KARA MARKETS AND RURAL INSECURITY IN IGBÓMÌNÀ–ÈKÌTÌ LAND, KWARA STATE: AN ISLAMIC PERSPECTIVE

BY

Ally Hammed Bello & Yahaya Alabi Jabata Ibrahim
Department of Islamic Studies, Kwara State College of Education, Oro.
Department of Arabic Medium, Kwara State College of Education, Ilorin.
Email: allybello10@gmail.com

Abstract

This study explores the relationship between Kara markets and rural insecurity in Igbómìnà–Èkìtì land, Kwara State, through an Islamic analytical lens. Kara markets, historically established as centers for livestock trade, play a vital role in sustaining rural livelihoods, facilitating the movement of cattle, goats, and other animals, and fostering socio-economic interactions across communities. Despite their economic significance, these markets have increasingly been linked to insecurity, including cattle rustling, armed robbery, and banditry, due to inadequate regulatory oversight and the strategic location of rural markets along transportation and grazing routes. Drawing on historical accounts, security reports, and Islamic jurisprudence, the research examines how market operations intersect with broader socio-economic and security dynamics. The study highlights the Islamic framework of market ethics, particularly the *Maqāṣid al-Sharīʿah,* which prioritizes the protection of life (H*ifẓ al-nafs*) and property (*Hifẓ al-māl*), and the traditional institution of *ḥisbah*, which ensured fairness, transparency, and public safety in commercial spaces. Findings reveal that Kara markets are not inherently linked to criminality; rather, gaps in monitoring and governance may allow exploitation by criminal actors. From an Islamic perspective, interventions such as temporary market closures, staggered trading hours, community-based surveillance, and stakeholder engagement are ethically justified under the principles of Maslahah (public interest) and *Wasatiyyah* (moderation). The study concludes that effective market management requires a balance between economic continuity and public security, guided by ethical governance, Islamic legal principles, and active community participation, thereby ensuring that Kara markets remain centers of lawful commerce, social cohesion, and rural development.
Keywords: Kara *Markets*, Maqāṣid al-Sharīʿah,ḥisbah, Maslahah,,governance, Community security.

Introduction

Markets have historically served as vital centers of economic interaction, social engagement, and cultural exchange within human societies. In many African communities, particularly in Nigeria, rural markets function not only as avenues for trade but also as platforms that sustain livelihoods, strengthen communal relationships, and promote socio-economic development. In the northern and southwestern regions of Nigeria, Kara markets, commonly known as cattle or livestock markets, play a crucial role in the supply chain of meat production and livestock distribution. These markets attract traders, herders, transporters, and buyers from different regions, thereby contributing significantly to the local and national economy (Akinyemi & Adejumo, 2022). Igbómìnà–Èkìtì land of Kwara State, Kara markets have traditionally functioned as strategic commercial hubs where livestock transactions occur regularly. These markets facilitate the movement of cattle, goats, sheep, and other animals across communities and states, linking pastoral producers with urban consumers. Beyond their economic importance, Kara markets also foster inter-community interaction and cultural exchange among diverse ethnic and occupational groups. However, in recent years, concerns have emerged regarding the security implications associated with some of these markets. Reports of cattle rustling, armed robbery, kidnapping, and other forms of criminal activities in rural areas have generated public anxiety and prompted debates about the role of certain market environments in facilitating insecurity (International Crisis Group, 2023).

The challenge of rural insecurity has become a pressing national issue in Nigeria. Several studies have linked the escalation of rural violence to factors such as weak law enforcement, competition over land and grazing routes, proliferation of small arms, and socio-economic marginalisation (Okoli & Atelhe, 2020; Ojo, 2021). In some cases, large and poorly regulated livestock markets have been alleged to provide operational spaces where criminal networks interact, exchange information, or dispose of stolen livestock. While it would be simplistic to attribute rural insecurity solely to Kara markets, their strategic position within the livestock economy has placed them at the centre of public discourse concerning rural security management. Within Igbómìnà–Èkìtì land, the situation has attracted particular attention from community leaders, government authorities, and security agencies. Concerns about the potential misuse of livestock markets for illicit activities have led to regulatory interventions, including increased surveillance and, in some instances, temporary closure of certain markets. These measures have sparked mixed reactions among stakeholders. While some community members view such interventions as necessary for restoring safety, others worry about the economic consequences for legitimate traders and pastoralists who depend on these markets for their livelihood.

