

Investigating the Feasibility of Islamic Finance in Uzbekistan

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Article Info

Paper Type:

Research Paper

Submitted Received: May 03, 2023

Revised: May 26, 2023

Accepted: June 26, 2023

First Available online: June 29, 2023

Publication Date: June 29, 2023



Cite this document:

Abdullaev, A., Juliana, J., & Bekimbetova, G. (2023). Investigating the Feasibility of Islamic Finance in Uzbekistan. *Review of Islamic Economics and Finance*, 6(1), pp. 63-74.

Abstract

Purpose - This article presents the results of a survey conducted to assess the feasibility of introducing Islamic finance in Uzbekistan. The survey aimed to gather information on public opinion and awareness of Islamic finance in the country, shedding light on the opportunities and challenges associated with implementing an Islamic finance system.

Methodology - The methodology involved a combination of face-to-face interviews and online questionnaires. A total of 2,235 entrepreneurs and 4,938 individuals participated in the survey, while official letters were sent to all 30 commercial banks in Uzbekistan, resulting in responses from 27 banks.

Findings - The survey findings revealed a significant level of interest and demand for Islamic finance in Uzbekistan. Notably, individuals and businesses that have been hesitant to use traditional bank credit services due to religious considerations expressed a strong inclination towards Islamic finance alternatives. However, the survey also identified several challenges that need to be addressed for successful implementation. These include the absence of specific laws regulating Islamic financial products and services, the need for a tailored regulatory framework for banks operating under Islamic law, and the lack of adequately trained specialists in Islamic finance and banking.

Keywords: Islamic Finance, Islamic Bank, Uzbekistan

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1. INTRODUCTION

Islamic finance is a rapidly growing industry that has gained significant attention worldwide due to its principles of ethical and socially responsible investment. The Islamic financial system is founded on the absolute prohibition of the payment or receipt of any predetermined, guaranteed rate of return. According to [Iqbal Zamir \(1997\)](#), the system of Islamic finance prohibits the use of debt-based instruments and the concept of interest. Instead, it promotes risk-sharing, entrepreneurship, and emphasizes the importance of contracts while discouraging speculative behavior. With the global Islamic finance industry expanding at an annual rate of approximately 10%, there is increasing interest in the potential for Islamic finance to contribute to the economic development of countries. The rapid growth of Islamic banking and finance worldwide has brought new opportunities for individuals and institutions seeking to be part of modern banking and economic systems. It allows them to participate in the economic process while earning returns and profits that align with Shariah principles ([Ali, Muhammad Aqib, 2015](#)). The growth of the Muslim population in the world also offers great opportunities for this type of financial activity in the future. Islamic banking has continued to grow rapidly even after the 2008 financial crisis and has expanded beyond the Muslim world to other regions such as Europe and America, and is continuing to develop innovative solutions to meet the demands of Islamic finance (such as credit default solutions that comply with Shari'a).

In response to these recent changes, literature and research on the subject have also been developed, and it is driving the growth of Islamic finance. Islamic financial instruments are developed based on Shari'a laws, and it prohibits the collection or charging of interest, which is known as *riba* ([Mohammed Obaidullah, 2005](#)). Islamic finance also promotes ethical investments in areas that benefit society, such as healthcare, education, and renewable energy. Islamic financial institutions can also promote social and environmental goals indirectly by investing in the social sector to increase the capacity to produce social goods ([Ahmed, Habib, 2015](#)).

[Asutay, Aysan, and Karahan \(2013\)](#) state that a number of non-Muslim countries have established a regulatory and institutional framework that promotes Islamic finance, with some countries such as the UK, France, and Luxembourg being at the forefront of these efforts. This has led to other countries following suit and working towards creating a similar environment that is conducive to the growth of Islamic finance. Uzbekistan is one such country that has shown interest in developing Islamic finance as an alternative financial system to conventional banking. Uzbekistan has a predominantly Muslim population, and the government has been taking steps to promote Islamic finance as a means of attracting foreign investment and diversifying the economy. The country has also made several legal and regulatory changes to create a conducive environment for the development of Islamic finance.

