

Integrating Islamic Ethical Values to Improve Public Perception of NURTW Members in Ibadan Metropolis

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ABSTRACT

Public perception of members of the National Union of Road Transport Workers (NURTW) in Nigeria has long been associated with negative stereotypes, including aggression, unprofessional conduct, and disruptive behavior in public spaces. Such perceptions have contributed to the stigmatization of the profession despite its significant role in the transportation sector and urban mobility. This study aims to examine prevailing public perceptions regarding the behavior and professionalism of NURTW members in Ibadan Metropolis and to explore how the integration of Islamic ethical values may contribute to improving their conduct and public image. The research employed a qualitative approach using Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) conducted with NURTW members in four major transport hubs in Ibadan: Ojoo Garage, Iwo Road Bus Terminal, Ajimobi Motor Park (Challenge), and the New Motor Park in Apata. Each FGD involved five participants who shared their experiences, perceptions, and views regarding professional conduct and ethical values. The findings reveal that although NURTW members are widely perceived as aggressive and unprofessional, many participants attributed such behaviors to work-related pressures, economic challenges, and the misconduct of a few individuals within the union. Importantly, participants expressed strong support for integrating Islamic ethical principles such as honesty, respect, accountability, and professionalism into their daily practices. The study concludes that structured ethical training, leadership commitment, and community engagement grounded in Islamic values could significantly improve the behavior of union members and reshape public perception of the profession. These findings highlight the potential of ethical frameworks in promoting professionalism within informal transportation sectors.

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INTRODUCTION

The importance of transportation can never be overemphasized for societal development. In Nigeria, National Union of Road and Transport Workers (NURTW) is an umbrella body that coordinates the commercial transportation and its administrative system include the park managers, taxi drivers, three-wheeler riders, bus drivers, motorbike riders, and due collectors. For NURTW members, "Agbero" is common name they are referred to as, which literally means, those who call passengers in Yoruba parlance, and denotes the lowest rank in union. (Fourchard, 2022). However, these agberos detest being referred to as such, because they believe it disparages them and relegates them to the margin, by that, they often distance themselves from such connotations associated with the profession. (Fourchard, 2023) The NURTW is well established under the law; however, it has been the subject of heavy criticisms from the public as a result of the incessant misconducts of its members in the community which has led the public to stigmatize the profession. "The Union" is known to be societal disruption and unrest, especially during the electoral process in Nigeria. (Akinyemi,2023) In other words, the average Nigerian believes this profession is synonymous to causing mayhem and unrest in the society, this is most common perception about the union due to the past and present people have about them. In the light of these, this study intends to investigate the concept of integrating Islamic ethical values into this profession in order to change public perception about them, and improve their professionalism. This study is therefore limited to Ibadan Metropolis, and explores the following research questions: 1) What are the prevalent perceptions and experiences of the public regarding the behavior and professionalism of NURTW members in Ibadan Metropolis? 2) How can the integration of Islamic ethical values influence the behavior and public perception of NURTW members in the Ibadan Metropolis?

In conclusion, to tackle these questions, FGDs were carried out at the following significant garages in the Ibadan Metropolis: 1) The Ojoo garage, 2) Iwo Road bus terminal, 3) Ajimobi Motor Park, 4) The New Motor Park in Apata, Ibadan

After the FGDs at each of the garages, interviews were randomly conducted with some selected members of the public. Finally, transportation is a crucial development, and if some moral explication from the Islamic doctrine can be imbued by the transportation officers, especially the Ibadan chapter, which is the central focus of this study, this can significantly change the perceptions the public and also enhance the professionalism of the NURTW.

Urban transportation workers play a crucial role in supporting mobility and economic activities in many developing countries. In Nigeria, members of the National Union of Road Transport Workers (NURTW) are among the most visible actors in the informal transportation sector, particularly in major cities such as Ibadan. Despite their important role in facilitating urban mobility, public perception of NURTW members has often been associated with negative stereotypes, including aggressive behavior, lack of professionalism, reckless driving, and poor interaction with passengers. Reports from media coverage, public discourse, and community experiences frequently highlight conflicts between transport workers and passengers, as well as issues related to discipline and accountability within the sector. These perceptions have significant implications for public trust, road safety, and the overall image of the transportation industry.