From an Islamic perspective, the issue of market regulation and public security is deeply rooted in the ethical and legal principles of Sharīʿah. Islam recognises trade as a lawful and honourable means of livelihood, provided it is conducted in accordance with justice, honesty, and social responsibility. The Qur’an encourages lawful commercial activities while condemning exploitation and corruption. For instance, Allah states: “Allah has permitted trade and forbidden usury.” (Qur’an 2:275). Islamic jurisprudence also emphasises the protection of fundamental human interests, commonly referred to as Maqāṣid al-Sharīʿah. Among these objectives are the preservation of life (*ḥifẓ al-nafs*), property (*ḥifẓ al-māl*), religion, intellect, and lineage (Kamali, 2023). Any activity or institution that threatens these essential objectives must be carefully regulated or reformed in order to safeguard public welfare. Consequently, when market environments become associated with threats to life or property, Islamic governance principles support appropriate regulatory measures aimed at restoring justice and security.

Classical Islamic scholarship provides numerous precedents for regulating markets in the interest of societal wellbeing. Early Muslim societies developed the institution of ḥisbah, a system through which market activities were supervised to ensure fairness, transparency, and public safety. The *muḥtasib* (market inspector) was responsible for preventing fraud, resolving disputes, and maintaining order within commercial spaces (Ibn Taymiyyah, 1998). This historical model highlights the Islamic commitment to balancing economic freedom with ethical responsibility and social stability. Against this background, examining Kara markets within the broader framework of Islamic ethical governance becomes both relevant and necessary. Such an analysis enables a more nuanced understanding of how market institutions can operate responsibly while contributing to social harmony and economic development. Rather than viewing Kara markets merely as economic spaces, an Islamic perspective encourages their assessment in terms of their compliance with moral accountability, communal welfare, and the protection of human dignity. This study therefore explores the relationship between Kara markets and rural insecurity in , Igbómìnà–Èkìtì land of Kwara State through an Islamic analytical lens. It seeks to evaluate the socio-economic role of these markets, investigate the concerns surrounding their alleged connection with insecurity, and examine how Islamic principles of justice, market regulation, and public welfare can inform practical responses to the problem. By doing so, the study contributes to the broader discourse on the intersection of religion, governance, and rural security in contemporary Nigerian society.

Concept of Market in Islam

The concept of the market occupies a significant place within the socio-economic framework of Islam. From the earliest period of Islamic civilisation, markets served not merely as centres for commercial exchange but also as institutions regulated by ethical principles and moral accountability. Islam recognises trade and commerce as legitimate and honourable means of livelihood, provided that they are conducted in accordance with justice, transparency, and social responsibility. The Qur'an and the Sunnah contain numerous directives that guide Muslims in conducting business activities in ways that promote fairness and protect the welfare of society. In Islamic teachings, economic transactions are viewed as part of a broader moral order designed to ensure justice and mutual benefit among members of the community. The Qur'an explicitly legitimises trade while prohibiting exploitative practices such as usury. Allah states:

"Allah has permitted trade and forbidden usury" (Qur'an 2:275).

This verse establishes the foundational principle that lawful trade (*al-bayʿ*) is permissible, provided it avoids injustice and exploitation. Markets therefore function as legitimate spaces where individuals engage in buying and selling to meet their material needs and support economic growth.