To understand the potential of Islamic finance in Uzbekistan and the challenges it may face, a survey was conducted among various stakeholders, including policymakers, financial institutions, and the general public. The purpose of the survey was to identify the level of awareness of Islamic finance, the demand for Islamic financial products and services, and the challenges that need to be addressed for the successful introduction of Islamic finance in Uzbekistan. The survey aimed to provide insights into the perceptions and attitudes towards Islamic finance and to identify areas where improvements are needed to facilitate the growth of the industry.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Islamic finance has gained significant attention in recent years due to its ethical and socially responsible nature. A study on Islamic finance products in Uzbekistan conducted as part of the United Nations Development Program's Development Strategy revealed that religious beliefs, high interest rates on loans, and complexity of lending were the primary reasons for not using bank loans in the country. However, the study also found that if an Islamic finance institution is established in Uzbekistan, most of the participants in the survey indicated that they would be likely to use its services. To ensure the competitiveness of Islamic banking among Muslim customers, it is crucial to identify the primary criteria for selecting a bank. This will help to ensure that Islamic banks meet the needs and preferences of Muslim customers. (Ahmad, Wan Marhaini Wan., 2008). The relation between religiosity and bank loan spread survives after we address potential endogeneity issues. The relation is stronger for firms with only one geographic location, suggesting that religiosity of headquarters has a weaker impact on bank loan cost for geographically dispersed firms (He, Wen, and Maggie Rong Hu. 2016).

Conventional banks in Uzbekistan have also expressed their opinion on the establishment of Islamic finance institutions in the financial market, arguing that it would lead to healthy and efficient competition, resulting in an increase and diversification of the country's financial flows (Kutmonov, 2020). The growing need for Islamic banks is due to their restriction of activities harmful to society, reliance on real assets, and the reduction of the risk of financial crises (Hussain & Nizam, 2019). The current global financial crisis and the lack of a clear solution have created a timely opportunity for Islamic banking and finance to emerge as a practical financial system. While some may view this as part of the global Islamic resurgence to modernize Islam's legacy, the interest in this system is primarily driven by the philosophy and value system it offers. Islamic banking and finance is expected to provide a comprehensive approach to addressing real economic issues and a genuine alternative to traditional economic and financial management principles for human welfare and prosperity, making it a promising solution in the current uncertain economic climate (Furqani, Hafas, 2011).

The profit-sharing system involves a partnership between the bank and the business owner where they share the profits and losses in a mutually beneficial relationship. To start a business, the mudharib, or the person with the expertise, requires capital, which the bank provides. The two parties collaborate, with the bank providing capital and the mudharib running the business. The profits from the business are shared based on the ratio agreed upon in the contract. (Algaoud & Lewis, 2003; El-Gamal, 2006). In cooperation with the United Nations Development Program and the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Uzbekistan, a comprehensive survey was conducted among the public, business representatives, and banks to study the opportunities for implementing an Islamic finance system in Uzbekistan (see: <https://islommoliyasi.uz/uz/islom-moliyasi-undp/>). The results of this survey, along with valuable insights, are detailed in Figures 1, 2, 3, and 4 of the article (see: <https://islommoliyasi.uz/uz/islom-moliyasi-undp/>). These figures provide visual representations of the survey data and help in understanding the perspectives and preferences of various stakeholders. Additionally, a private survey was conducted to further explore the potential of Islamic finance in Uzbekistan. The findings of this survey, which consisted of 14 questions and their corresponding answers, are presented in Table 1. The table provides a comprehensive overview of the survey responses and sheds light on the perceptions and attitudes of the participants towards Islamic finance in Uzbekistan. The results of both the comprehensive and

private surveys contribute to a comprehensive analysis of the feasibility of implementing an Islamic finance system in Uzbekistan.

3. METHODOLOGY

The survey conducted in this study utilized a mixed-methods approach, consisting of both quantitative and qualitative data collection methods. The research aimed to investigate the opportunities for implementing an Islamic finance system in Uzbekistan and understand the attitudes and perceptions of consumers and financial professionals towards Islamic finance.

Population: The target population for this study included consumers and financial professionals in Uzbekistan who had knowledge and experience related to banking and financial services.

