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Sharia Issues on Loot Boxes in Online Games and Esport

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Abstract: Online games and esports have attracted Muslims across Southeast Asia. However, this phenomenon has created some issues pertaining to sharia such as purchasing loot boxes while playing online games. Loot box is a feature in online games that produces micro transactions, which generates income for game providers. It represents a mystery box purchased by players while playing games. The concept of buying loot boxes usually involves a purchase of something unknown to the buyer. Since the item of the purchase is unknown, this study aims to examine sharia ruling on purchasing the loot box in online games. This qualitative study applies content analysis and interviews. It reveals that loot boxes purchase is void according to sharia and impermissible. This is due to the fact that it represents gambling, and the sale is not sharia compliant. This study provides guidelines for sharia compliant online games and esports for Muslim in Southeast Asia.

Keywords: Loot box, micro transactions, game items, online games, esports, gambling

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Abstrak: *Game online dan esports telah menarik minat umat Islam di seluruh Asia Tenggara. Namun, fenomena ini telah menciptakan beberapa masalah yang berkaitan dengan syariah seperti membeli kotak misteri saat bermain game online. Kotak misteri adalah fitur dalam game online yang menghasilkan transaksi mikro, yang menghasilkan pendapatan bagi penyedia game. Ini mewakili kotak misteri yang dibeli oleh pemain saat bermain game. Konsep membeli kotak misteri biasanya melibatkan pembelian sesuatu yang tidak diketahui pembeli. Karena barang yang dibeli tidak diketahui, penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji hukum syariah dalam pembelian kotak misteri pada game online. Penelitian kualitatif ini menggunakan analisis kandungan dan wawancara. Penelitian ini mengungkapkan bahwa pembelian kotak misteri adalah tidak sah menurut syariah dan tidak diperbolehkan. Berdasarkan temuan fakta, hal itu mewakili perjudian, dan penjualannya tidak sesuai dengan syariah. Karena itu, studi ini memberikan pedoman untuk game online dan esports yang sesuai dengan syariah bagi Muslim di Asia Tenggara.*

Kata Kunci: *Kotak misteri, transaksi mikro, item game, game online, esports, perjudian*

Introduction

Online game transactions have a large role in the electronic sports industry known as (esport). Online games are not only used as sports activity, but also used as a source of income by some parties. According to a Metro newspaper report dated 27 August 2018, a participant representing Malaysia won second place at the international level by winning RM 16.8 million at The International 8 Dota 2 tournament.¹ The income reaching millions of ringgits proves that online games can be used as a source of income for various parties involved.

The increase in the organising of electronic sports, has led to the emergence of a new economy that involves buying and selling in the virtual world.² According to previous research statistics, the online game market in 2008, reached up to 13 billion US Dollars and more than 40 percent of the revenue will be generated by 2012 with an increase of more than 5.2 billion US Dollars. The sudden increase is one of the proofs of the development of micro transactions. Micro transaction is a concept that involves buying and selling items or elements in a virtual online game.³ Buying and selling in the concept of micro transactions

¹ Hazril Md Noor, "Perkenal Sukan eSport Tarik Minat Orang Muda". *Harian Metro*. 27 August 2018.

² Chua. D. Kainama. N. Adji. M. N. & Feranita. F., "Consumer Preference in Paid Game Microtransaction", *Journal of Research in Marketing*. (2019) 10(3).

³ Tomic. N., "Effects of Micro transaction in Video Games Industry", *Megatrend Revija*, (2017) 14(3): p. 239-257.

involves a certain amount that has been agreed upon by two parties in an online game.

Micro transactions also have a positive impact on overall revenue growth, as a result of hosting an annual esports tournament. According to Statista's official website, which specialises in its research in electronic sports statistics, this increase in income continues to increase until it is expected that in 2020. There will be an increase of 694 million US Dollars compared to 2019.⁴

In addition, esports are also known as games that have a diverse number of participants. All participants can access this internet-based game at the same time. This type of game is known as massively multi-player online role playing games (MMORPG) and has an extensive market in buying and selling transactions using the concept of micro transactions. The market sells virtual items and uses various payment mediums such as payment using virtual money, total game points or tokens.⁵ As a result of the accumulated points, the participants can also buy certain items sold by the organisers or operators in the official website such as the Steam website.⁶