Historically, markets played a central role in the early Muslim community. When the Prophet **Muhammad** (peace be upon him) migrated to **Medina**, one of his notable administrative actions was the establishment of a free and open marketplace for the Muslim community. This market was intended to operate without monopolistic control, excessive taxation, or unfair manipulation by traders. The Prophet emphasised honesty, fairness, and mutual consent in commercial dealings, thereby laying the foundation for an ethical market environment (Khan, 2022). His teachings discouraged fraudulent practices such as hoarding, price manipulation, and deception, which could undermine trust within the marketplace. Islamic scholarship further elaborated on the ethical framework governing markets. Classical Muslim scholars emphasised that economic activities must align with the broader objectives of Islamic law, known as **Maqāṣid al-Sharīʿah**. These objectives include the preservation of life (*ḥifẓ al-nafs*), property (*ḥifẓ al-māl*), intellect (*ḥifẓ al-ʿaql*), religion (*ḥifẓ al-dīn*), and lineage (*ḥifẓ al-nasl*). Markets, therefore, should function in ways that protect these essential values and contribute to the collective welfare of society (Kamali, 2023). To ensure that market activities complied with Islamic ethical standards, early Muslim societies developed the institution of **ḥisbah**, a system of public supervision over market transactions. The official responsible for this function, known as the *muḥtasib*, monitored trading activities, ensured accurate measurements and weights, prevented fraudulent practices, and maintained public order within the marketplace. According to **Ibn Taymiyyah**, the purpose of market supervision was to safeguard justice and prevent harm to both consumers and traders (Ibn Taymiyyah, 1998). The *muḥtasib* also addressed issues such as price manipulation, hoarding of essential commodities, and unethical business conduct.

Another key principle governing markets in Islam is the concept of **mutual consent (***tarāḍī***)** in commercial transactions. The Qur'an emphasises that trade must occur through voluntary agreement between parties:

> O you who believe! Do not consume one another's wealth unjustly, but only through trade by mutual consent among you Qur'an 4:29).

This principle underscores the importance of fairness, transparency, and the absence of coercion in economic dealings. It also implies that any form of exploitation, deception, or forceful acquisition of property contradicts Islamic economic ethics. Islam also emphasises the social responsibility of traders and market participants. Business activities are not viewed purely as profit-seeking ventures but as opportunities to serve society while earning lawful income. Honesty in trade is highly valued in Islamic teachings, and trustworthy merchants are promised great spiritual reward. The Prophet **Muhammad (peace be upon him)** stated that the truthful and trustworthy trader will be in the company of the prophets, the righteous, and the martyrs on the Day of Judgement (Tirmidhi, Hadith 1209). Such teachings reinforce the moral obligation of traders to maintain integrity and accountability in their commercial activities. Furthermore, Islam discourages practices that disrupt market stability or harm the welfare of the community. Activities such as hoarding essential goods, engaging in fraudulent measurements, and spreading misinformation about commodities are strictly condemned. Islamic jurists have also discussed the conditions under which government authorities may intervene in markets to prevent injustice or protect public welfare. For example, market regulation may be justified when traders manipulate prices or create artificial scarcity in order to exploit consumers (Chapra, 2021). The Islamic conception of the market therefore balances economic freedom with moral discipline and public accountability. While individuals are free to pursue lawful trade and enterprise, their activities must align with ethical principles that safeguard the interests of society as a whole. Markets are thus expected to function as environments of trust, fairness, and social cooperation.

Historical Development of Kara Markets

The development of Kara markets, commonly referred to as cattle or livestock markets, forms an important aspect of the socio-economic history of livestock trade in West Africa and Nigeria in particular. These markets emerged as organised centres where pastoralists, livestock traders, butchers, and consumers meet to exchange animals and related products. Over time, Kara markets evolved into vital economic institutions that facilitate the distribution of livestock from pastoral production zones to urban and rural consumption centres. Their growth has been closely connected to pastoral mobility, regional trade networks, and the expansion of urban meat demand. Historically, livestock trade in West Africa predates colonial rule and was deeply embedded in trans-Saharan and regional trading systems. Pastoral communities such as the Fulani (Fulɓe) traditionally engaged in cattle rearing and seasonal migration across vast territories in search of pasture and water. These movements created natural trading points where livestock could be exchanged for agricultural products, textiles, and other goods. As a result, informal livestock trading hubs gradually developed along major routes linking pastoral communities with farming settlements and urban centres (Adamu, 2022). These early trading points later evolved into structured livestock markets that served broader economic functions.