Previous studies on transportation unions and informal transport sectors have primarily focused on issues such as labor organization, urban transport management, and the socio-economic conditions of transport workers. Some studies also discuss behavioral challenges among drivers and union members in relation to regulatory systems and economic pressures. However, limited attention has been given to the ethical dimension that could potentially shape the conduct of transport workers, particularly from a religious or moral perspective. In contexts where religion plays a central role in shaping social values and everyday practices, the integration of ethical principles rooted in religious teachings may offer an alternative framework for promoting professionalism and responsible behavior. Nevertheless, the role of Islamic ethical values in influencing the conduct of transport workers remains largely underexplored in existing studies.

This study aims to examine prevailing public perceptions regarding the behavior and professionalism of NURTW members in Ibadan Metropolis and to explore the potential role of Islamic ethical values in improving their conduct and public image. Unlike previous studies that focus primarily on economic or institutional factors, this research emphasizes the ethical and moral dimensions of professional behavior. By examining the perspectives of union members themselves, this study seeks to provide a deeper understanding of the challenges they face and the possibilities for behavioral transformation through ethical guidance.

Therefore, this study argues that the integration of Islamic ethical values—such as honesty, respect, accountability, and responsibility—can serve as an important framework for improving professionalism among NURTW members. Through qualitative inquiry using Focus Group Discussions conducted in several major transport hubs in Ibadan, this research seeks to demonstrate that ethical awareness and value-based training may contribute to transforming both individual behavior and public perception of transport workers in the informal sector.

OVERVIEW OF NURTW

In most Nigerian garages, the National Union of Road Transport Workers (NURTW) has taken the position of local governments as the primary transportation union (Fourchard, 2023). It is a part of the Nigeria Labour Congress (NLC), which was founded in 1978 as the only trade union hub by military mandate. A new radical leadership assured continued union autonomy and militancy with frequent conflicts with the state, even if the merger of previously opposing centers was a ploy to strengthen state control. (Beckam *et al.* 2023) The union was formed during the Second Republic. (Omobowale 2008) According to Fourchard, the union is referred to as "*agbero*" throughout the community. The phrases "*agba*" and "*ero*," which signify commuter receivers, are where the word "*ero*" gets its meaning. (Fourchard, 2023).

The system is structured in such a way that it is dominated by males. These *agberos* collect dues at motor parks and report to the heads of the various branches, while the branch heads also remit dues in a hierarchical chain. Interestingly, they retain their share after meeting the daily targets. (Sulaimon, 2024) In other words, members of the public have preconceived notions about the NURTW members due to their unruly activities. In some areas, the NURTW profession is a curse that people fervently pray against. Hardly any media in the nation would not report one or two social vices perpetrated by the members of "The Union". Moreover, Fourchard notes that the general public's perception of the NURTW has been unfavorable. This is because the union is perceived as being more focused on serving the interests of street bureaucrats than on representing the interests of its members, and it is linked to acts of violence

and money laundering against drivers, as well as networks of political patrons. (Fourchard, 2023).

The Role of NURTW in Political and Social Unrest in Oyo State: Historical Context and Factionalization

20 years ago, Oyo state experienced significant political and social unrest unleashed by the members of NURTW, particularly in the Ibadan metropolis. (Omobowale & Fayiga, 201) To some specialists, this union is perceived as a criminal organization, (Fourchard, 2011) this occurred as a result of the majority of its members engaging in electoral violence, producing chaos and bloodshed during faction conflicts, (Agbiboa, 2022) and persecuting and killing political dissidents (Omobowale 2008), and this was particularly evident during the godfatherism conflict between Alhaji Adedibu and Senator Adewolu Ladoja in Oyo State. Due to internal conflict over the management of vehicle parks, this professional association in Oyo State was annexed for violent crimes. (Animasawun, 2013) There were two main lines of division within the National Union of Road Transport Workers (NURTW) before the 2003 state gubernatorial elections. Alhaji Lateef Akinsola, also known as Tokyo, commanded one party, while Alhaji Wasiu Abubakar, also known as Tawa, led the other.

This factionalism was a result of a power tussle within the union and the active role of two major political aspirants who wanted to use the union for political gain. The former enjoyed the patronage of the candidate of the Alliance for Democracy (AD), Alhaji Lam Adesina, While the latter had a wide range of support from PDP candidates running for governor, particularly Senator Rasheed Ladoja. Due to a series of physical attacks and unrest before the 2003 gubernatorial election, the union broke into two, with the formation of the "Self Employed Drivers Association of Nigeria," or SEDAN, a split-out organization led by Tawa, while NURTW was under the control of Alhaji Tokyo. As the violence became intense, disrupting public and economic activities, it became glaring that SEDAN was being sponsored by Senator Ladoja, while NURTW was sponsored by Alhaji Lam Adesina (Animasawun, 2013) This and other unreported narratives allude to the fact that NURTW has been a pawn in the hands of political leaders across the nation.

