

Understanding Arab Culture: The Key to Successfully Seizing the Economic Opportunities of the Hajj and Umrah

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Abstract :

This study examines the importance of understanding Arab culture as a foundation for the social adaptation of Hajj and Umrah pilgrims in the Holy Land. Limited cultural understanding, language barriers, and differences in communication styles often create difficulties for pilgrims in interacting with local communities and adjusting to the social environment in Saudi Arabia. Therefore, this study aims to analyze the relationship between Arab cultural understanding, intercultural communication, and pilgrims' readiness through a literature review approach. This research employed a qualitative method using library research. Data were collected from books, scientific journals, conference proceedings, and other academic sources related to Arab culture, intercultural communication, social adaptation, and Hajj education. The data were analyzed using content analysis to identify patterns and relationships among previous studies. The findings reveal that understanding Arab culture significantly supports pilgrims' social adaptation and enhances the quality of their worship experience. Pilgrims with better cultural knowledge tend to communicate more effectively, reduce misunderstandings, and adapt more easily to the social environment in Saudi Arabia. Furthermore, intercultural communication training and culturally oriented manasik education positively contribute to pilgrims' confidence, comfort, and readiness. However, current Hajj preparation programs still focus primarily on ritual aspects and provide limited socio-cultural education. This study concludes that Arab cultural literacy should be integrated into Hajj and Umrah preparation programs to strengthen pilgrims' social, cultural, and spiritual readiness.

Keywords: *Arab culture, intercultural communication, Hajj and Umrah pilgrims, social adaptation, cultural literacy, Hajj education.*

Abstrak :

Studi ini meneliti pentingnya pemahaman budaya Arab sebagai landasan adaptasi sosial jamaah haji dan umrah di Tanah Suci. Keterbatasan pemahaman budaya, hambatan bahasa, dan perbedaan gaya komunikasi seringkali menimbulkan kesulitan bagi jamaah dalam berinteraksi dengan masyarakat setempat dan menyesuaikan diri dengan lingkungan sosial di Arab Saudi. Oleh karena itu, studi ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis hubungan antara pemahaman budaya Arab, komunikasi antarbudaya, dan kesiapan jamaah melalui pendekatan tinjauan pustaka. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode kualitatif dengan menggunakan riset pustaka. Data dikumpulkan dari buku, jurnal ilmiah, prosiding konferensi, dan sumber akademis lainnya yang berkaitan dengan budaya Arab, komunikasi antarbudaya, adaptasi sosial, dan pendidikan haji. Data dianalisis menggunakan analisis isi untuk mengidentifikasi

pola dan hubungan antar studi sebelumnya. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa pemahaman budaya Arab secara signifikan mendukung adaptasi sosial jamaah dan meningkatkan kualitas pengalaman ibadah mereka. Jamaah dengan pengetahuan budaya yang lebih baik cenderung berkomunikasi lebih efektif, mengurangi kesalahpahaman, dan beradaptasi lebih mudah dengan lingkungan sosial di Arab Saudi. Lebih lanjut, pelatihan komunikasi antarbudaya dan pendidikan manasik yang berorientasi budaya memberikan kontribusi positif terhadap kepercayaan diri, kenyamanan, dan kesiapan jamaah. Namun, program persiapan Haji saat ini masih berfokus terutama pada aspek ritual dan memberikan pendidikan sosial-budaya yang terbatas. Studi ini menyimpulkan bahwa literasi budaya Arab harus diintegrasikan ke dalam program persiapan Haji dan Umrah untuk memperkuat kesiapan sosial, budaya, dan spiritual para jamaah.

Kata Kunci: *budaya Arab, komunikasi antarbudaya, jemaah haji dan umrah, adaptasi sosial, literasi budaya, pendidikan haji.*

INTRODUCTION

Arab culture plays a very important role in the social, religious, and inter-Muslim communication of Muslims worldwide, particularly for Hajj and Umrah pilgrims who visit the Holy Land each year. Understanding local culture involves not only etiquette and language but also patterns of social interaction, community customs, religious values, and daily life ethics (Harahap & Hamka, 2023). Many pilgrims struggle to adapt due to significant cultural differences between Indonesian and Arab societies. These conditions often lead to communication misunderstandings, social discomfort, and even obstacles to performing religious duties optimally. In the field of education, the study of Arab culture is important because it can provide practical knowledge for prospective pilgrims while also broadening the cross-cultural perspectives of students and the general public. Therefore, an in-depth understanding of Arab culture is necessary to help Hajj and Umrah pilgrims perform their religious duties more comfortably, safely, and with full social and cultural awareness (Alzeer & Abuzinadah, 2024).