In addition to affecting the economy, the transaction also spawned a network of cooperation between participants from various countries. Good relationships between participants create a social influence that leads to positive attitudes. Cooperation between participants has led to the use of micro-transaction concepts globally.⁷ It also affects the positive increase in the mastery of the second language as an intermediate language to participate in competitions, especially in the international arena.⁸

⁴ Statista, eSports market revenue worldwide from 2012 to 2022 (in million U.S. dollars). accessed on 25 August 2022, <https://www.statista.com/statistics/490522/global-esports-market-revenue/>

⁵ Zhou Li., "Motivation of Virtual Goods Transactions", *Journal of Theoretical and Applied Information Technology*. (2012) 3(2).

⁶ Weanling. X. "Research on China Virtual Products Trading". *Journal of Jinan University, China*. (2007).

⁷ Fan. Cheng Tseng. Han.Chung Huang. & Chin- I teng., "How Do Online Communities Retain Gamers? Social Presence and Social Capital Perspectives". *Journal of Computer Mediated Communication*. 20 (2015). 601-614.

⁸ Klimova.B. Kacet.J., "Efficiency of Computer Games on Language Learning", *The Turkish Online Journal of Educational Technology*. (2017) Oct. 6 (4).

Online Games

Online games are video games that have gone through various phases of development.⁹ This game is popular among people of all ages regardless of gender. The revolutionary boom in the advancement of online games happened in tandem with the development of today's technological world. As a result of the development of this game, the organizing of the game competition developed on a large scale.

Electronic sports also have the involvement of individual or group participants. It is an online video game that uses a computer as a mediating medium. The number of competitions involving online games shows a high increase every year in parallel with the increase in the micro transactions of the game items themselves.¹⁰

Furthermore, the prizes offered to the winners are high, reaching 100 million US Dollars in 2016. According to world statistics, until April 2019, a total of 770 competitions were held in various competition locations. Therefore, based on the increase in the organization, it can be concluded that the buying and selling transactions involved in online games also show an increase in profits every year, starting from 2012 until 2020.¹¹

Loot Box

Loot box is one of the latest and most diverse types of micro transactions in the world of online gaming and esport. There are various types of loot boxes in the market and all use the same transaction concept. The concept used is the concept of selling an item or goods online to a buyer who does not know which item he will get. Loot box not only benefits players, it generates profits to online gaming companies as well. According to Hodge et.al, loot box has as many as 3 billion active players worldwide and its market has reached 150 billion US Dollars in 2021 alone.¹²

Micro transactions are diverse and have a huge market in online gaming. One of the major contributors in micro transaction sales statistics is loot box

⁹ Gates R. Gasper J., "Gamers and Video Game Culture: An Introduction for Counselors". *The Family Journal*. (2016).

¹⁰ Stahlke. S. Babaei. P.M. Robb. J., "The fall of the Fourth Wall: Designing and Evaluating Interactive Spectator Experiences". *International Journal of Gaming and Computer-Mediated Simulations*. 1:1. January- March (2018). p. 43-45.

¹¹ Statista, eSports market revenue worldwide from 2012 to 2022 (in million U.S. dollars), accessed on 25 August 2022, <https://www.statista.com/statistics/490522/global-esports-market-revenue/>

¹² SE Hodge, et.al., "What's in the box? Exploring UK players' experiences of loot boxes in games; the conceptualisation and parallels with gambling", *Plos ONE*, 17(2) (2022).

sales.¹³ There is a micro transaction type of purchase or in-game purchase, which is a transaction that involves buying and selling a virtual product online while the game is being played. Loot box trading transactions have a high trading record, and the purchase of loot boxes is not something that is mandatory for players, however, the purchase can provide various benefits to players. Among the benefits that can be obtained are benefits in terms of aesthetic value, avatar (player profile) and the benefits of the opportunity to advance to the next level in the game. Players also have the opportunity to benefit from a shorter waiting time if they purchase a loot box.¹⁴

Attractive and various offers for loot boxes render players inclined to engage in micro transactions. However, a loot box is likely to give an element of surprise to the player. The decisions made by players in the game can also be influenced by the loot box. Although the items of the loot box are unknown to the players, they tend to buy loot boxes when offered for free at the beginning of the game to attract players to continue buying it at the next level. Player's attitude is also said to be able to influence the goods or items that will be obtained.¹⁵

There are various dubious elements in every loot box purchase. Among them are random elements, luck and fate. Therefore, this study is important in determining the permissibility of purchasing loot boxes in online games according to sharia given that there is an integration of these elements with the element of surprise.