The Creation of Park Management System (PMS) in Oyo State and its activities to date.

On Monday, May 31, 2019, just a couple of days after being sworn in as Governor for the first term in office, Engineer Seyi Makinde proscribed all the activities of the former NURTW under the leadership of Alhaji Abideen Ejiogbe. The Park Management System (PMS) was subsequently introduced in February 2020, meaning NURTW activities were inactive for nearly 9 months until the creation of PMS and this period witnessed the rise of Alhaji Mukaila Lamidi, also known as Auxiliary. It can be argued that Auxiliary's persona was both wonderfully and 'fearfully' made. In 2023, while still basking in the Omitutun 2.0 euphoria and partially wet from the rain at the historic Obafemi Awolowo Stadium, news began flying from pillar to post in the media around the afternoon of May 29, 2023, that His Excellency Governor Seyi Makinde of Oyo State had dissolved the disciplinary committee of the Park Management System (PMS). This information emerged just a few hours after the Governor took the oath of office for his second term. (Ogunbowale, 2024). According to Punch Newspaper, on May 7, 2024, the DSS arrested an Oyo motor park leader at his residence in the Olodo area of Ibadan around 4:00 pm on Tuesday. (Punch, 2024) The Commissioner of Police, Adebola Hamzat, while briefing journalists at the command's headquarters in Ibadan, said the command had, on June 2, 2023, declared Mr. Lamidi wanted. The Police Command in Oyo State, on Thursday, paraded a former chairman of Oyo State Park Management System (PMS), Mukaila Lamidi, popularly

known as Auxiliary, over the alleged murder of Mr. Azeez Rahman, whom he stabbed in the chest with a knife at Baba Onilu Shopping Complex, Iwo Road area of Ibadan. He was also alleged to have committed armed robbery and kidnapping. (P.M News, 2024)

Furthermore, on June 3, 2023, Governor Seyi Makinde invited the past and present members of the NURTW to the State Secretariat, House of Chiefs, Agodi, Ibadan, which included Alhaji Tokyo, Ejiogbe, with PMS members led by Auxiliary and others. In his remarks, Ejiogbe stated that the union can influence the peace and stability of the state and is capable of instigating unrest that will distract the sitting government. In his closing remarks, he urged the State Government to ensure that they allow the NURTW to operate in a manner that creates avenues for union leaders to benefit economically without contravening the arrangement of government. Finally, in the remarks of Alhaji Olowoposi at this same meeting, he noted that anyone appointed as a union leader must enter into a formal agreement with the government to adhere strictly to the law of the state to foster a peaceful community. Should they fail to comply, they should face arrest by the government. Lastly, another prominent member of the NURTW, whom Mr. Oriyomi Hamzat referred to as Baba Bola, acknowledged the fact that the union had caused the entire members of Oyo state huge damage in the past as a result of the incessant violence, disrupting public and economic activities, most especially in the Ibadan Metropolis. He sought the forgiveness of the members of the whole state, alluding to the fact that there won't be any problems henceforth. (Makinde, 2023)

Subsequently, on June 4, 2023, Governor Seyi Makinde announced the new Chairman of the PMS. (Vanguard, 2023) Eight months later, after the appointment of the former secretary of the PMS, Mr. Tomiwa Omolewa, as its new Chairman and Mr. Kasali Lawal as secretary in the State and other executive members. (Oyo State Government, 2024)

The Question of Integration and Islamic Ethical Values.

One suggestion to redeem the public perception of NURTW members is to integrate Islamic ethical values into their practices. The general public holds negative views of the union due to various social vices associated with its members, such as their involvement in election-related violence and their often-unrefined behavior towards commuters and passengers. Although the profession itself is essential, a significant number of union members exhibit poor human relations when dealing with the public. People believe NURTW harbors criminals and street urchins, leading families to caution their wards against imitating the union members' characters. This negative perception is reinforced by reported illicit activities associated with the union. Islam appreciates individuals who strive to earn their livelihood and frown upon begging and laziness. On this note, Islam disapproves of idleness and enjoins Muslims to work for their daily sustenance. Therefore, integrating Islamic ethical values into the NURTW's practices could be a significant step towards improving the public image and societal integration of its members.