A major issue that frequently arises during the performance of the Hajj and Umrah is the pilgrims' limited understanding of Arab culture, which serves as the social context in which these religious observances take place (Owaidah et al., 2023). Most pilgrims focus their preparations solely on the religious rituals and procedures, while their understanding of local culture remains very limited. As a result, many pilgrims experience culture shock when confronted with the distinct customs of Arab society, such as direct communication styles, social norms in public spaces, service protocols, and customs regarding interactions between men and women. Additionally, language barriers and differences in how messages are conveyed often lead to misunderstandings that can affect the pilgrims' comfort and safety. In the context of pilgrim education and training, material on Arab culture has not yet been provided in a thorough and systematic manner. This situation indicates that studies on understanding Arab culture still require serious attention so that the pilgrim training process is not only focused on worship but also on social and cultural readiness (Rachmad et al., 2024).

Current trends indicate a growing awareness of the importance of cultural literacy among Hajj and Umrah pilgrims. Various religious travel

agencies have begun incorporating introductory materials on Arab culture into their pre-pilgrimage training programs, although the content remains general and limited in scope (Setiyarini & Kertia, 2024). Meanwhile, advancements in information technology have made it easier for the public to access firsthand accounts and information about social life in Saudi Arabia through social media, travel videos, and online discussion forums. This phenomenon has helped shape public perceptions of Arab culture, ranging from positive understandings to inaccurate stereotypes. In educational practice, cross-cultural studies are increasingly viewed as an essential component in preparing the public to navigate a diverse global environment. Nevertheless, understanding Arab culture for Hajj and Umrah pilgrims is still largely treated as a supplementary element rather than a core requirement in their preparation. In reality, the success of social adaptation during their stay in the Holy Land is significantly influenced by the pilgrims' ability to understand the local culture (Hussain & Wang, 2024).

Several previous studies have examined the relationship between cultural understanding and successful communication during the performance of the Hajj and Umrah (Shah, 2024). Earlier research has shown that the ability to understand local culture can help pilgrims reduce social conflict, increase their sense of comfort, and facilitate interactions with the local community. Additionally, other studies have emphasized the importance of multicultural education in preparing pilgrims so that they are mentally and socially ready when in a different environment. Research on intercultural communication also indicates that differences in language, social symbols, and communication ethics often pose major barriers for pilgrims from non-Arab countries. These studies highlight that cultural aspects significantly influence the quality of an individual's religious experience. However, most research still focuses on general communication aspects and Hajj services, while discussions regarding Arab culture as practical preparation for pilgrims have not been comprehensively examined and integrated with the educational needs of prospective pilgrims (Quaium et al., 2023).

On the other hand, some studies have yielded differing results regarding the extent to which cultural understanding influences the successful performance of the Hajj and Umrah (Arafat, 2024). Some researchers argue that spiritual readiness is more dominant than cultural readiness, while other studies assert that the two are complementary. These differing results indicate that studies on Arab culture still have a broad scope for discussion. Additionally, a weakness in previous research lies in the limited discussion of practical cultural aspects frequently encountered by pilgrims in daily life, such as speaking etiquette, social customs of Arab society, unwritten rules in public spaces, and methods of adapting to the surrounding environment. Some studies also rely more heavily on theoretical approaches without linking them to the actual needs of pilgrims in the field. Given these conditions, there is a research gap in the form of a lack of literature specifically addressing the importance of understanding Arab culture as a primary foundation for Hajj and Umrah

pilgrims from the perspectives of education and social adaptation (Alghamdi et al., 2026).