During the pre-colonial period, many traditional rulers and local authorities regulated livestock markets within their domains. Market days were designated, and traders from neighbouring communities gathered to buy and sell cattle, sheep, and goats. These markets contributed significantly to rural economies by providing income opportunities for herders, traders, transporters, and meat processors. In many Yoruba-speaking regions of southwestern Nigeria, including areas that now constitute parts of Kwara State, livestock markets became integrated into existing traditional market systems that served both agricultural and pastoral economies (Akinola & Olatunji, 2021). The colonial era marked a significant turning point in the institutionalisation of livestock markets in Nigeria. Colonial authorities introduced administrative structures that facilitated the regulation of trade and movement of animals. Veterinary services, livestock taxation, and designated grazing reserves were established in some regions to improve animal health and regulate pastoral activities. In addition, colonial economic policies encouraged the development of organised livestock markets to support the growing demand for meat in urban centres such as Lagos, Ibadan, and Ilorin. As road and rail transportation networks expanded, livestock markets became more strategically located along transportation corridors to facilitate the movement of animals across regions (Hassan & Mohammed, 2020).

It was during this period that the term **"Kara market"** gained wider recognition in southwestern Nigeria. The term "Kara" is widely associated with cattle markets predominantly managed by Fulani livestock traders and pastoralists. These markets usually function as specialised trading centres where large numbers of animals are assembled for sale, slaughter, or onward transportation to other markets. Over time, Kara markets developed distinct organisational structures, including leadership systems headed by market leaders or *Sarkin Kara,* who coordinate trading activities and resolve disputes among traders (Bello & Yusuf, 2023). Following Nigeria's independence in 1960, the livestock sector continued to expand due to rapid population growth and increasing urbanisation. The demand for beef and other animal products increased substantially, leading to the growth of major cattle markets across the country. Several Kara markets emerged in different parts of Nigeria, particularly in regions that served as transit points between northern pastoral zones and southern consumption centres. These markets not only supported the livestock economy but also provided employment opportunities for thousands of individuals involved in transportation, feed supply, meat processing, and ancillary services (Adebayo, 2021). In Kwara State, particularly within the Igbómìnà–Èkìtì region, Kara markets developed as part of the broader network of livestock markets that connect northern pastoral communities with southern urban consumers. Traders from northern Nigeria frequently transport cattle to these markets, where they are sold to butchers, middlemen, and retailers who distribute meat to surrounding towns and cities. Over time, these markets became embedded within the rural economic landscape, attracting traders from different ethnic and occupational backgrounds and contributing significantly to local economic development.

However, the expansion of Kara markets has also been accompanied by emerging governance challenges. Rapid urbanisation, population pressure, and increasing competition for land have sometimes created tensions between pastoralists and farming communities. In some cases, poorly regulated livestock markets have been associated with disputes over land use, cattle rustling, and other security concerns. Scholars have noted that the absence of adequate infrastructure, security oversight, and formal regulatory frameworks in some markets can create opportunities for criminal activities to occur within or around market environments (Okoli & Ogayi, 2022). Despite these challenges, Kara markets remain critical components of Nigeria's livestock economy. They provide an essential link between pastoral production systems and consumer markets while sustaining the livelihoods of numerous stakeholders. Understanding the historical development of these markets is therefore crucial for analysing their contemporary role in rural socio-economic dynamics and security issues. From an Islamic perspective, the historical evolution of markets reflects the broader Islamic emphasis on lawful trade, social cooperation, and ethical economic behaviour. Islam encourages the establishment of markets that operate with fairness, transparency, and accountability. When markets function within such ethical boundaries, they contribute positively to economic development and social stability. Conversely, when market environments become associated with injustice or insecurity, Islamic principles support appropriate regulatory interventions aimed at restoring order and protecting public welfare.