Furthermore, integration refers to the merging of two or more racial groupings (components, parts, and others) into one cohesive entity. (Kamus, 2010) It includes the unification or consolidation of two or more racial groups (factors, sectors, etc.), beginning with the traditional Islamic understanding of religion and morality, Muslims need to absorb a wide range of information. (Anas *et al*, 2013) Integration, according to Islamic teaching, includes both Muslims and non-Muslims. Islam fosters the growth of strong bonds between its followers by promoting tolerance, respect, and mutual aid. The success of integration depends on the cooperation, solidarity, and complete commitment of all community members. (Hamzah, 2023)

Going forward, the Quran introduces the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) as the best in ethical values among all men and creatures of Allah. Muslims find the best practices in him and follow his steps. Islamic ethics is referred to as *Al-Akhlāq Al-Islāmiyyah*. This is concerned with good character, the ways of acquiring it and living by it. In general, ethics is the application of moral principles to interactions, actions, and behaviors among people. However, it deals with the issue of appropriate and inappropriate behavior, right and wrong, in Islam. It acts as a set of moral guidelines for how we should interact with Islamic ethics and defines value as "good character," which is influenced by the teachings of the Qur'an, the Sunnah of Prophet Muhammad, and other precedents established by Islamic jurists (Ebrahimi & Yasin, 2017). As a result, Islam offers a comprehensive set of moral principles that guide daily behavior. Islam is full of moral precepts that apply to every facet of modern life, including the family, the individual, politics, the economy, the judiciary, and society. In Islam, labor is valued so highly that it is regarded as a form of devotion in and of itself.

While some individuals mistakenly think that because they devote their lives to worshipping God, they are exempt from working, this is an incorrect understanding of the concept of worship. (Ahmad & Owoyemi, 2012) History has it that all Prophets of Allah are their sources of income, this is an Islamic model, instead of begging. Al-Ghazali refers to the Companion of the Prophet, the extra emphasis on this topic was provided by 'Umar ibn Al-Khattab, who used to say, —Never should anybody among you assume that *du'ā* (supplication) for sustenance without effort will avail him, for heaven never rains gold nor silver (Al-Ghazali, 1988). The early collection of Hadith has numerous examples of the Prophet endorsing work; in fact, the Prophet personally urged Muslims to work. For example, if a man goes to find food for his young children, he is walking in the path of Allah. Furthermore, he is in the way of Allah if he works for his aging parents. Additionally, working for himself to be modest is in the path of Allah; yet, working for pride and boasting is in the way of *Shayṭān*.

As such, NURTW is another noble work, because transportation is a need for human development, however, this union is undoubtedly in need of ethical reformation in Nigeria, especially in the Ibadan Metropolis which is the case study for this article. In other words, Islam frowns at indulging in acts of indecency, such as abusing and cursing others, cheating, fornicating, drinking alcohol, fighting, and instigating unrest in society; these actions are common with the union. From the foregoing, Islamic ethics are firmly grounded in the teachings of Islam, including its precepts, customs, laws, and practices. They are derived from the *Qur'ān* and the *Sunnah*. It explains the distinctions between deeds and sins, *ḥalāl* (lawful) and *ḥarām* (unlawful), good and bad. This circumstance will boost one's motivation, sense of fulfillment, and commitment to life. (Shafique, *et al*, 2015)

Thus, this article, therefore suggests that the NURTW needs to be aware of the following for ethical reform in the union through the lens of Islam. Thus, Islamic ethical values that can be integrated into the NURTW system are suggested below sequel to the interviews with over 30 respondents in Ibadan Metropolis, however, the summary of the responses is given in support of the suggested values during the interview sessions.

Honesty (*Al-Amānah*): Muslims believe that honesty is needed to be successful in life and the hereafter. This is known as *Al-Amānah* which is the bedrock of interaction with the community. Honesty includes the rights of Allah and humans, and their responsibilities related to all other humans and resources. This value is one of the key values that is expected to be upheld by the members of the NURTW. According to a respondent during the interview, she said and I quote:

I believe one of the most honorable Islamic ethical values that NURTW members should exhibit is honesty. Frequently, I have encountered instances of dishonesty among union members. For example, despite agreeing on a transport fare before departure, drivers often increase the fare midway through the journey, exploiting the passenger's lack of alternatives with flimsy and unfounded excuses. This has happened to me numerous times, particularly when returning from work at night from Ojoo Park to Moniya. Such behavior is quite common among them. (Ajadi, 2024)

Thus, honesty is extremely important to human life. The command of the Almighty Allah and His Messenger is to uphold *Al-Amānah* or honesty. All facets of human behavior are connected to it. They ought to carry it out throughout all of their regular activities as a result. The inconsiderate application of *Al-Amānah* is the primary source of social tragedy. Antisocial behaviors abound in societies and include treason, physical assault, attempted rape, rape, domestic abuse, murder, and more. Honesty has a significant part in ensuring the safety, security, protection, and harmony of societies all over the world. (Samsudin & Islam, 2015) This value is crucial in changing public perception about the NURTW.

