With the first objective completed in the review, this section answers the second and third objectives: it presents the integrated framework, elaborates its ethical core through the six IEPs, then distributes halal responsibility across the chain.

An Integrated Framework for Sustainable Halal Integrity in OFD

Answering the third objective, this section proposes an integrated conceptual framework for sustainable halal integrity in OFD, structured around four sequential levels (see Figure 1). The first level identifies the OFD integrity gaps: the operational handling gap and the informational vendor classification gap. The second level addresses these gaps through two mutually reinforcing components: external procedural halal assurance, comprising certification, standards, SOPs, audits, and platform protocols; and internalised Islamic Ethical Principles, comprising *taqwa*, *amanah*, *taharah*, *mas'uliyah*, *qist*, and *ihsan*. The third level is shared halal responsibility across vendors, riders, platform providers, halal authorities, and consumers. The fourth level is self-regulating halal conduct: careful handling, truthful disclosure, separation, reporting, and accountable handover. Together, these levels produce sustainable halal integrity outcomes: lower *syubhah* exposure, stronger accountability, and consumer confidence.

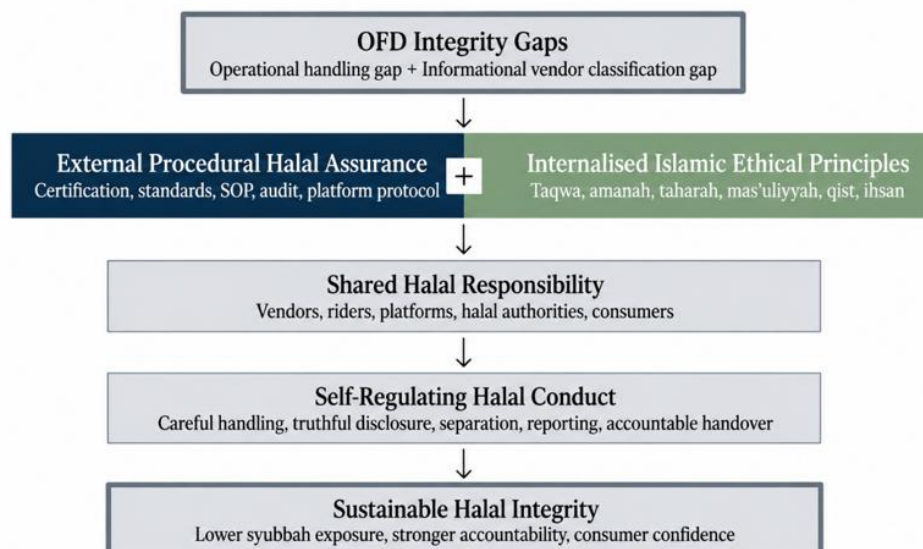


Figure 1: An Integrated Framework for Sustainable Halal Integrity in Online Food Delivery

Source: Developed by the authors based on literature synthesis.

Salin et al. (2017) provide the theoretical basis for this integration argument. They demonstrate that external regulatory mechanisms become weak when actors treat compliance as a performative response to external pressure rather than a moral obligation. Their argument, developed in the context of corporate fraud prevention, applies directly to halal delivery: the

compliance-only mindset creates fragile integrity that breaks down at the last mile, where supervision stops and the actor's internal moral formation becomes the operative control. The framework does not replace procedural discipline with individual piety; it asks that discipline be supported by the internal motivation to follow through when no one is watching. Three propositions follow for future empirical testing.

The framework also differs in emphasis from earlier halal supply chain models. Zulfakar et al. (2014) locate integrity enhancement in organisational assets, information sharing and regulatory pressure, while Ali et al. (2017) build integrity around raw material, production and service dimensions within firm control. Both remain organisation-centred. The present framework retains their procedural core but adds two elements the OFD setting makes unavoidable: actor-level ethical formation, since critical handling decisions sit with individuals outside firm walls, and shared responsibility across parties no single organisation commands. It extends, rather than competes with, existing halal integrity models.

P1. Procedural halal assurance is necessary but insufficient to sustain halal integrity in multi-actor, last-mile OFD delivery contexts.