Unit of Analysis (Sample): The unit of analysis for this study was individual consumers and financial professionals. These participants were selected as the sample for the survey.

Sample Size and Distribution: A stratified sampling strategy was employed to ensure representation from all regions of Uzbekistan. The sample size consisted of 7,200 participants, including 4,938 financial professionals and 2,235 entrepreneurs. The participants were recruited through various channels, including social media platforms, email invitations, and in-person visits to financial institutions. Efforts were made to ensure a diverse sample in terms of age, gender, educational background, and geographical location.

Data Collection: Participants were provided with an online questionnaire that was designed based on existing literature and expert opinions. The questionnaire aimed to collect information on participants' knowledge of Islamic finance, their attitudes towards Islamic financial products, and their preferences for Islamic banking services.

Data Analysis: The survey data was analyzed using descriptive statistics, such as frequency distributions and cross-tabulations, to summarize and present the findings. Inferential statistics, including chi-square tests, were also applied to identify any significant relationships between variables.

Descriptive research is used to analyze data by describing or describing the data that has been collected as it is without intending to make conclusions that apply to the public or generalizations (Sugiyono, 2016). The purpose of descriptive research is to describe the mechanism of a process and create a set of categories or patterns (Priyono, 2016). In addition to the survey, qualitative data was collected through in-depth interviews with experts in the field of Islamic finance in Uzbekistan. These interviews were conducted either in person or via telephone, and were transcribed and analyzed using content analysis techniques to identify common themes and patterns related to the introduction of Islamic finance in Uzbekistan.

Verification research is research carried out to test the truth of existing sciences, in the form of concepts, principles, procedures, propositions, and practices from the science itself (Arifin, 2011), so that the purpose of verification research in this study is to obtain the truth of a hypothesis, carried out through data collection in the field. Research using this method will obtain information from the population and collect it directly at the scene empirically with the aim of knowing the opinion of some of the population towards the object being studied.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of a survey on the introduction of Islamic finance in Uzbekistan can provide valuable information about public opinion and awareness of Islamic finance in the country. According to Groves et al. (2009), survey methodology can help policymakers and industry stakeholders to understand the level of interest and demand for Islamic finance products and services, and can guide the development of strategies and policies for promoting Islamic finance in the country. However, it is important to note that survey results should be interpreted with caution and should not be the sole basis for decision-making (Tourangeau, Rips, 2000). Other factors such as economic and regulatory conditions should also be taken into account when making decisions about the introduction and development of Islamic finance in a country (Haneef, Mirakhor 2009).

The survey on the introduction of Islamic finance in Uzbekistan is important because it helps gauge public opinion and interest in this type of financial system. By understanding the level of support for Islamic finance, policymakers and financial institutions can better assess the potential demand for these services and tailor their offerings accordingly (El-Gamal, 2006). As suggested by Dillman (2011), the tailored design method can be used to create surveys that are specifically targeted to the population of interest and can increase response rates. The results of the survey can also provide valuable insights into the specific features and products that consumers are looking for in Islamic finance (Hasan, Dridi, 2011). For example, if the survey reveals a high demand for Shariah-compliant loans, financial institutions can prioritize the development of these products to meet the needs of their customers (Karim & Hassan, 2001). Krosnick and Presser (2010) discuss the importance of question and questionnaire design in ensuring that surveys produce accurate and relevant information.

Overall, the survey results can help inform the development and implementation of Islamic finance in Uzbekistan, potentially leading to greater financial inclusion and a more diverse financial sector. According to Alreck and Settle (2004), the survey research handbook can provide guidance on best practices for survey design, administration, and data analysis. Additionally, as noted by Couper (2000), web surveys can be a useful tool for conducting surveys in areas where internet access is widespread. In cooperation with the United Nations Development Programme and the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Uzbekistan, a comprehensive survey was conducted among the public, business representatives, and banks to study the opportunities for implementing an Islamic finance system in Uzbekistan (Figure 1,2,3 and 4).