Respect (*Al-Ihtirām*): Islam acknowledges treating creatures with respect, through acknowledging the inherent worth and dignity of the person, whether he or she shares the religion, race, or ethnic group with you or not, this also extends to the animals. This act means interacting with others in a manner that shows that you have regard for them, their feelings, value their opinions, and rights. In other words, it extends to non-verbal attacks on other people and ensures you maintain proper boundaries without encroaching upon the rights of others. On this, Miss Maryam, a student of the University of Ibadan shared her ordeal with a member of the NURTW in Ibadan:

According to the respondent, she stated that most people I am aware of, including myself find that NURTW in Ibadan is very aggressive and that applies to other members outside Ibadan, they are always unprofessional in their work. They incessantly use foul language and are always quick to get angry over what can be subtly addressed. This makes commuting stressful and unsafe for the public. Furthermore, about how Islamic ethical values can have influence, I believe that values like honesty, respect, and compassion could potentially change their behavior at work and beyond. If these values are genuinely taught practiced, and monitored, it could improve their public image significantly. (Maryam, 2024)

This experience above underscores the need to imbibe the ethical value of respect in interacting with the public. This will go a long way in changing the perception of the public about the profession and changing their lifestyle as well.

Professionalism (*Al-Ihtirāfiyyah*): Islam urges us not just to work hard but to be proactive. It also emphasizes the need to perform our work to the best of our abilities. Muslims need to remind themselves of Islamic professionalism and work ethics in a world where competition and the constant pursuit of advancement and riches are the norm. They don't need to adopt the Muslim way of doing things; rather, they should return to the Islamic method. To thrive in their job and earn a respectable place for themselves in the world of the twenty-first century, they must return to the sunnah (tradition) of all the Prophets. (Hasan, 2024) Sequel to the above, a respondent who is by named Mr. Yekeen, a secondary school teacher of Agricultural Science, recounts his experience during the interview session and I quote:

According to Mr Yekeen, he states that: The general perception is very negative. Many see NURTW members as reckless and unruly. I have personally witnessed so many cases of reckless driving which nearly caused my life. Also, I have witnessed countless physical altercations from this union. In other words, I think Islamic ethical values could provide a moral lifestyle that might enhance them to act professionally. However, this could only be achieved under strong enforcement and regular training. (Yekeen, 2024)

Another respondent recounts:

The respondent revealed that she has witnessed so many times these members of the Union behaving rudely and aggressively, especially towards a passenger who questions them when on high fares or challenges them when they take other routes as against their normal routes. She concluded that their lack of professionalism is a major concern. She stated that teaching them Islamic values like patience, honesty, and respect for those who are Muslims could make a difference, the same thing goes for ethical values in Christianity would assist the Christians among them, but here in Ibadan, Muslims are more in the Union than others. She concluded that these values will help them to understand the importance of treating passengers with a high level of dignity. (Gbadamosi)

Thus, professionalism as an Islamic ethical value demands that one has to be proactive at work and do it to the best of his manner. This in turn applies to the members of the NURTW to be highly professional at work and relate with the public in the best manner. Applying this is a way of integrating Islamic ethical values into the profession.

Self-esteem (*Al-Murū'ah*): Self-esteem is another Islamic ethical principle that is essential for changing the public's attitudes toward the NURTW. Many union members are thought to be involved in social vices and never value their worth. The Arabic term for self-esteem is *Al-Murū'ah*, it refers to the capacity to uphold moral behavior by eschewing a variety of viewpoints, expressions, and actions that could diminish the dignity of people, who are Allah's most excellent creations. (Kamus, 2006) The term can also refer to a person's pinnacle of morals and personality, which signifies the wholeness of their character.³⁶ Islamic psycho-spiritual teachings place moral and spiritual values as one of the main pillars of its teachings, right after faith and worship. From these foundations, self-esteem is constructed. (Al-Mawardi *nd*). Sequel to the above, two of the respondents recount their experiences, which are, Mr. Qadri a businessman who has been at Iwo Road for nearly 20 years said and I quote,