P2. Islamic Ethical Principles strengthen halal integrity by shaping the internal judgement, moral discipline and accountability of OFD actors when direct monitoring is limited.

P3. Halal integrity in OFD is more sustainable when procedural controls and Islamic ethical self-regulation operate together across the delivery chain.

Islamic Ethical Principles as Internal Determinants of Halal Conduct

The six IEPs answer the second objective and were selected through the four criteria set out in the methodology. Foundational concepts such as *tawhid*, *niyyah*, *ibadah*, *taklif*, and *maqasid al-Shari'ah* remain the doctrinal foundations from which the six principles draw authority. Figure 2 illustrates the relationship among the six, with *taqwa* positioned as the primary motivational driver from which the others derive their moral force.

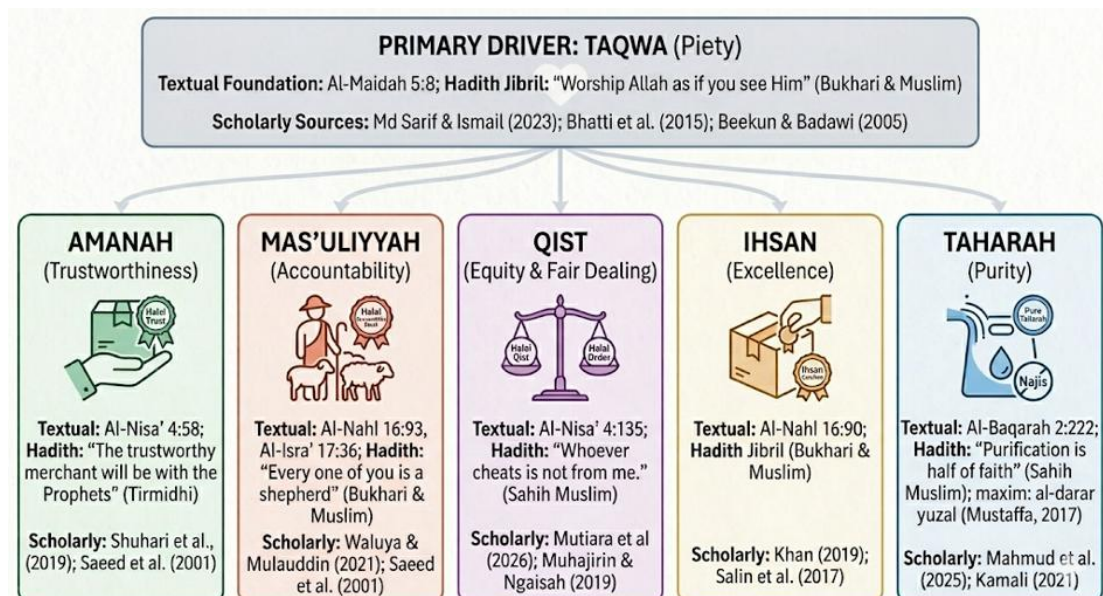


Figure 2: The Six Islamic Ethical Principles as Internal Determinants of Halal Conduct in OFD

Source: Authors' synthesis based on Qur'anic foundations, Prophetic traditions, Islamic ethical principles and halal logistics literature.

Taqwa, derived from the Arabic root meaning to protect or shield (Md Sarif & Ismail, 2023), functions as the primary internal driver. Bhatti et al. (2015) define *taqwa* as an all-encompassing consciousness of duty toward Allah and awareness of accountability before Him. In OFD, *taqwa* addresses the most critical structural vulnerability: the absence of continuous supervision. A rider with internalised *taqwa* does not handle food carelessly because no supervisor is watching. A vendor with *taqwa* does not misrepresent halal status for commercial convenience. Bhatti et al. (2015) found this effect empirically in conventional workplaces, where *taqwa* reduced deviant behaviour even under weak supervision. The OFD setting sharpens their finding. A rider works alone between the restaurant door and the customer's gate, and the only witness to how the bag is handled is the rider's own conscience. Ustadi et al. (2020) reached a similar position from a behavioural direction: halal transportation compliance rests on attitude and perceived behavioural control, not on the standard alone. *Taqwa* supplies the attitude before any control is applied, and it is the reason *amanah*, *taharah*, *mas'uliyah*, *qist*, and *ihsan* remain active in the actor's conduct when formal monitoring ends.