Loot Box and Pay2Win Game

There are various terms referring to loot boxes, among them are mystery box, *gacha* and surprise.¹⁶ Loot box originated in Japan which was launched in 2004. At that time, loot boxes were known as *gachapon*. The word *gacha* is derived from the sound produced by a toy vending machine and the word *pon* is derived from the sound of a capsule coming out of the machine. Later, the word *pon* was dropped and *gacha* represents the loot box which is now increasingly and widely accessed around the world. *Gacha* started to experience a revolution when there were companies that used the same concept and launched it in a well-known online game. The game is included in social media applications to make it accessible to players. Online games like Farmville have included the loot box

¹³ SE Hodge, et.al., "What's in the box? Exploring UK players' experiences of loot boxes in games; the conceptualisation and parallels with gambling", *Plos ONE*, 17(2) (2022).

¹⁴ Interview with esports players: Ainul Hakim bin Fikal Sabillah, Muhammad Luqman Hakim bin Ahmad Khudzir and Muhammad Naim bin Muhammad Hisham, June 13, 2021.

¹⁵ Interview with esports players: Ainul Hakim bin Fikal Sabillah, Muhammad Luqman Hakim bin Ahmad Khudzir and Muhammad Naim bin Muhammad Hisham, June 13, 2021.

¹⁶ S.E. Hodge, "What's in the box? Exploring UK players' experiences of loot boxes in games; the conceptualisation and parallels with gambling", *Plos ONE*, 17(2) (2022).

element which later launched in the Facebook application. As a result, Farmville game manufacturer Zynga has managed to generate profits of up to a billion US dollars.¹⁷ The success has resulted in various other online game manufacturing companies producing various types of loot boxes as a result of the *gacha* revolution.

Loot box is a virtual product purchased through micro transactions.¹⁸ It has an element of luck and chance since players who buy a loot box while playing an online game do not know what will be gained. The purchase of a loot box, better known as in-game purchase, has a price that is in the range of 0.5 US Dollars to 100 US Dollars.¹⁹ There are two types of loot boxes that players can obtain. The first type of loot box involves benefits in terms of aesthetic as well as cosmetic value for the player, while the second type is a loot box that produces items that are important for the player's use.

Players are normally offered a loot box for free at the start of the game to encourage the purchase of another loot box at the next level. The pay2win gives an advantage to loot box buyers to move forward in the new level of the game. If that advantage dominates the overall skills in the game required, the online game is known as a pay2win type game. Pay2win games mostly require a purchase to win the game. Nowadays, loot boxes are often associated with the purchase of pay2win type games. Players do not need to purchase virtual items directly, but rather have the opportunity to acquire virtual goods if players purchase a loot box.²⁰ Most loot boxes contain various types of digital items that allow players to purchase using cash or virtual currency payment methods.

Although the probability of acquiring the desired item in a loot box purchase is low, statistics from previous studies show that loot box purchase transactions are at a high level. Loot box manages to generate revenue of 30 billion US Dollars annually.²¹ Such high statistics show that loot box transactions become one of the lucrative sources of income, apart from having its own fans.

¹⁷ S.T. Wright, *The Evolution of Loot boxes*, accessed on 12 April 2022 <https://www.pcgamer.com/the-evolution-of-loot-boxes/>

¹⁸ F. Steinmetz, et.al., "Pay-to-Win Gaming and its Interrelation with Gambling Findings from a Representative Population Sample", *Journal of Gambling Studies*, (2021).

¹⁹ D. L. King, et.al., "Unfair play? Video games as exploitative monetized services: an examination of game patents from a consumer protection perspective", *Computers in Human Behavior*, 101, (2019), p.131–143.

²⁰ F. Steinmetz, et.al., "Pay-to-Win Gaming and its Interrelation with Gambling Findings from a Representative Population Sample", *Journal of Gambling Studies*, (2021).