The results of the survey were publicly announced during a session of the Legislative Chamber of the Oliy Majlis dedicated to the issues of "creating legal foundations and developing strategies for the implementation of an Islamic finance system in Uzbekistan." The event was attended by members of parliament, relevant ministries and agencies, economists, experts, and specialists in the field, who discussed the history and current state of Islamic finance, the need for Islamic financial services in Uzbekistan, and the legal and regulatory framework necessary for its implementation (see: <https://kun.uz/en/news/2021/09/03/ministerial-official-explains-why-islamic-finance-is-not-fully-introduced-in-uzbekistan>). Figure 1 below shows the result of this survey.

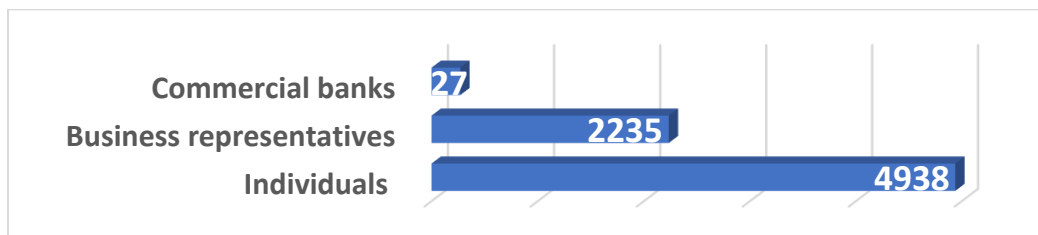


Figure 1. Total members of survey

Source: <https://islommoliyasi.uz/uz/islom-moliyasi-undp/>

The comprehensive survey involved 27 commercial banks, 2,235 entrepreneurs, and 4,938 individuals. To gather data from commercial banks, official letters containing the survey form were sent to all 30 commercial banks in the Republic. Responses were received from 27 banks (along with completed survey forms), providing insights into the perspectives of the banks. For entrepreneurs and business representatives, 1,000 questionnaires were conducted through face-to-face interviews to gather direct feedback. An additional 1,235 questionnaires were conducted online, bringing the total number of surveyed entrepreneurs to 2,235. The public survey was conducted online through the website “<https://islommoliyasi.uz/survey/uz.html>”, with a total of 4,938 individuals participating in the survey.

The results of the survey can provide insights into the opportunities and challenges of implementing an Islamic finance system in Uzbekistan. The survey can provide information on the level of awareness and interest in Islamic finance among businesses, banks, and the public, as well as the legal and regulatory framework needed for its implementation. The results can also help identify potential areas for development and growth of Islamic finance in Uzbekistan, as well as any concerns or obstacles that need to be addressed. Figure 2 below shows the result of this survey.

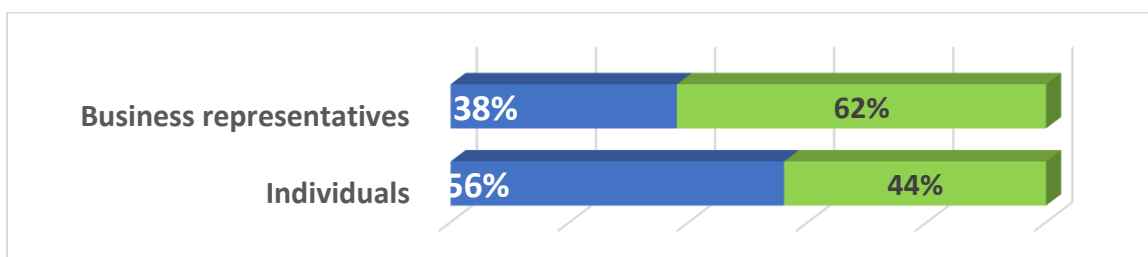


Figure 2. Amount of member not-using traditional banks

In both the face-to-face and online surveys, a significant proportion of respondents indicated that their religious beliefs were a barrier to their use of traditional bank credit services. Specifically, 38% of business entities and 56% of individuals reported that their religious beliefs were the reason they did not use traditional bank credit services. This highlights the potential demand for Sharia-compliant financial products, which are designed to be in line with Islamic principles and may be more attractive to individuals and businesses with religious considerations. By understanding this barrier, policymakers and financial institutions can better understand the needs of their potential customers and design products and services that are more aligned with their values and beliefs. Figure 3 below shows the result of this survey.