The fellow stated without equivocation that, he has been plying Iwo Road for over years and witnessed every unrest instigated by NURTW, most especially at Iwo Road. He stated further that NURTW members are seen as thugs and troublemakers and politicians use them for thuggery activities and agents of societal instability. He stated further that their involvement in needless fights and the use of uncouth language are common complaints from the public. If stated further, if Islamic ethical values are integrated into their profession, this might help to mitigate their unruly behavior and encourage them to be responsible and improve how they interact with passengers. (Qadri, 2024)

Another respondent who is a civil servant recounts her ordeal and I quote:

He stated that the public has countless fear and mistrust towards NURTW members. People often feel unsafe because of their reckless driving and the manner in way they handle conflicts. As such, he holds that incorporating Islamic ethical principles could be beneficial to them. He emphasized that if these values were sincerely adopted, it could lead to a more respectful and safer environment for commuters. (Fatai, 2024)

The foregoing are indications that if union members can integrate the ethical value of Self-esteem into their professional and personal life affairs, it will give a positive perception of them in the public.

Goodness (*al-Ihsān*): The phrase "*al-Ihsān*" refers to generosity or kindness of any kind toward any creature of Allah; yet, the definition of *al-Ihsan* varies depending on the personality, rights, and standing of the recipient of the kindness. (Kadhim, *et ai* 2017) The best of you in conduct is the noblest of you in God's eyes, according to the Qur'an (49:13).

These values serve as the basis of the Islamic ethics that should be integrated by individual members of the NURTW members.

DISCUSSION ON FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION WITH SELECTED MEMBERS OF NURTW, IBADAN METROPOLIS.

In this section, the discussion on the FDGs that took place at four major motor parks of Ibadan—the Ojoo garage, the Iwo Road bus terminal, the Ajimobi Motor Park, and the New Motor Park in Apata— are examined. Selected members of the NURTW were present during the conversation. It should be noted that it was not an easy task to gather the union members for FDGs due to the nature of their job as they were monitoring the vehicles leaving and coming into the park to be able to collect the park dues, while those who are commuters were after the turn of loading their vehicles to transport the passengers. The author conducted the FDGs, Mustapha Ridwan with 4 members of the research team. Before we started, we explained the purpose of the FDGs and what we intended to achieve. The team explained that four major parks were selected for the FDGs, and at the end of the research, we made it known to them that it is our focus to create a framework with the research so that the public can have a positive perception about NURTW. Thus, they agreed to participate in the exercise. The team only included the Muslims during the session. Hence, the team was able to gather 5 members across the four parks we visited.

Focus Group Discussion Findings

To explore public perceptions regarding the behavior and professionalism of members of the National Union of Road Transport Workers (NURTW) and the potential role of Islamic ethical values in shaping their conduct, Focus Group Discussions (FDGs) were conducted in four major transport hubs within Ibadan Metropolis: Ojoo Garage, Iwo Road Bus Terminal, Ajimobi Motor Park (Challenge), and the New Motor Park in Apata. Each FGD involved five NURTW members who shared their experiences and perspectives regarding public perceptions and the potential integration of Islamic ethical values in their professional conduct.

Public Perceptions and Experiences

The findings across the four locations reveal a relatively consistent pattern regarding public perceptions of NURTW members. Participants generally acknowledged that the public often perceives them as aggressive, unprofessional, and sometimes reckless in their interactions

and driving behavior. However, participants emphasized that such perceptions often fail to consider the difficult working conditions they face daily.

At **Ojoo Garage**, participants explained that their interactions with passengers are frequently influenced by job-related stress, demanding schedules, and pressure to meet daily financial targets. Some participants admitted that the actions of a few individuals within the union contribute significantly to the negative image of the entire group. They emphasized that while many members strive to maintain professionalism, the misconduct of a minority tends to overshadow these efforts. Participants also pointed out that aggressive responses sometimes arise from disrespectful treatment by passengers.

Similarly, discussions at **Iwo Road Bus Terminal** revealed that members are aware of the negative stereotypes associated with their profession. Participants acknowledged that although some members exhibit undesirable behavior, the majority attempt to perform their duties responsibly. They also indicated that competitive pressures within the transportation sector often compel drivers to prioritize speed and efficiency, which may be perceived by the public as reckless driving.