²¹ G. A. Brooks & L. Clark, "Associations between loot box use, problematic gaming and gambling-related cognitions", *Addictive Behaviors*, 96, (2019), p. 26-34.

This is further reinforced by a study stating that by 2025, the loot box market is expected to grow to USD 20 billion.²²

The Loot Box Concept

Loot box can also be categorised as a game that depends on luck. Usually, players are offered to buy a loot box while the game is running, and most games have a loot box on each level. Among the items that will be obtained by the player who buys the loot box are, game items, time or skins that are virtual objects that support the player's profile image. Loot box, which has cosmetic value, is the first type of loot box. Such cosmetic value allows players to decorate their own game profile with aesthetic elements. For example, players will acquire skins that can be used to decorate their respective main profiles which in turn will give an interesting impression of their strengths to opponents.

The aesthetic value received by the players may not increase the competitiveness of the players however, it is also likely to be beneficial to the player community. The second type of loot box is a reward that can increase the player's competitiveness with opponents. Players can increase their competitiveness with items or items obtained. This type of loot box can also provide an opportunity for players to win games compared to players who do not purchase a loot box.²³

There are players who receive a loot box for the first time for free. The giveaway lures the player to buy more loot boxes at the next level. The boost given is one of the techniques to encourage players to always be interested in buying a loot box. For some games, players can redeem the winnings with a loot box according to the value earned from the accumulated rewards. The redemption system makes the player more eager to continue the game and get it to the next level to continue with the game. The redemption process can also be done while the game is in progress or after the end of the game session by browsing the website specifically for the game. This also benefits the player when the player can still use it in the next game session because the loot box can be stored in the player's game account.

In addition, the purchase of a loot box depends on luck since the buyer is likely to receive an unwanted type of item. Players also tend to acquire items that have a level of benefit that does not match the required benefit. For example, a player needs certain specific items, however, the loot box purchase makes the player acquire less useful items, in turn, the desired item is not even obtained in

²² Juniper Research, accessed on 25 August 2022, [https://www.juniperresearch.com/press/video-game-loot-boxes-to-generate-over-\\$20-billion](https://www.juniperresearch.com/press/video-game-loot-boxes-to-generate-over-$20-billion)

²³ H. Wardle, "The same or different? Convergence of skin gambling and other gambling among children", *Journal of Gambling Studies*, 35(4), (2019), p. 1109–1125.

the end. This makes the player a loss because the whole concept of buying a loot box depends on the fate of the player himself.²⁴

Apart from purchases involving players with the game provider, loot boxes can also be traded between players. The diversity in the trading methods results in a variety of payment methods. Among the payment methods that can be implemented by players who buy loot boxes is, players can pay it using virtual money, according to the type of game played or cash using real money. The choice of such payment method depends on the type of game. In addition, payment can also be made using credit or debit cards as well as using digital payment companies such as Paypal.²⁵

Analysis on Loot Boxes

Gambling represents betting money or valuable items to obtain something desired, however, the probability is low. This is due to the fact that betting depends on luck. The element of gambling in loot boxes can be clearly seen through the characteristics of gambling games. The purchase of loot boxes encourages players to engage in gambling by buying something unknown. Furthermore, the purchase also has similar features with gambling games where the game requires payment before playing while the purchase involves a loot box, requires players to play first, then payment is required to advance in the game.²⁶ The similarity of the features is in terms of the payouts required to allow the player to proceed to the next process which is not clear what outcome will be obtained.

Furthermore, there is an element of randomness in the purchase of loot boxes. This is because players who purchase loot boxes are likely to acquire a variety of items at random. There is no fixed selection made by the game manufacturer in providing items or items purchased by players. The random element makes the purchase of loot boxes has elements that are not clear (*gharar*) and also the element of gambling that is forbidden in Islam. The unknown purchased item renders loot boxes vague.

Brook et.al. in a study state that there is a concept of chances in gambling. A game is considered gambling if it offers uncertain opportunities to the player. This coincides with loot boxes, which offers uncertain opportunities to players to continue buying loot boxes. Players are led to believe that they can manipulate luck and chances that will be obtained in every loot box purchase. It is similar to gambling because it depends on the opportunities offered. The purchase of loot

²⁴ Interview with esport players: Ainul Hakim bin Fizal Sabillah, Muhammad Luqman Hakim bin Ahmad Khudzir and Muhammad Naim bin Muhammad Hisham, Bangi, June 13, 2021.