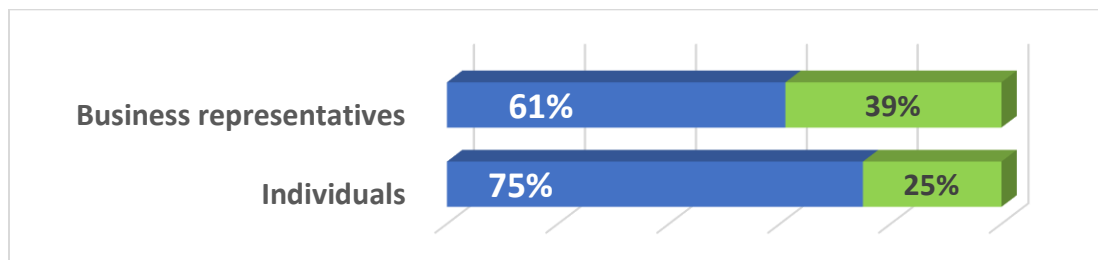


Figure 3. Willing to choose Islamic finance.

The survey found that 61% and 75% of the respondents respectively were willing to choose Islamic financial institutions or use Islamic financial services if they were to be established in Uzbekistan. This suggests that there is significant interest and demand for Islamic finance in the country, and that establishing such institutions could potentially benefit both businesses and individuals who have been reluctant to use traditional bank credit services due to religious reasons.

During the survey, all banks were asked if they supported the implementation of Islamic finance in Uzbekistan, including the opening of Islamic banks, to which all banks expressed their support. Some banks explained that they support the establishment of Islamic banks in the country because they estimate that approximately 90% of the population are Muslims and there is a high demand for such financial products from businesses. Additionally, 67% of banks indicated that the implementation of Islamic finance is highly necessary as it increases competition between financial institutions, develops a market for "halal" products and services, attracts investment from Muslim countries, and contributes to diversification of external and internal investments.

In the conducted survey, banks were asked about the biggest challenges and issues in establishing an Islamic finance system in Uzbekistan. It is noted that:

1. There are no laws regulating Islamic financial products and services, including Islamic insurance (takaful);
2. The current banking and tax legislation is not tailored to banks operating on the basis of Islamic law;
3. The existing regulatory systems in banks are not suitable for carrying out operations related to Islamic finance products;
4. There is a lack of specialists trained in Islamic finance and banking in the higher education system, and there is also a lack of practical experience. Furthermore, public knowledge and understanding of Islamic finance is also insufficient.

Figure 4 below shows the result of this survey



Figure 4. Overall result

Overall, more than 68% of all participants expressed approval for the implementation of the Islamic finance system in Uzbekistan. The majority of Uzbekistan's population adheres to Islam,

and as a result, around 40-50 percent of the population do not use traditional credit systems due to religious beliefs. However, this segment could potentially be fully incorporated into the credit system through Islamic finance. This could provide a great opportunity for economic development by channeling internal investments into the economy, reducing the shadow economy, and most importantly, promoting entrepreneurship.

As part of our research, we conducted a private survey to gather more detailed information and partially re-examine the results of the comprehensive public survey. Private surveys are useful to gain deeper insights into the attitudes and behaviors of a targeted group, and to validate or challenge the results of publicly announced surveys (Denscombe, 2010). The private survey helped us understand the awareness, perception, and adoption of Islamic finance in Uzbekistan among a specific group of respondents. By leveraging the leverage-saliency theory of survey participation (Groves et al., 2000), we aimed to increase response rates and gather more reliable data.

The private survey consisted of 14 questions that covered a range of topics related to our research, including questions related to the demographics of the respondents, their familiarity and opinion on Islamic finance, their usage and preference for Islamic finance products and services, and the barriers and measures required for the adoption of Islamic finance in Uzbekistan.