At **Ajimobi Motor Park in Challenge**, participants highlighted the various pressures influencing their professional behavior, including interactions with regulatory agencies such as the Oyo State Road Transport Management Authority (OYRTMA) and law enforcement officials. These pressures, combined with the need to meet strict schedules, were cited as contributing factors to the aggressive driving styles sometimes observed among union members. Nevertheless, participants recognized that the union's public image remains largely negative and expressed a willingness to improve it.

Similarly, participants at **The New Motor Park in Apata** acknowledged the existence of negative public perceptions regarding their professionalism. They explained that financial challenges and intense competition within the transport sector often create stressful working conditions that affect their behavior toward passengers. Despite these challenges, participants emphasized that many members are actively attempting to change the negative perception associated with the union.

Overall, across all four locations, participants recognized that while certain individuals contribute to the negative reputation of the union, many members are committed to improving their professional conduct and rebuilding public trust.

Table 1. Summary of Focus Group Discussion (FGD) Findings at Major Motor Parks in Ibadan

Location of FGD	Participants	Main Issues Discussed	Key Findings	Analytical Interpretation
Ojoo Garage	5 NURTW members	Public perception, work pressure, passenger interaction	Participants acknowledged that NURTW members are often perceived as aggressive and unprofessional. However, they explained that job stress, financial pressure, and demanding schedules often influence their behavior. Misconduct by a minority of members also contributes significantly to the union's negative image.	Negative perceptions are partly shaped by structural working conditions and individual misconduct. Institutional support and behavioral regulation are needed to improve professionalism.

Iwo Road Bus Terminal	5 members	NURTW	Professional conduct, competition in transport sector	Participants recognized the existence of negative stereotypes about their profession. They indicated that intense competition among drivers and the need for efficiency often lead to behavior that the public interprets as reckless driving.	Economic competition within the transportation sector influences driving behavior and professional interactions.
Ajimobi Motor Park (Challenge)	5 members	NURTW	Institutional pressure and regulatory interaction	Participants emphasized that interactions with regulatory agencies and strict operational demands contribute to aggressive driving behavior. Despite this, members acknowledged the need to improve the public image of the union.	External institutional pressures play an important role in shaping professional conduct among transport workers.
New Motor Park Apata	5 members	NURTW	Economic challenges and passenger relations	Participants admitted that financial difficulties and intense competition create stressful working conditions that influence their interactions with passengers. Many members expressed willingness to change negative perceptions associated with the union.	Financial pressure and job insecurity contribute to behavioral stress and affect service quality.

Influence of Islamic Ethical Values

Participants across all locations responded positively to the idea of integrating Islamic ethical values into their professional practices. They widely agreed that values such as honesty, respect, integrity, accountability, and professionalism could significantly improve their interactions with passengers and enhance the public perception of the union.

At **Ojoo Garage**, participants emphasized that the integration of Islamic ethical values could foster mutual respect between drivers and passengers. They suggested that the union leadership should organize regular training and sensitization programs on ethical conduct and establish monitoring mechanisms to ensure compliance. Participants also stressed the importance of leadership commitment in promoting ethical standards.

At **Iwo Road Bus Terminal**, participants similarly highlighted the need for continuous education on Islamic ethical principles. They argued that such training should not only be theoretical but also practical, enabling members to apply ethical values in their daily work. One participant cited the example of the Prophet Muhammad's leadership during the Treaty of Ḥudaybiyyah to illustrate how leadership by example can inspire ethical behavior among followers.

Participants at **Ajimobi Motor Park** also emphasized the importance of leadership in promoting ethical conduct within the union. They argued that leaders must embody the values they promote, as this would encourage members to emulate their behavior. Additionally, participants suggested that community feedback mechanisms could help identify areas for behavioral improvement.

Similarly, at **The New Motor Park in Apata**, participants expressed strong support for initiatives that promote Islamic ethical values among union members. They emphasized that regular training, leadership example, and public awareness campaigns could contribute to positive behavioral change and help reshape the public image of the union.

In general, participants across all locations agreed that the integration of Islamic ethical principles could serve as a transformative framework for improving professionalism among NURTW members. They emphasized that such values, when supported by proper training, leadership commitment, and community engagement, could significantly enhance both individual conduct and the overall reputation of the union.