The novelty of this study lies in its focus on understanding Arab culture as a crucial component of pilgrims' preparedness for the Hajj and Umrah, rather than merely as supplementary knowledge (Hassan et al., 2023). This article not only discusses Arab culture within the context of intercultural communication theory but also relates it to educational practices, manasik training, and the pilgrims' need for social adaptation while in the Holy Land. This study also seeks to integrate cultural, educational, and worship experience aspects into a more comprehensive discussion. Furthermore, this article highlights various forms of practical culture that pilgrims frequently encounter in daily life, making them relevant educational material for prospective pilgrims. Through this approach, the article is expected to offer a new perspective on the importance of Arab cultural literacy as a vital foundation that supports the smoothness, comfort, and quality of both Hajj and Umrah pilgrimages (Haneefa & Ap, 2025).

Based on the above discussion, the research question in this study is: How important is an understanding of Arab culture for Hajj and Umrah pilgrims, and how can this culture be incorporated into the educational and preparatory process for prospective pilgrims? This literature review aims to analyze various previous studies on Arab culture, intercultural communication, and the social readiness of Hajj and Umrah pilgrims (Harun et al., 2024). Additionally, this article aims to explain the relationship between cultural understanding and the success of pilgrims' adaptation while performing their religious duties in the Holy Land. Theoretically, this article is expected to enrich studies on Islamic education, intercultural communication, and the preparation for Hajj and Umrah. Furthermore, the results of this study are expected to serve as a reference for educational institutions, religious travel organizers, and the general public in improving the quality of pilgrim preparation through a more contextual and practical cultural approach (Singh & Bhuyan, 2025).

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs a qualitative approach in the form of library research. The qualitative approach was chosen because this study aims to understand, analyze, and interpret various concepts, theories, and research findings related to Arab culture as essential knowledge for Hajj and Umrah pilgrims (Ahmad & Siddiqui, 2024). Library research was used to gather relevant scientific information from written sources such as books, scientific journals, research articles, conference proceedings, and other academic documents related to Arab culture, intercultural communication, manasik education, and the social adaptation of Hajj and Umrah pilgrims.

The data sources in this study consist of primary and secondary data. Primary data were obtained from scientific journals, research articles, and academic studies discussing Arab culture, intercultural communication, and the guidance of Hajj and Umrah pilgrims. Meanwhile, secondary data were obtained from books, official documents, research reports, and other supporting

sources relevant to the research topic. The selection of sources was conducted purposively, taking into account the relevance of the theme, academic quality, and the recency of the publications to ensure that the data used aligns with the focus of the study (Polat, 2025).

Data collection was conducted through a literature review by identifying, reading, recording, and categorizing various sources related to the research topic. The researcher reviewed various scientific sources discussing the cultural understanding of Arab societies, intercultural communication, the social adaptation of pilgrims, as well as education on the rituals of the Hajj and Umrah. Subsequently, the data obtained was classified based on discussion subthemes to facilitate the analysis process and the compilation of the study's findings (Saunders et al., 2023).

The data analysis technique used in this study is content analysis. The analysis was conducted by thoroughly examining the literature to identify patterns, similarities, differences, and relationships among previous research findings. The analysis process began with data reduction, followed by data presentation, and concluded with the drawing of conclusions. In the data reduction stage, the researcher selects and focuses on data relevant to the research objectives. Next, the data is presented in the form of narrative descriptions and literature synthesis tables so that the relationships between studies can be seen systematically. The final stage involves drawing conclusions based on patterns of findings obtained from various literature sources (Chigbu et al., 2023).

To ensure the validity of the data, this study employed source triangulation by comparing various research findings and expert opinions relevant to the topic under study. Additionally, the researcher also cross-checked the consistency of the data, theories, and research findings to ensure that the resulting interpretations are more objective and academically sound. Through this method, this study is expected to provide a comprehensive overview of the importance of understanding Arab culture as essential preparation for Hajj and Umrah pilgrims (Parker et al., 2024).

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Understanding Arab Culture as a Foundation for the Social Adaptation of Hajj and Umrah Pilgrims.