Amanah, trustworthiness and the faithful discharge of entrusted responsibility, carries specific moral weight in the OFD context. Shuhari et al. (2019) ground *amanah* in Qur'an 33:72, where humans undertook the trust that the heavens and earth declined to carry. A rider accepting a halal delivery assignment accepts a moral trust, not merely a gig task. Halal food, halal status information, and consumer confidence in the delivery system are all forms of *amanah*. When a rider mixes orders, a vendor makes unclear halal claims, or a platform fails to distinguish certified from uncertified status, they breach a moral trust that carries consequence before Allah. Shuhari et al. (2019) developed this concept for stable employment settings, and the gig economy tests their framing. The rider's tie to the platform is contractual and short-term, while *amanah* demands a duty of care wider than the contract. The trust is owed to Allah and to the consumer, not only to the employer, which is why it survives the end of a shift. In the OFD context, *amanah* means every actor is a custodian of halal continuity across the chain.

Taharah, purity and freedom from ritual impurity (*najis*), gives halal integrity its material and practical form. The Qur'an states "Allah loves those who purify themselves" (Qur'an 2:222), and the Prophet declared "purification is half of faith" (*Sahih Muslim*, Hadith 223). These textual injunctions extend beyond ritual cleanliness. In OFD, *taharah* translates into delivery bag discipline, segregation of halal from non-halal orders, packaging hygiene, and protection from contamination during transit. Supian (2018) confirms that tools handling halal products during transportation must not be shared with those used for non-halal products, and that proper hygiene and dedicated facilities are required to prevent cross-contamination. Demirci et al. (2016) reach a parallel conclusion from food safety scholarship: halal assurance and hygiene control converge in practice, since contamination destroys both. The fiqh maxim "when halal and haram mix, the haram prevails" reinforces this obligation (Mustaffa, 2017). For the OFD rider, *taharah* is not a ritual abstraction but a practical discipline determining whether the food reaching the consumer remains what it was when it left the kitchen.

Mas'uliyah, accountability, is grounded in the Prophetic hadith: "Every one of you is a shepherd and is responsible for his flock" (*Sahih al-Bukhari*, Vol. 9, Book 89, Hadith 252, cited in Ab. Wahab & Ismail, 2019). In OFD, *mas'uliyah* requires riders to report misdeliveries, escalate doubt when handling seems wrong, and not remain silent after an error occurs. Ab. Wahab and Ismail (2019) argue that negligent performance is an act of moral cheating under Islamic work ethics, and earnings from careless work fall under the category of *haram*. They built this argument for organisational employees. Its force in OFD is greater, not smaller,

because no line manager stands between a rider's error and the consumer's plate. Silence after an error is not a neutral act. Under *mas'uliyah*, every actor in the OFD chain bears individual accountability before Allah for the halal status of what they pass forward.

Qist, equity and fair dealing, addresses the informational dimension of the last-mile gap directly. Allah commands “O believers, be firmly established in justice” (Qur'an 4:135) and “be just, for that is nearest to righteousness” (Qur'an 5:8). The Prophet warned “whoever cheats is not from me” (*Sahih Muslim*, Hadith 102). Muhajirin and Ngaisah (2019) distinguish *qist* from *'adl*: *qist* carries an operational function specifically requiring that no party is disadvantaged through information asymmetry or deceptive representation. This position follows Saeed et al. (2001), who place truthful disclosure at the centre of Islamic market ethics, since withholding material product information for commercial gain breaches the duty owed to the consumer. In OFD, *qist* demands that platform operators display accurate and differentiated halal information and that vendors disclose uncertain halal status honestly, rather than exploiting consumer reliance on unverified surrogate labels. A platform allowing a vendor name or a “No Pork No Lard” label to serve as a halal claim, without verification, places the moral cost of the ambiguity entirely on consumers who trusted the system.