Table 2. Integration of Islamic Ethical Values in Professional Conduct

Ethical Theme	Participant Perspectives	Expected Impact on NURTW Behavior	Islamic Interpretation	Educational
Honesty (Sidq)	Participants agreed that honesty in fare collection and communication with passengers is essential.	Builds public trust and improves the credibility of transport workers.	Honesty is a fundamental Islamic ethical value guiding social interactions.	
Trustworthiness (Amanah)	Members emphasized the need for responsibility and reliability in their professional duties.	Encourages accountability and professional discipline.	Amanah represents moral responsibility in both personal and professional life.	
Respect (Ihtiram)	Participants highlighted the importance of mutual respect between drivers and passengers.	Reduces conflicts and improves service interactions.	Respect strengthens social harmony within Islamic ethical teachings.	
Leadership Example (Uswah Hasanah)	Members emphasized that union leaders must demonstrate ethical behavior to inspire others.	Ethical leadership can influence behavioral transformation among members.	Islamic pedagogy emphasizes moral guidance through exemplary leadership.	
Ethical Training and Awareness	Participants suggested regular training and sensitization programs within the union.	Improves professional conduct and public perception of the union.	Ethical education functions as character formation (<i>tarbiyah al-akhlaq</i>).	

Analysis from the Perspective of Islamic Education

From the perspective of Islamic education, the behavioral challenges experienced by members of the National Union of Road Transport Workers (NURTW) in Ibadan can be understood as a reflection of the limited internalization of ethical and moral values in professional life. Islamic education emphasizes not only the acquisition of knowledge but also the formation of character (*tarbiyah al-akhlaq*) and moral responsibility in social interactions. The findings of this study indicate that many of the behavioral issues attributed to NURTW members—such as aggressive interactions, lack of professionalism, and reckless conduct—are closely related to external pressures, economic struggles, and the absence of structured ethical guidance. In Islamic educational philosophy, moral conduct is considered an integral part of human development, where ethical awareness guides individuals to act responsibly in both personal and professional domains.

Furthermore, Islamic education promotes the concept of *akhlaq al-karimah* (noble character) as the foundation of social harmony and justice. Values such as honesty (*sidq*),

trustworthiness (*amanah*), respect (*ihitiram*), and accountability (*mas'uliyah*) are central teachings in Islam that regulate human interactions within society. The responses from NURTW members across the different transport hubs demonstrate a recognition of these values and their potential to improve interactions with passengers and the broader public. This suggests that ethical frameworks rooted in Islamic teachings could serve as an effective mechanism for transforming professional conduct, particularly in communities where religion significantly influences social norms and daily practices.

In addition, Islamic education highlights the importance of exemplary leadership (*uswah hasanah*) in shaping ethical behavior. The emphasis by participants on the role of union leaders in modeling ethical values reflects a core principle within Islamic pedagogy, where moral guidance is often transmitted through practical example rather than mere instruction. When leaders demonstrate integrity, fairness, and respect in their actions, these behaviors are more likely to be internalized by members of the organization. This approach aligns with the Prophetic model of leadership, where moral example served as a primary method of ethical education and community transformation.

Therefore, integrating Islamic ethical values into the professional training and organizational culture of NURTW can be viewed as an extension of Islamic educational principles in real-life social contexts. Such integration may not only improve individual behavior but also contribute to reshaping public perceptions of the union. By incorporating ethical education, leadership accountability, and community engagement, the transportation sector could benefit from a value-based framework that promotes professionalism, social responsibility, and harmonious relationships between transport workers and the public.

CONCLUSION

This study highlights the significant roles of integrating Islamic ethical values into the practices of members of the National Union of Road and Transport Workers (NURTW) in the Ibadan Metropolis. The FGDs were conducted at key bus stations such as Ojoo, Iwo Road, Ajimobi Motor Park, and New Garage Park Apata while interview was conducted with individuals with passengers after conducting the FGDs. From the survey, the research found that aggressive and unprofessional behavior among union members is often linked to external pressures like tight schedules and financial difficulties. The participants, however, noted that integrating Islamic values, such as respect, honesty, and integrity, coupled with leadership by example and continuous training, has the potential to significantly improve professionalism. This, in turn, would help reshape the public's negative perception and enhance the overall image of the profession.

Therefore, I humbly submit that the Islamic ethical norm is the magic bullet that could offer a framework for resolving the disorderly and disruptive conduct of NURTW members toward the general public. To do this, community involvement, public awareness campaigns that center around these Islamic ethical principles, as well as frequent training, are required. These measures will help to improve the public perception of NURTW members and considerably boost their professionalism. Thus, the aforementioned strategy would assist greatly in putting an end to the pervading complaints and concerns about the union, and its unruly behavior towards members of the public. It would also enhance the ethical culture that conforms to both Islamic values and societal norms.

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