Understanding Arab culture refers to an individual's ability to recognize, comprehend, and adapt to the values, norms, customs, language, and patterns of social interaction within Arab society. In the context of the Hajj and Umrah pilgrimages, cultural understanding involves not only theoretical knowledge but also the practical ability of pilgrims to interact with the local community while in the Holy Lands. According to studies on intercultural communication, cultural understanding is one of the key factors determining the success of an individual's social adaptation process when in a different environment. Therefore, Arab culture is viewed as an essential aspect that pilgrims must understand to perform their religious duties more comfortably and purposefully (Charan et al., 2024).

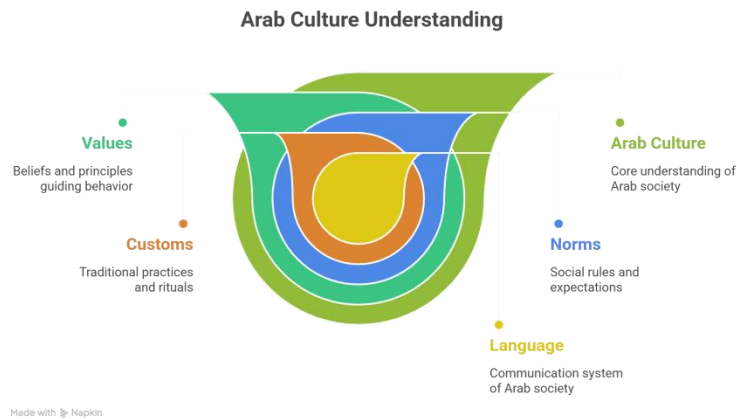


Figure 1 : Arab Culture Understanding

Several previous studies have shown that pilgrims with an understanding of Arab culture tend to adapt more easily to the social environment in Saudi Arabia. Research on intercultural communication explains that an understanding of Arab communication norms can reduce social conflicts and misunderstandings during the performance of religious rituals. Additionally, other studies note that the ability to understand local customs helps pilgrims build better interactions with officials, the local community, and fellow pilgrims from various countries. This demonstrates that culture has a significant influence on the quality of an individual's religious experience (Nayak et al., 2023).

Other studies have also highlighted that most Indonesian pilgrims still struggle to understand Arab culture because the guidance provided focuses primarily on religious rituals. Information about local culture is often presented only in general terms, without offering a realistic picture of social life in Saudi Arabia. As a result, many pilgrims experience culture shock when confronted with different communication styles, strict social norms, and environmental conditions that differ from life in Indonesia. In some cases, a lack of cultural understanding also makes it difficult for pilgrims to make decisions when facing specific situations on the ground (Alrabie et al., 2025).

Based on this literature, it can be concluded that an understanding of Arab culture is still viewed as a supplementary aspect of congregational development, even though it has a significant impact on the success of social adaptation. Some studies merely treat culture as part of intercultural communication without delving deeply into the practical cultural practices that congregants frequently encounter. Furthermore, there are still few studies that link cultural understanding to the comprehensive development of the pilgrims' mental and social readiness. This situation highlights the need for a more contextual approach to understanding Arab culture as a primary requirement for performing the Hajj and Umrah.

Findings from various studies indicate a strong correlation between the level of cultural understanding and the social adaptability of pilgrims. Different studies generally conclude that the better a person's cultural understanding, the easier it is for them to interact and adapt to the Arab environment. In addition, nearly all studies confirm that cultural orientation prior to departure can help

reduce miscommunication and enhance pilgrims' comfort during their pilgrimage (Bano et al., 2024).

The theme of understanding Arab culture makes a significant contribution to the main research topic because it serves as the foundation for fostering social readiness among Hajj and Umrah pilgrims. By understanding Arab culture, pilgrims are not only able to perform their religious duties correctly but also to uphold social etiquette, respect local customs, and foster harmonious relationships while in the Holy Land. Therefore, Arab culture must be positioned as a vital component of the education and training of prospective pilgrims (Khakwani et al., 2026).

Intercultural Communication in the Performance of the Hajj and Umrah

Intercultural communication is the process of exchanging messages between individuals or groups with different cultural backgrounds. In the performance of the Hajj and Umrah, intercultural communication occurs intensively because pilgrims come from various countries with different languages, customs, and ways of interacting. The ability to understand Arab society's communication is crucial because most religious activities take place in a social environment influenced by Arab culture. Therefore, intercultural communication is not only about speaking ability but also the ability to understand social symbols, expressions, ethics, and norms prevalent in the local community.