Ihsan, excellence in conduct, is grounded in the hadith: “Verily Allah has prescribed excellence in all things” (*Sahih Muslim*, from the Forty Hadith of Imam al-Nawawi, cited in Ab. Wahab & Ismail, 2019). Ab. Wahab and Ismail (2019) describe *ihsan* as the quality driving a person to perfect their work as if Allah is observing, producing conduct beyond what obligation strictly requires. In OFD, *ihsan* moves actors from rule-following to careful, quality-driven halal delivery. Hamid, Hirnissa, and Gani (2024) confirm that actors with internalised moral conviction sustain halal conduct even under conditions where external monitoring is difficult. Nazri et al. (2018) likewise place *ihsan*, paired with *itqan* (quality), at the centre of Muslim-friendly service standards, which indicates that excellence is a standards requirement rather than a private virtue. A rider with *ihsan* does not merely avoid contamination. They actively protect the integrity of what they carry, because the quality of their service reflects their relationship with Allah.

Together, these six principles explain how Islamic ethics becomes operational in halal practice. *Taqwa* provides the motivational foundation. *Amanah* grounds trust-based responsibility. *Taharah* guides physical discipline. *Mas'uliyah* demands accountability for errors and omissions. *Qist* secures fairness in information. *Ihsan* drives excellence beyond compliance. Together, they give the framework's internal component its operational content.

Shared Halal Responsibility Across the OFD Chain

No single actor guarantees last-mile halal integrity alone. Table 2 shows how the six IEPs express differently across the OFD chain according to each actor's procedural role and risk exposure.

Table 2: Shared Halal Responsibility Across the Online Food Delivery Chain

OFD Actor	Procedural Role	Key IEPs in This Role	Halal Integrity Function
Vendors	Sourcing, preparation, packaging, disclosure	<i>Amanah, taharah, qist, ihsan</i>	Disclose halal status accurately; maintain clean preparation; avoid misleading vendor names or labels; strengthen packaging discipline
Platform Providers	Vendor listing, halal classification, rider allocation, complaint response	<i>Qist, mas'uliyah, amanah, ihsan</i>	Differentiate JAKIM-certified from unverified claims; design halal-sensitive rider allocation; respond to complaints responsibly; improve halal disclosure interfaces
Delivery Riders	Pickup, transit, bag handling, separation, handover	<i>Taqwa, amanah, taharah, mas'uliyah</i>	Segregate halal and non-halal orders; handle food with care; report misdelivery and doubt; exercise ethical judgement on ambiguous assignments
Consumers	Halal selection, checking information, reporting	<i>Taqwa, mas'uliyah, qist</i>	Practise responsible halal selection; verify vendor certification status rather than relying on unverified names or labels; report misleading halal claims

Source: Developed for this study based on the Islamic ethics and halal logistics literature reviewed in this paper.
Note: all six IEPs apply across all actors; the table highlights which are most operationally visible in each role.

Platform providers carry a specific responsibility under *qist* that cannot be passed to riders or consumers. Allowing a vendor name that sounds Malay, or labels like “No Pork No Lard”, to serve as implied halal verification without institutional backing creates an information structure that systematically misleads Muslim consumers (Said, 2021; Haji Bibi et al., 2025; Shahrman et al., 2026). Fathullah Harun et al. (2021) demonstrate that the Irsyad Fatwa categorises rider involvement with non-halal food as a matter of Islamic legal concern. Mazri & Man (2021) further clarify that a rider who knowingly delivers confirmed non-halal food acts unlawfully. These *fiqh* determinations mean platform design choices carry moral weight: a system placing riders into ethically ambiguous assignments without clear halal classification is not operating in a morally neutral space.

Structural Limits of Ethical Self-Regulation

A well-formed counterargument must be acknowledged. Islamic ethics alone cannot guarantee halal integrity in OFD. Platform design permitting mixed halal and non-halal orders without rider choice mechanisms places Muslim riders under structural pressure, where ethical conduct requires individual resistance against platform practice. In a small interview study, riders report that platforms previously allowed registration as halal-only riders, an option since withdrawn (Ajwad et al., 2025). Recent Malaysian reporting captures the same pressure in broadly: Muslim

riders have described receiving non-halal assignments without a refusal mechanism and have sought religious guidance on their position (Utusan Malaysia, 2026; MSTAR, 2026). Rider training remaining rules-based without affective ethical formation produces actors who know the procedures but lack the internal conviction to follow through under pressure. Incentive structures penalising slower delivery without rewarding careful handling create conditions where *ihsan* becomes difficult to sustain in practice. In these circumstances, faith-based consciousness faces operational pressure that individual piety cannot overcome alone. An ethical rider inside an indifferent system carries a burden the system itself created.