Insecurity in Igbómìnà–Èkìtì Land

In recent years, insecurity has emerged as one of the most pressing socio-political challenges confronting many rural communities in Nigeria. The phenomenon has taken different forms across the country, including banditry, kidnapping, cattle rustling, armed robbery, and communal conflicts. Rural regions, which traditionally enjoyed relative peace and communal cohesion, are increasingly experiencing security threats that disrupt economic activities, social stability, and the overall wellbeing of residents. Within this broader national context, **Igbómìnà–Èkìtì land in Kwara State** has not been immune to the growing wave of rural insecurity. Igbómìnà–Èkìtì land, located in the southern part of Kwara State, comprises several towns and villages whose economies depend largely on agriculture, trade, and small-scale commercial activities. Historically, the communities within this region maintained peaceful coexistence among farmers, traders, and pastoralists who interacted through markets and agricultural exchange networks. However, the security landscape in many rural areas of Nigeria has gradually changed over the past decade, largely due to the rise of organised criminal networks, weak law enforcement in remote areas, and increasing socio-economic pressures (Ojo, 2023).

One of the most visible manifestations of insecurity in the region has been the rise of **kidnapping and armed robbery** along rural roads and forest corridors that connect various towns within Igbómìnà–Èkìtì land. These criminal activities have created widespread fear among residents and travelers, thereby affecting mobility, trade, and agricultural productivity. In several cases, farmers have reportedly abandoned their farmlands due to fear of attacks, while traders have become increasingly cautious in transporting goods to and from rural markets (Akinyetun & Adewumi, 2022). Another significant dimension of insecurity in the region is **cattle rustling and livestock-related conflicts.** As livestock trading expanded across different parts of Nigeria, cattle became valuable economic assets that attracted criminal interest. Reports from various rural communities indicate that cattle rustling and disputes between herders and farmers have occasionally contributed to local tensions. These conflicts often arise from competition over land, grazing routes, and access to water resources, particularly in areas where population growth has intensified pressure on agricultural land (Okoli & Ogayi, 2022). Furthermore, the increasing presence of criminal elements within forested areas surrounding rural settlements has compounded the security challenges faced by communities in Igbómìnà–Èkìtì land. Many rural regions in Nigeria contain extensive forests that are difficult for security agencies to monitor effectively. Criminal groups sometimes exploit these environments as hideouts for planning attacks, conducting kidnappings, or transporting stolen goods. The proximity of some rural markets and livestock trading points to such forest zones has raised concerns among local authorities and community leaders about the potential misuse of these locations by criminal networks (International Crisis Group, 2023).

The socio-economic implications of insecurity in the region have been considerable. Agricultural production, which serves as the primary livelihood for many households, has been negatively affected as farmers limit their activities due to safety concerns. Rural trade and market attendance have also declined in some communities because traders and buyers fear travelling through insecure routes. Consequently, the overall economic vitality of the region has been threatened, with ripple effects on household income and food security. In addition to economic impacts, insecurity has also weakened the social fabric of many communities. Traditional systems of communal cooperation and trust, which once facilitated peaceful interaction among diverse occupational groups, have been strained by suspicion and fear. In some cases, misunderstandings between farming and pastoral communities have escalated into broader communal tensions. Scholars have observed that such conflicts are often driven not only by economic

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competition but also by the absence of effective conflict resolution mechanisms and limited state presence in rural governance structures (Adebayo, 2021).

Government authorities and security agencies have made various efforts to address these challenges through patrol operations, community policing initiatives, and policy interventions aimed at improving rural security. In some instances, state governments have introduced regulatory measures targeting specific activities or locations believed to contribute to insecurity, including closer monitoring of livestock markets and movement of animals. While these measures are often intended to restore public safety, they sometimes generate debate among stakeholders who fear potential economic consequences for legitimate traders and pastoralists. From an Islamic perspective, the issue of insecurity constitutes a serious violation of the fundamental objectives of **Sharīʿah**, particularly the protection of life (*ḥifẓ al-nafs*) and property (*ḥifẓ al-māl*). Islam strongly condemns acts that threaten the safety and wellbeing of society. The Qur'an warns against spreading corruption and disorder on earth, emphasising that such actions contradict the divine principles of justice and social harmony. Allah states:

"Do not cause corruption upon the earth after its reformation" (Qur'an 7:56).