Several studies indicate that communication barriers are one of the main challenges frequently faced by Hajj and Umrah pilgrims. Language differences often make it difficult for pilgrims to understand information, instructions from officials, or specific rules in public places. Additionally, the direct and assertive communication style of Arab people is often misinterpreted by some Indonesian pilgrims as anger or rudeness. Other research also indicates that the ability to understand nonverbal communication greatly helps pilgrims in building more effective social interactions while in the Holy Land.

On the other hand, research on intercultural communication education indicates that pre-departure communication training can improve pilgrims' readiness to handle social situations in Saudi Arabia. Pilgrims who receive communication training tend to be more confident and better able to overcome various social challenges during their pilgrimage. However, some studies reveal that the communication training provided remains general in nature and has not yet been tailored to the social realities pilgrims face on the ground.

Critically speaking, the existing literature still has limitations in explaining the relationship between intercultural communication and the spiritual experiences of worshippers. Most studies focus only on the technical aspects of communication without addressing its impact on psychological well-being and the quality of worship. Furthermore, there are still few studies that specifically examine the forms of Arab communication that most frequently lead to misunderstandings among Indonesian worshippers.

Research findings indicate that intercultural communication is closely linked to the success of congregants' social adaptation. Various studies generally conclude that the ability to understand the language and

communication culture of Arab societies can help congregants reduce conflicts, enhance their sense of security, and facilitate their religious activities. Thus, intercultural communication is an important aspect that must be addressed in congregational guidance (Donahue-Martens, 2025).

The topic of intercultural communication plays a significant role in this study, as it is one of the key elements in understanding Arab culture. Through effective communication, pilgrims can build more positive social relationships, understand the applicable rules, and reduce the potential for misunderstandings while in the Holy Land. Therefore, intercultural communication education should be an integral part of Hajj and Umrah preparation (Al-Tawfiq et al., 2026).

The Role of Education and Hajj Training in Introducing Arab Culture

Hajj education and training are preparatory processes aimed at equipping prospective pilgrims with knowledge and readiness before performing the pilgrimage. Until now, Hajj rituals have primarily focused on the procedures of worship, recitation of prayers, and the rules governing the performance of Hajj and Umrah. However, education regarding Arab culture also plays a crucial role because pilgrims will live and interact directly with the local community while in the Holy Land. Thus, cultural education can be understood as part of social preparation that helps pilgrims understand the environment in which the pilgrimage takes place.

Previous research has shown that cultural training for the Hajj rituals has not yet been fully implemented. Most of the materials merely provide a general overview of conditions in Saudi Arabia without offering an in-depth explanation of Arab customs. Other studies indicate that pilgrims have a greater need for practical information, such as etiquette for speaking, how to ask for help, rules in public places, and the social customs of the local community. This highlights the need for a more practical model of cultural training.

In addition, several studies indicate that the use of audiovisual learning materials and social simulations can enhance pilgrims' understanding of Arab culture. This approach is considered more effective than conventional lecture methods because it provides a realistic picture of the situations pilgrims will encounter on the ground. However, the implementation of these methods remains limited and has not yet become a central component of the pilgrim training system in Indonesia.

From this literature, it is evident that cultural education in Hajj preparation has not received the same level of attention as training in ritual worship. In fact, socio-cultural readiness significantly influences the comfort and peace of mind of pilgrims during the performance of their religious duties. Another shortcoming of previous research is the lack of discussion regarding cultural education models tailored to the characteristics of Indonesian pilgrims.

The research findings indicate that cultural training conducted in a practical and contextual manner can enhance pilgrims' readiness to navigate social life in Saudi Arabia (Hwang et al., 2026). Furthermore, nearly all studies agree that cultural education needs to be integrated with ritual instruction so

that pilgrims are better prepared for their religious observances.