This is why the integrated framework requires procedural halal assurance and internalised IEPs to operate together: platform design offering halal-sensitive rider allocation, training that builds ethical judgement through case-based *syubhah* scenarios rather than rule memory alone, interpretive guidance translating existing standards into gig-delivery realities, and support rather than penalty for riders who report doubtful assignments. Without these conditions, IEPs remain individual virtues functioning despite the system rather than through the delivery chain. The framework's contribution is to show that procedural halal assurance and ethical self-regulation must be aligned through shared halal responsibility, not merely placed side by side.

Theoretical and Practical Contributions

This paper makes three contributions. First, it extends halal logistics literature by shifting analytical attention from external compliance structures to the internal ethical formation of actors. Ab Talib and Azam (2026) argue that halal supply chain governance requires a broader paradigm moving beyond compliance-based approaches; this paper provides one direction for that expansion. Second, it contributes to Islamic ethics literature by operationalising *taqwa*, *amanah*, *taharah*, *mas'uliyah*, *qist*, and *ihsan* as internal determinants of conduct in a contemporary platform-based setting, demonstrating classical principles carry specific operational meaning in modern delivery governance. Third, it contributes to OFD governance by proposing an integrated halal OFD framework as an ethics-integrated approach addressing both the operational and informational dimensions of the last-mile halal integrity gap.

Practically, halal authorities and platform providers should recognise last-mile delivery as a distinct space in halal assurance requiring specific interpretive guidance. Rider training should incorporate ethical reasoning alongside technical halal logistics procedures. Platform operators should distinguish JAKIM-certified status from unverified halal indicators, including vendor names and surrogate labels, in their user interfaces. Vendors should receive clear guidance on truthful disclosure obligations and the strict prohibition of misleading representation under Islamic commercial ethics. Consumers should be informed about the distinction between surrogate labels (i.e., “Muslim-Friendly” and “No Pork No Lard” labels) and verified halal certification, so responsible halal selection becomes part of shared moral conduct across the OFD chain. Experience from other Malaysian service sectors supports this direction: Muslim-friendly standards in event management were developed by translating Shariah guiding principles into workable codes of conduct, while retaining what conventional standards already do well (Nazri et al., 2018). These implications do not replace the call for dedicated OFD halal standards; they strengthen the human dimension any standard depends on to function.

Conclusion

Halal integrity in Malaysia's OFD sector does not depend on certification documents and audit reports alone. It depends on the conduct of real actors, who make real decisions in real time, often without direct supervision. Standards and SOPs are necessary. They define what halal

requires and provide the accountability structure within which actors operate. But they are not self-executing. Their effectiveness depends on vendors, riders, platforms, and consumers who carry halal responsibility as a moral obligation, not merely as an administrative requirement. This paper has argued that six Islamic Ethical Principles, *taqwa*, *amanah*, *taharah*, *mas'uliyah*, *qist*, and *ihsan*, function as internal determinants of halal integrity in OFD by shaping actor conduct when formal monitoring is limited. These principles are grounded in the Qur'an and Sunnah, carry specific operational meanings in last-mile delivery contexts, and address the structural vulnerabilities procedural assurance alone cannot reach. The integrated framework proposed here combines procedural assurance with ethical self-regulation, and locates halal integrity as a shared moral responsibility across the entire OFD chain.

The model is conceptual and requires empirical validation. Future research should examine how IEPs are understood and expressed by riders, platform operators and vendors through qualitative inquiry. Comparative studies between ethics-integrated and rules-based training would test whether IEP internalisation measurably affects halal handling conduct, while studies on platform design would address the structural coercion question raised in the counterargument. The halal integrity of Malaysia's OFD sector ultimately rests on the convergence of institutional procedures, platform responsibility, and human moral formation. This paper argues that the third element has been the least examined and the most consequential. Procedural halal assurance defines the requirement. Internalised Islamic Ethical Principles form the actor. Ethical self-regulation sustains halal integrity when direct monitoring ends.

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