We are confident that the results of this private survey will add value to our research and contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of the topic. We look forward to sharing our findings with the academic community and other interested parties. The table 1 below lists the private survey questions and results:

Table 1. Questions and result of private survey

| No | Survey Question | Answer | Number of Respondents | Percentage |
|----|---|---|-----------------------|------------|
| | | | 240 | |
| 1 | What is your age range? | 18-24 | 56 | 23,30% |
| | | 25-34 | 74 | 30,80% |
| | | 35-44 | 49 | 20,40% |
| | | 45-54 | 33 | 13,80% |
| | | 55 and above | 28 | 11,70% |
| 2 | What is your gender? | Male | 142 | 59,20% |
| | | Female | 95 | 39,60% |
| | | Prefer not to say | 3 | 1,30% |
| 3 | What is your educational level? | High school or lower | 18 | 7,50% |
| | | Bachelor's degree | 98 | 40,80% |
| | | Master's degree | 86 | 35,80% |
| | | Doctoral degree | 38 | 15,80% |
| 4 | Are you familiar with the concept of Islamic finance? | Yes, I have a good understanding of it | 59 | 24,60% |
| | | Yes, but I don't know much about it | 99 | 41,30% |
| | | No, I have never heard of it before | 82 | 34,20% |
| 5 | What do you think about Islamic finance? | It's a financial system based on Islamic principles | 140 | 58,30% |

| | | | | |
|-----------|---|--|-----|--------|
| | | It's a way of financing for Muslims only | 29 | 12,10% |
| | | It's a type of charity | 4 | 1,70% |
| | | Others | 67 | 27,90% |
| 6 | Do you believe that Islamic finance can contribute to the development of Uzbekistan's economy? | Yes, strongly agree | 65 | 27,10% |
| | | Yes, somewhat agree | 112 | 46,70% |
| | | Neutral | 34 | 14,20% |
| | | No, somewhat disagree | 24 | 10,00% |
| | | No, strongly disagree | 5 | 2,10% |
| 7 | Have you ever used Islamic finance products or services before? | Yes | 45 | 18,80% |
| | | No | 195 | 81,30% |
| 8 | If you answered "yes" to the previous question, which Islamic finance products or services have you used? | Murabaha | 15 | 33,30% |
| | | Musharaka | 6 | 13,30% |
| | | Ijarah | 10 | 22,20% |
| | | Takaful | 5 | 11,10% |
| | | Sukuk | 3 | 6,70% |
| | | Others | 6 | 13,30% |
| 9 | What factors do you think are important when considering using Islamic Bank's products or services? | Shariah compliance | 108 | 45,00% |
| | | Competitive pricing | 42 | 17,50% |
| | | Convenient location | 16 | 6,70% |
| | | Availability of a wide range of products | 36 | 15,00% |
| | | Reputation of the financial institution offering the products/services | 31 | 12,90% |
| | | Others | 7 | 2,90% |
| 10 | How likely are you to use services of Islamic Bank if they were available in Uzbekistan? | Very likely | 108 | 45,00% |
| | | Somewhat likely | 99 | 41,30% |
| | | Not very likely | 29 | 12,10% |
| | | Not at all likely | 4 | 1,70% |
| 11 | What do you see as the biggest advantage of Islamic finance in Uzbekistan? | Ethical and moral aspects: | 120 | 50,00% |
| | | Stability and risk-sharing: | 67 | 27,90% |
| | | Access to new sources of funding | 36 | 15,00% |
| | | Others | 17 | 7,10% |
| 12 | What barriers or challenges do you think exist for the adoption of Islamic finance in Uzbekistan? | Lack of awareness and understanding | 111 | 46,30% |
| | | Limited product offerings | 36 | 15,00% |
| | | Lack of regulatory framework | 53 | 22,10% |
| | | Lack of Shariah scholars | 12 | 5,00% |

| | | | | |
|----|--|--|-----|--------|
| | | Perception of higher costs compared to conventional finance | 21 | 8,80% |
| | | Others | 7 | 2,90% |
| 13 | How do you think the introduction of Islamic finance in Uzbekistan will affect the country's banking industry? | It will disrupt the existing banking industry | 17 | 7,10% |
| | | It will complement the existing banking industry | 187 | 77,90% |
| | | It will have no impact on the existing banking industry | 36 | 15,00% |
| 14 | In your opinion, what measures should be taken to promote the adoption of Islamic finance in Uzbekistan? | Developing a regulatory framework | 96 | 40,00% |
| | | Providing education and awareness campaigns | 65 | 27,10% |
| | | Encouraging financial institutions to offer more Islamic finance products and services | 55 | 22,90% |
| | | Attracting foreign Islamic finance institutions to invest in Uzbekistan | 19 | 7,90% |
| | | Others | 5 | 2,10% |