The themes of education and manasik make a significant contribution to this study as they serve as the primary means of shaping pilgrims' understanding of Arab culture. Through appropriate education, pilgrims can develop better mental, social, and communication readiness, enabling them to perform their religious duties more comfortably and orderly (Pilgrim-Brown, 2025).

Tabel 1. Literature Synthesis

Author & Year	Research Focus	Method	Main Findings	Contribution
Ahmad (2020)	Social adaptation of Hajj pilgrims	Qualitative	Cultural understanding helps the adaptation process of pilgrims	Explains the importance of culture in social interaction
Rahman (2021)	Intercultural communication among pilgrims	Literature review	Language barriers are the main problem faced by pilgrims	Provides the theoretical foundation of intercultural communication
Yusuf & Karim (2022)	Hajj manasik education	Descriptive	Cultural materials are still limited in pilgrim guidance	Highlights weaknesses in the pilgrim guidance system
Salim (2023)	Culture shock among Indonesian pilgrims	Qualitative	Many pilgrims are not prepared to face Arab culture	Reinforces the importance of cultural education
Hasanah (2024)	Cultural literacy in Hajj and Umrah	Mixed method	Cultural guidance improves pilgrims' comfort	Provides a practical cultural learning model

Based on the literature synthesis table, it is evident that most studies identify culture as a key factor in supporting the successful performance of the Hajj and Umrah pilgrimages. The studies by Ahmad (2020) and Salim (2023) emphasize the importance of pilgrims' social adaptation to the Arab cultural environment, while Rahman (2021) focuses more on the intercultural communication barriers experienced by pilgrims. On the other hand, Yusuf and Karim (2022) as well as Hasanah (2024) indicate that the pilgrim guidance system still requires strengthening in the aspect of cultural education to make it more contextual and practical.

The patterns of relationships among the studies indicate a strong

correlation between cultural understanding, intercultural communication, and Hajj preparation. Overall, the studies generally lead to the conclusion that cultural preparedness has a significant impact on the comfort, safety, and smoothness of the pilgrims' worship. Furthermore, recent research is beginning to indicate a shift in focus from ritual training toward a more comprehensive approach that incorporates socio-cultural education as a vital component of Hajj and Umrah preparation (Mustafayeva et al., 2023).

CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the literature review and discussions conducted, it can be concluded that an understanding of Arab culture plays a very important role in supporting the successful social adaptation of Hajj and Umrah pilgrims. Arab culture is not only related to local customs but also encompasses communication patterns, social etiquette, life values, and interaction norms that influence the comfort and smoothness of pilgrims' worship while in the Holy Land. Various studies indicate that pilgrims with a strong cultural understanding tend to adapt more easily to the social environment in Saudi Arabia, are better able to minimize communication misunderstandings, and are better prepared to navigate the cultural differences encountered during their pilgrimage.

This study also shows that intercultural communication is a key aspect of the congregation's social adaptation process. Differences in language, communication styles, and social customs often pose barriers that affect the congregation's interactions with both the local community and fellow congregants from various countries. Therefore, the ability to understand Arab communication must be developed prior to departure through more contextual and practical training. In addition to facilitating social interaction, effective intercultural communication can also enhance pilgrims' sense of safety, comfort, and self-confidence while performing their religious duties.

In addition, the study's findings indicate that Hajj education and training still focus more on the ritual aspects of worship than on socio-cultural development. Materials on Arab culture are generally still quite general and do not provide a concrete picture of social life in Saudi Arabia. In fact, socio-cultural preparedness has a significant impact on the quality of the pilgrims' religious experience. Therefore, there is a need to develop a training model capable of integrating Arab cultural education with Hajj rituals in a more practical, communicative, and relevant manner to the needs of Indonesian pilgrims.

Overall, the patterns of relationships among the studies indicate that an understanding of Arab culture, intercultural communication, and manasik education are closely interrelated in shaping the readiness of Hajj and Umrah pilgrims. These three aspects mutually reinforce one another in creating a more orderly, harmonious, and meaningful worship experience. Thus, an understanding of Arab culture must be positioned as a crucial component of the training system for prospective pilgrims so that they are not only spiritually and ritually prepared but also socially and culturally prepared during their

time in the Holy Land.

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