This verse underscores the Islamic commitment to peace, justice, and societal stability. Any activity that endangers lives, disrupts lawful economic activities, or creates fear within communities is considered a form of corruption (*fasād*) that must be prevented. Islamic governance traditions also emphasise the responsibility of authorities to ensure public security and protect the rights of citizens. Classical Muslim scholars argued that rulers and administrators bear the duty of safeguarding society from injustice and criminal behaviour. Effective governance therefore requires the establishment of systems that promote justice, regulate economic activities, and prevent exploitation or violence (Kamali, 2023).

Link between Kara Markets and Banditry

The growing concern about rural insecurity in Nigeria has generated scholarly and policy debates regarding the possible relationship between livestock markets—commonly known as Kara markets, and the activities of armed bandits. While Kara markets primarily function as legitimate economic institutions that facilitate livestock trade, some studies and security reports suggest that certain poorly regulated markets may inadvertently create opportunities for criminal networks involved in cattle rustling, banditry, and illicit trade. Understanding this relationship is important for analysing the broader dynamics of rural insecurity in regions such as Igbómìnà–Èkìtì land of Kwara State. One of the major ways in which Kara markets become linked to banditry is through the sale and distribution of rustled cattle. Cattle rustling has become a significant component of banditry operations in several parts of Nigeria. Armed groups often raid rural settlements and pastoral communities to steal livestock, which they later attempt to sell in distant markets in order to convert the stolen animals into cash. Livestock markets therefore become potential outlets for disposing of rustled animals when there are inadequate mechanisms for verifying ownership or tracking livestock movements (Shehu et al., 2024). Security reports from different parts of northern Nigeria illustrate this pattern. In some cases, government authorities have closed cattle markets after discovering that bandits were allegedly selling stolen cattle in these locations. For example, authorities in Zamfara State temporarily shut down several cattle markets after intelligence reports indicated that armed bandits were using them to trade rustled livestock. Such measures demonstrate how livestock markets can sometimes become entangled in broader security challenges when effective monitoring systems are absent.

Another dimension of the connection between Kara markets and banditry relates to logistical and communication networks. Livestock markets typically attract large numbers of traders, transporters, brokers, and buyers from different regions. While this diversity contributes positively to economic exchange, it can also provide opportunities for criminal actors to blend into commercial environments. In some situations, bandits or their collaborators may use market gatherings to gather information about livestock movement, negotiate transactions for stolen animals, or establish contacts with intermediaries who facilitate the sale of rustled cattle. Scholars examining rural markets in conflict-prone regions have observed that the lack of proper regulatory systems—such as livestock identification, documentation of ownership, and surveillance of transactions—can increase the vulnerability of livestock markets to criminal exploitation. Where such regulatory mechanisms are weak or absent, it becomes difficult for authorities or traders to distinguish legitimately owned animals from stolen ones. Consequently, criminal groups may attempt to exploit these institutional gaps to integrate stolen livestock into the formal market system (Atser et al., 2023).