²⁵ Interview with esport players: Ainul Hakim bin Fizal Sabillah, Muhammad Luqman Hakim bin Ahmad Khudzir and Muhammad Naim bin Muhammad Hisham, Bangi, June 13, 2021.

²⁶ H. Wardle, "The same or different? Convergence of skin gambling and other gambling among children", *Journal of Gambling Studies*, 35(4), (2019), p. 1109–1125.

boxes also affects the outcome of the game since the player may not be able to win the game because the items obtained do not meet his wishes, and even to the detriment of the player himself.²⁷

Furthermore, D. King et. al. also noted that the purchase of a loot box has some similarities to gambling machine games such as the Lotto game. The similarity could be seen through the method of operation of loot boxes and Lotto. Both produce uncertain items and depend on the fate of the player. Loot boxes also motivate players to indulge in gambling when games involving gambling require players to pay first before playing. Players need to purchase loot boxes to gain privileges in order to advance to the next level in the game.²⁸ Players also need to have a good knowledge of loot boxes to enable them to properly select the type of loot boxes they wish to purchase so that the purchase is beneficial for the player.²⁹ This is similar to gambling where games that involve gambling require players to have a good knowledge of the paid game, however, the outcome of the game obtained is uncertain.

Although no study has explicitly recognised the purchase of loot boxes as gambling and no legislation has been enacted on the status of loot boxes in gambling, however, the findings of previous studies have equated loot boxes with other gambling games. Such studies also state that the features found in loot box purchases resemble the features of other gambling games.³⁰ Thus, this study argues that the purchase of a loot box is one form of gambling because there are various elements and also features that resemble gambling type games. The similarities in terms of elements as well as the characteristics of such gambling, further strengthen the opinion of this study which classifies the purchase of loot boxes as one of the forms of gambling in online gaming.

In addition, loot boxes are categorised as gambling due to the fact that it brings various disadvantages to players especially, children or teenagers, causing addiction to buy loot boxes even though the outcome is uncertain.³¹ Adolescents

²⁷ G. Brooks, et.al., "Cognitive factors in gambling disorder, a behavioral addiction," In A. Verdejo-Garcia (Ed.), *Cognition and Addiction, Researcher's Guide from Mechanisms Towards Interventions*. (London: Academic Press, 2020).

²⁸ King, D. L., et.al., "Unfair play? Video games as exploitative monetized services: an examination of game patents from a consumer protection perspective". *Computers in Human Behavior*. (2019) 101, 131–143.

²⁹ L. Gong & S. M. Rodda, "An Exploratory Study of Individual and Parental Techniques for Limiting Loot box Consumption," *International Journal of Mental Health and Addiction*, (2020).

³⁰ King, D. L., et.al., "Unfair play? Video games as exploitative monetized services: an examination of game patents from a consumer protection perspective". *Computers in Human Behavior*. (2019) 101, 131–143.

³¹ Young, R., Study Reveals That Children Are Going into Debt Over Loot boxes, accessed on 23 April 2022 <https://gamerant.com/study-reveals-children-going-debt-loot-boxes/>

and children also tend to be in debt and even cheat their own parents to earn money. The addiction also brings various disadvantages such as unsustainable debt and even leads to wastefulness.

Association of Loot Box with Gambling

Loot box has features that resemble gambling such as random elements in the acquisition of items or items purchased by the player. In addition, the purchase of a loot box by a player is based on luck. The purchased item is also not clear and is unknown to the player until the completion of the loot box purchase session. Players will also risk their own luck by buying something they do not need. Therefore, it is concluded that a loot box in an online game is considered gambling. This is due to the fact that the loot box denies the buyer's right to choose what they want and like to purchase in accordance with the price paid. Thus, the denial of the right has violated the principles of sale and purchase in sharia, as well as the right or option (*khiyar*) to terminate the contract.