A total of 240 respondents participated in the survey, with the majority being male (59.2%). The age range of the respondents varied, with the highest percentage falling in the 25-34 age range (30.8%). Over 41% of the respondents had heard of Islamic finance but did not know much about it, while 34.2% had never heard of it before. In terms of the perception of Islamic finance, over half of the respondents (58.3%) correctly identified Islamic finance as a financial system based on Islamic principles. In addition, over 73% of respondents agreed that Islamic finance could contribute positively to Uzbekistan's economy.

While only a small percentage of respondents (18.8%) reported using Islamic finance products or services, a significant proportion (45.0%) stated that they would be very likely or somewhat likely to use these services if available in Uzbekistan. The survey also found that Shariah compliance was the most important factor considered by respondents when using Islamic banks' products or services. It is evident that there is a certain level of familiarity with Islamic finance in Uzbekistan, but there is also a need for more education and awareness campaigns to promote its adoption. Additionally, the development of a regulatory framework would be beneficial in facilitating the growth of Islamic finance in the country.

One of the key findings from the survey is the positive perception of Islamic finance in Uzbekistan. Respondents correctly identified Islamic finance as a financial system based on Islamic principles, and a majority agreed that it could have a positive impact on the country's economy. This indicates a favorable attitude towards the potential benefits of Islamic finance, such as promoting economic growth and financial stability. While the percentage of respondents currently using Islamic finance products or services is relatively low, a significant proportion expressed their likelihood to use these services if they were available in Uzbekistan. This suggests a potential demand for Islamic finance among the population, highlighting an opportunity for

financial institutions to cater to this market segment. The importance of Shariah compliance was emphasized as a key factor for respondents when considering the use of Islamic banks' products or services.

In summary, the survey results provide valuable insights into the current state of Islamic finance in Uzbekistan. The development of a regulatory framework would support the growth of Islamic finance in the country. By addressing these aspects, Uzbekistan can harness the potential of Islamic finance to promote financial inclusion, attract investments, and diversify its financial sector.

5. CONCLUSION

The survey results presented in this article shed light on the intriguing landscape of Islamic finance in Uzbekistan and offer fascinating insights into its potential impact on the country's economy and society. The overwhelmingly positive attitude and willingness expressed by the majority of respondents to embrace Islamic financial products and services reveal a compelling demand for these offerings within Uzbekistan. These findings not only validate the viability of Islamic finance in the country but also present an exciting opportunity for economic growth and development. By capitalizing on the inherent advantages of Islamic finance, Uzbekistan can foster financial inclusion and stability, aligning its financial sector with Islamic principles and values.

One noteworthy aspect highlighted by the survey is the need for greater awareness and education surrounding Islamic finance. This finding resonates with the broader discourse on Islamic political economy, emphasizing the significance of knowledge dissemination and raising awareness. By addressing this need and investing in educational initiatives, Uzbekistan can empower its population with the necessary understanding of Islamic finance, ultimately driving its widespread adoption and reaping its full benefits.

Moreover, the development of a well-crafted regulatory framework tailored to Islamic finance is paramount. Such a framework would provide the essential guidelines and regulations to govern Islamic financial activities, ensuring transparency, accountability, and investor protection. By establishing a robust regulatory environment, Uzbekistan can create an atmosphere conducive to the growth and stability of Islamic finance, attracting domestic and international investments and fostering a diverse and resilient financial sector.

In conclusion, the survey results not only affirm the potential of Islamic finance as a transformative force in Uzbekistan but also underscore the need for strategic actions. Through targeted awareness campaigns, educational initiatives, and the establishment of a supportive regulatory framework, Uzbekistan can unlock the full potential of Islamic finance, driving economic development, financial inclusion, and social progress.

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