Banditry also affects Kara markets in another significant way: the disruption of legitimate commercial activities. Armed attacks on rural communities and trading routes often create fear among livestock traders and market participants. In some regions of Nigeria, bandit attacks have forced traders to abandon markets temporarily, leading to declining economic activity and loss of livelihood among those who depend on the livestock trade. In extreme cases, markets have been deserted after repeated attacks or threats from criminal groups operating in surrounding forests and rural areas. However, it is important to emphasise that Kara markets themselves are not inherently criminal institutions. The majority of traders operating within these markets engage in lawful economic activities that contribute significantly to food supply chains and rural livelihoods. Many market associations have internal mechanisms for verifying livestock ownership and reporting suspicious transactions to authorities. For instance, some traders rely on established networks that track the origin of cattle transported from different regions, thereby helping to identify potentially stolen animals before they are sold in the market (Okere, 2021). The challenge therefore lies not in the existence of Kara markets but in the governance and regulation of these markets. When markets operate without adequate oversight, they may become vulnerable to exploitation by criminal actors involved in cattle rustling and banditry. Conversely, when effective monitoring systems are implemented—such as livestock documentation, surveillance, and collaboration between market leaders and security agencies—the likelihood of criminal infiltration can be significantly reduced. From an Islamic perspective, any economic activity that facilitates injustice, theft, or harm to society is strongly condemned. Islam emphasises the protection of property (*ḥifẓ al-māl*) and the preservation of public security (*ḥifẓ al-nafs*) as fundamental objectives of the Sharīʿah. Activities such as cattle rustling, theft, and banditry clearly violate these principles because they involve unlawful appropriation of property and the creation of fear within communities. The Qur'an strongly warns against acts of corruption and disorder that undermine social stability:

> Indeed, the penalty for those who wage war against Allah and His Messenger and strive to spread corruption in the land… (Qur'an 5:33).

Islamic governance traditions therefore support the regulation of markets in order to prevent injustice and protect the welfare of society. Historically, the institution of *ḥisbah* ensured that market activities were supervised to prevent fraudulent practices, theft, and exploitation. Applying similar principles in contemporary contexts would involve strengthening institutional oversight, improving livestock tracking systems, and promoting ethical commercial conduct within livestock markets.

Islamic Perspective on the Protection of Life and Property

1. The Sanctity of Life

In Islam, human life is sacred. The Qur'an makes this very clear, equating the unjust killing of one person to killing all of humanity:

> Whoever kills a soul unless for a soul or for corruption in the land, it is as if he had slain mankind entirely" (Qur'an 5:32, Yusufali, 1991/2008).

This tells us that life cannot be taken lightly, and any act of violence must be carefully justified within the law of Sharīʿah, such as self-defence or judicial punishment. Life is not just a personal right, it is a trust from Allah that society is collectively responsible for protecting (Kamali, 2020).

The Prophet Muḥammad (peace be upon him) reinforced this principle, saying:

> A Muslim is one from whose hand and tongue people are safe" (Sahih al-Bukhari, Hadith 10, translated).

In other words, each of us has a duty to ensure that our actions, and even our words, do not harm others. Safety and respect for life start with individual responsibility.

2. Respecting Property

Just as life is sacred, so is property. Islam sees property as a trust that must be protected. Taking or damaging someone else's belongings unjustly is forbidden. The Qur'an warns:

> Do not consume one another's wealth unjustly or send it [in bribery] to the rulers in order that you may knowingly consume a part of people's wealth (Qur'an 2:188, Yusufali, 1991/2008).

The Prophet (peace be upon him) also emphasised this connection between safety and property, saying:

> The Muslim is the one from whose hand and tongue the Muslims are safe, and the believer is he from whom the people's wealth and blood are safe (Ibn Mājah, Hadith 225, translated).

So, protecting property is not just about avoiding theft, it is part of a broader moral responsibility to prevent harm and maintain trust in society.

3. A Shared Responsibility

Islam does not leave protection of life and property to individuals alone. Communities and leaders share the responsibility. The Qur'an instructs:

> O you who believe, be persistently standing firm in justice, witnesses for Allah, even if it be against yourselves, your parents, or your kin (Qur'an 4:135, Yusufali, 1991/2008).

This means that society must create systems, like courts, policing, and governance, that protect people and ensure fairness. Historically, Islamic governments established laws and enforcement mechanisms to keep citizens safe and safeguard property, recognising that security is a cornerstone of justice (Al-Khaṭīb, 2021).

4. Ethical and Social Dimensions

Beyond laws and rules, Islam encourages everyday ethics. We are expected to help one another, prevent harm where possible, and treat others' lives and belongings with respect. Social harmony comes from both the legal system and a shared culture of care and responsibility (Sajid, 2022).