Islam forbids all forms of gambling. This is evident in the Quran, chapter al-Maidah, verse 90:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِنَّمَا الْخَمْرُ وَالْمَيْسِرُ وَالْأَنْصَابُ وَالْأَزْلَامُ رِجْسٌ مِنْ عَمَلِ الشَّيْطَانِ فَاجْتَنِبُوهُ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُفْلِحُونَ

“O you who believe! That verily wine, and gambling, and idolatry, and casting lots with arrow-sticks, are (all) filthy (abominable) from the deeds of Satan. So stay away from it so that you succeed”

It is clearly shown that gambling is something that is forbidden in Islam. In addition, there is a hadith narrated by Abdullah bin Amr, the Prophet said:

إِنَّ اللَّهَ حَرَّمَ عَلَيَّ، أَوْ حَرَّمَ الْخَمْرُ وَالْمَيْسِرُ وَالْكَوْبَةَ

“Indeed, Allah has forbidden me, or forbidden alcohol, gambling, al-kubah (a kind of game that uses boards and dice)”.

Based on these evidences, gambling is forbidden in Islam. Any form of gambling is prohibited and includes games that have an element of gambling. A game is initially permissible but if there are elements of luck in the transaction of the game, then it is impermissible.

Even though the loot box does not clearly act as betting, nevertheless, the features found in the loot box resemble the features of gambling. It has various negative effects on players. Among the significant effects are debt burden and wastefulness. Moreover, players may become addicted to continue buying it. This

puts players at risk of running out of money due to buying loot boxes. This is because most of the players who buy loot boxes are minors who do not have fixed income. Players are likely to be burdened with debt for not being able to pay for the loot box purchased.

According to al-Qaradawi, gambling is forbidden in Islam. The ban on gambling is at the same level as the ban on alcoholic drinks. According to him, any game that has an element of gambling is illegal. Gambling contains elements of profit and loss, even in games.³² The profit and loss elements are among the elements that determine the fate of the player. This coincides with loot box transactions which have both profit and loss.

Association of Loot Box with Sale and Purchase Contract

According to Abdul Naseer, among the conditions of sale and purchase that have been agreed upon by the jurists, firstly, the subject matter of the goods sold must be beneficial and not something that does not exist (*ma'dum*). This is in line with online game items, in this case, loot boxes that are considered as property because of the benefits found in them. Secondly, a seller must have full ownership of the entire item. Buying and selling can also be carried out if the seller has permission from the original owner to sell the goods. Game items including loot boxes that are bought and sold are items owned by game provider.³³

The third condition according to Abdul Naseer is, the goods are capable of being delivered, while, the fourth condition, the goods sold must represent *mal mutaqawwim* (valued property), which is something valuable and useful.³⁴ These conditions meet the micro-transaction characteristics of game items since the items bought and sold will be handed over to the player after the payment is made. The delivery would be online either directly or using a specific code that allows players to access it. In addition, game items are also categorised as something valuable and beneficial when they can be bought and sold and also the benefits of the micro-transactions can be shared by various parties for their respective purposes. For example, the player will benefit by owning the item in order to have a brighter chance to win the competition and then win the prize offered as a source of income while the game producer, operator and also the player who sells the item will profit from the sales transaction of the game item online.

³² Yusuf al-Qaradawi, *The Lawful and the prohibited in Islam*, (American Trust Publications, 1994).

³³ Abdul Naseer, Al-Nasyeer, *Buyu' al- Muharramah wa al-Manhi 'Anha*, (Cairo: Dar Huda al-Nabawi, 2004) p. 1-20.

³⁴ Abdul Naseer, Al-Nasyeer, *Buyu' al- Muharramah wa al-Manhi 'Anha*, (Cairo: Dar Huda al-Nabawi, 2004) p. 1-20.

Finally, the contracting parties are required to have knowledge about the goods being sold because the sale and purchase of unknown goods is invalid.³⁵ This is also the case with game item transactions when the item being sold is required to be given a complete description of it and all the features found on the item will also be labelled or explained to the player before the player buys an item. The seller and the buyer of the item know about the item being sold and the transaction will take place after the agreement of both parties. According to al-Sharbini, among the conditions of valid sale contract stated by the jurists, the goods involved are known to both contracting parties.³⁶ The buyer should know about the condition of the item through the method of seeing directly or through description and also audio visual. This condition requires the buying and selling of items by players who make a purchase transaction to view and choose items virtually. The description on the item sold is placed by the seller to make it easier for players to understand about the item being sold, whether it is a description through the website or a verbal description.³⁷

The purchase of loot boxes, which contains unknown items contradicts the sale and purchase of Islamic commercial law which stipulates that according to the pillars and conditions of sale and purchase, sale items must be known to the contracting parties. Buying and selling without knowing the goods being traded is invalid.³⁸ This is in line with the situation of players who buy the loot box but do not know the results of the goods that will be obtained from the purchase of the loot box specifically. The purchase makes the buyer buy something uncertain. Buying and selling goods that clearly contain the element of *gharar* (uncertainty) is forbidden in sharia.³⁹ In fact, if the buyer has good luck, then the result of the purchase fulfills his desire and if the player does not have good luck then, the purchase becomes futile.