Government Intervention and Market Closure

Markets in the Igbómìnà–Èkìtì region, like in many parts of the world, serve as vital centres for economic activity, cultural exchange, and social interaction. In Islam, markets (suq) are not only economic spaces but also social institutions that must operate within ethical and legal boundaries. The Qur'an emphasises justice, fairness, and the prevention of harm in trade, stating:

> Woe to those who give less [than due], who, when they take a measure from people, take in full. But if they give by measure or by weight to them, they cause loss (Qur'an 83:1–3, Yusufali, 1991/2008).

Government intervention in markets can take various forms, including regulation, monitoring, or even temporary closure. In Nigeria, authorities have sometimes closed markets to prevent the spread of disease, curb insecurity, or address socio-political unrest (Ojo, 2022). From an Islamic perspective, such measures align with the principle of **maslahah**, which prioritises public interest and safeguards life, property, and community welfare (Kamali, 2020). Market closures are particularly relevant in regions affected by banditry or violent crime. They act as preventive measures to protect traders, customers, and surrounding communities. While closures may temporarily disrupt livelihoods, they help to avert greater harm, reflecting the Sharīʿah principle of **minimising harm while maximising benefit** (Hallaq, 2019). The Prophet Muḥammad (peace be upon him) emphasised both the protection of life and property, stating:

> The Muslim is one from whose hand and tongue the Muslims are safe, and the believer is he from whom the people's wealth and blood are safe (Ibn Mājah, Hadith 225, translated).

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This highlights that government authorities, alongside individuals, share responsibility for maintaining safety and justice.

Effective intervention requires a balance between public safety and economic continuity. Sudden or prolonged market closures can negatively affect traders' livelihoods, increase poverty, and strain social cohesion. Therefore, adaptive measures such as staggered trading hours, community policing, and improved surveillance can help maintain market activity while reducing risks. This approach reflects the Islamic value of **wasatiyyah**, or moderation, ensuring that protective measures do not create unnecessary hardship (Sajid, 2022). Moreover, engaging traders and community members in decision-making fosters transparency, accountability, and trust. Islamic governance emphasises consultation (shūrā) and equitable action, particularly when measures affect livelihoods and social stability (Al-Khaṭīb, 2021). By integrating ethical principles with practical security strategies, government interventions can protect life and property while sustaining the economic vitality of markets.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The protection of life and property is a core principle in Islam, forming the foundation of social justice, ethical governance, and community wellbeing. Markets, such as those in the, Igbómìnà–Èkìtì region, are essential economic and social institutions. However, they are also spacing vulnerable to insecurity, crime, and other threats. Government interventions, including temporary market closures, are therefore both practical and ethically justified under the Sharīʿah principle of maslahah, which prioritises public interest and the safeguarding of lives and property. While closures may disrupt economic activities, they are often necessary to prevent greater harm, such as banditry, robbery, or social unrest. Islamic teachings emphasise balance and moderation (wasatiyyah), highlighting those interventions should minimise harm while maximising benefit. Effective governance, therefore, requires a careful blend of security measures, community engagement, and ethical considerations to maintain trust, protect livelihoods, and ensure the overall welfare of society. Based on the discussion, the following recommendations are proposed to improve market management, security, and community welfare:

1. Authorities should implement robust policing, surveillance, and community-based security initiatives to reduce risks in market spaces without resorting to prolonged closures.
2. Introducing staggered trading hours or rotational market days can allow economic activity to continue while limiting exposure to insecurity or overcrowding.
3. Traders, market associations, and local residents should be involved in decisions regarding closures or regulations to ensure interventions are context-sensitive and socially accepted.
4. Policies should align with Islamic teachings on protection of life and property, justice, and fairness, ensuring that measures respect human dignity and livelihoods.
5. Community programmes should educate market participants on personal and collective responsibilities for safety, ethical trading, and cooperation with authorities, reinforcing a culture of trust and social cohesion.
6. Authorities should develop clear protocols for temporary market closure, including communication strategies, support for affected traders, and mechanisms to resume operations quickly once risks are mitigated.

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