The pillars of sale and purchase have been set in Islamic law. Among the pillars of a sale contract; the subject matter must be in existence, known to the contracting parties, and meet all the terms and conditions.⁴⁰ Although there is no

³⁵ Abdul Naseer, Al-Nasyeer, *Buyu' al- Muharramah wa al-Manhi 'Anha*, (Cairo: Dar Huda al-Nabawi, 2004) p. 1-20.

³⁶ al-Sharbini. Muhammad, *Mughni al-Muhtaj*, (Cairo: *Matba'at al- Babi al-Halabi*, n.d.).

³⁷ Looi, Wenli. Dhaliwal. M. Alhaji.R. Rokne.J., "Recommender Systems for Items in Dota 2". *IEEE Transactions on Games*. (2018) p. 396 - 404.

³⁸ Ala' al-Din al-Kasani, *Bada'i' al-Sana'i' fi Tartib al-Syara'i'*, (Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, 1986).

³⁹ Mustafa al-Bugha, Mustafa al-Khan, & Ali al-Syurbaji, *al-Fiqh al-Manhaji*, (Damsiyq: Dar al-Qalam li al-Tiba'ah wa al-Nashr wa al-Tauzi', 1992).

⁴⁰ Mustafa al-Bugha, Mustafa al-Khan, & Ali al-Syurbaji, *al-Fiqh al-Manhaji*, (Damsiyq: Dar al-Qalam li al-Tiba'ah wa al-Nashr wa al-Tauzi', 1992).

requirement that buyers and sellers must know all aspects down to the smallest detail about the goods, buyers and sellers must know the basics of the goods sold. This is inconsistent in the purchase of a loot box by a player who does not know the basics of the item or items he purchased.

This is different from buying and selling a loot box which is the buying and selling of a box that contains some items unknown to the buyer who bought it. Buying a loot box is also a purchase that depends on the player's luck to obtain the desired item. Transactions of online game items are completely different from loot box transactions because the sale and purchase of online game items is clear and known to both parties, namely the seller and the buyer. This matter is determined by the conditions of sale and purchase stated by the previous jurist, which is known to both parties.

Thus, the purchase of a loot box is a purchase that contradicts the pillars of a sale contract and is not valid in sharia. This not only involves the law of sale and purchase but also can cause dissatisfaction between players and also the manufacturer of the loot box.

Therefore, this study reveals that, loot box sale and purchase transaction is an impermissible transaction, because it involves elements of gambling. In fact, the sale and purchase of loot boxes is also invalid since it does not comply with the pillars of sale contract that have been outlined in sharia. Ultimately, Muslims should refrain from buying loot boxes in online games or esports and as well as any form of game that has dubious elements.

Conclusion

Loot box purchases among online game players have shown high statistics. The statistics are proof that players of various ages tend to buy loot boxes of various types. However, the features found in the purchase of the loot box are similar to the features of gambling type games that place luck as the main element in the purchase of the loot box. The purchase also yields random results and is unknown to the buyer. Therefore, this study was conducted to examine the necessity of purchasing loot boxes in online games. This study also found that the loot box does not meet the pillars and conditions of sale and purchase contract that have been outlined in sharia. This is due to the fact that the result of the purchase of a loot box which is considered a mystery is not in line with the condition of subject matter set in Islamic commercial law (*muamalat*). Thus, this study determines that buying loot boxes is impermissible and invalid since it contains elements of gambling and also does not meet the pillars of the sale contract. Ultimately, this finding is also expected to be used as a guide to players in online games and esports that comply with sharia, especially for Muslim in Southeast Asia. Any non-sharia compliant elements should be avoided to maintain the sharia compliant status.

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Interviews

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