
THE ROLE OF ARAB CULTURE IN INFLUENCING THE COMMUNICATION PATTERNS OF UMRAH PILGRIMS

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<i>Diterima: Desember 2025</i>	<i>Direvisi: Desember 2025</i>	<i>Diterbitkan: Desember 2025</i>
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Abstract :

The pilgrimage of Hajj and Umrah brings together millions of Muslims from diverse cultural backgrounds, including Indonesian pilgrims and Arab communities in the Holy Land. This cross-cultural interaction often generates complex communication dynamics that may lead to misunderstandings, particularly due to differences in speech styles, nonverbal expressions, and norms of politeness. This study aims to examine the influence of Arab cultural values on the communication patterns of Indonesian Hajj and Umrah pilgrims in their daily socio-religious interactions. The research employs a qualitative method with a descriptive phenomenological approach. Data were collected through in-depth interviews with pilgrims, religious guides (muthawwif), and Hajj/Umrah officers, supported by observation and literature review. The findings reveal that the direct, assertive, and expressive communication style of Arab society is frequently misinterpreted by Indonesian pilgrims, who are more accustomed to indirect and polite communication. These cultural differences affect the effectiveness of social interaction and religious service delivery. Therefore, understanding Arab cultural communication and enhancing cross-cultural communication competence are essential to fostering harmonious interactions, minimizing miscommunication, and supporting the smooth implementation of Hajj and Umrah rituals..

Keywords : *intercultural communication, Arab culture, Hajj and Umrah pilgrims, communication patterns, Indonesia*

Abstrak :

Perjalanan ibadah haji dan umrah mempertemukan jutaan umat Islam dari berbagai latar belakang budaya, termasuk jemaah Indonesia dengan masyarakat Arab di Tanah Suci. Interaksi lintas budaya ini kerap memunculkan dinamika komunikasi yang kompleks dan berpotensi menimbulkan kesalahpahaman, terutama akibat perbedaan gaya bertutur, ekspresi nonverbal, serta norma kesopanan. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis pengaruh budaya masyarakat Arab terhadap pola komunikasi jemaah haji dan umrah Indonesia dalam konteks sosial-keagamaan sehari-hari. Metode penelitian yang digunakan adalah kualitatif dengan pendekatan deskriptif-fenomenologis. Data diperoleh melalui wawancara mendalam dengan jemaah, pembimbing ibadah (muthawwif), dan petugas haji/umrah, serta didukung oleh observasi dan studi pustaka. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa budaya komunikasi masyarakat Arab yang cenderung lugas, tegas, dan ekspresif sering ditafsirkan secara keliru oleh jemaah Indonesia yang terbiasa dengan komunikasi halus dan tidak langsung. Perbedaan tersebut memengaruhi efektivitas interaksi sosial dan pelayanan ibadah. Oleh karena itu, pemahaman budaya Arab dan peningkatan kompetensi komunikasi antarbudaya menjadi faktor penting dalam menciptakan komunikasi yang harmonis, mengurangi miskomunikasi, serta menunjang kelancaran pelaksanaan ibadah haji dan umrah.

Kata Kunci : *komunikasi antarbudaya, budaya Arab, jemaah haji dan umrah, pola komunikasi, Indonesia.*

INTRODUCTION

The spiritual journey to the holy land (Mecca/Medina) is undertaken every year by millions of Muslims from various countries to perform the Hajj or Umrah pilgrimage. The way pilgrims communicate, especially those from Indonesia and Arab communities, is an interesting social phenomenon because it involves very intense cross-cultural encounters. In this context, the strong, expressive Arab culture, which is based on traditional Islamic

values, often influences the way communication takes place in the worship environment. Misunderstandings often occur between Indonesian pilgrims and local residents due to the use of body language, assertive speaking styles, and differences in expressions of politeness. Therefore, understanding the influence of Arab culture on the communication patterns of Hajj and Umrah pilgrims is crucial in order to create harmonious and effective relationships that support the smooth running of worship in the holy land, which is rich in cultural diversity. (Fauzan, n.d.)

The challenge of Arabic as a major barrier to communication between non-Arab pilgrims and local officials has been highlighted by several studies. The importance of intercultural communication skills for worship guides and organizers is emphasized by other studies. However, most research still focuses on the technical aspects or organization of the hajj and umrah, rather than on Arab culture. It is this gap that prompted researchers to conduct this study. (Solehudin, 2024)

This study aims to examine how Arab culture influences the communication patterns of Indonesian Hajj and Umrah pilgrims. The main question to be answered is the extent to which communication patterns between local communities and pilgrims during the pilgrimage process are affected. An effort is also made to explain how the distinctive Arab communication style is interpreted and learned by pilgrims. Conceptually, this study departs from the assumption that culture has a major influence on the way people communicate. The ability to understand Arab cultural values is considered the key to effective communication. The results of this study are expected to contribute theoretically to the study of intercultural communication and provide practical implications for Hajj and Umrah organizers. (ISA et al., 2025)

Achmad Nashrudin Priatna explained that cultural differences among pilgrims often lead to misunderstandings that can have fatal consequences. To eliminate these misunderstandings, pilgrims need to be aware of the unique cultures of each person, nation, and ethnic group, avoid ethnocentrism, and strive to develop empathy. (Priatna, 2023)

Khairawati Khairawati also explained that communication involves elements of reward in the form of profit and sacrifice (cost). From this model, we can see what traders do when offering or promoting goods sold by traders in the city of Medina to Umrah pilgrims. Mixed codes are used in communication to convey meaning and facilitate understanding in the buying and selling process. The mixed codes used include the insertion of words, phrases, repetition of words, idioms, and clauses such as “assalamualaikum,” “look around,” “find clothes,” and so on. (Harmaini, 2023)

The results of Wakidul Kohar's research show that most Hajj officers in Sector 1 of Medina have demonstrated supportive communication, with only a small number exhibiting defensive communication, which has an impact on the discomfort of Hajj service communication in Saudi Arabia. (Kohar et al., 2022)

From the results of these three studies, it appears that most previous studies have focused more on the dynamics of internal communication—whether between pilgrims, between officials and pilgrims, or in the context of transactional economics. Thus, there is still an area of study that has not been widely explored, namely the influence of Arab culture as an external factor on the communication patterns of Indonesian Hajj and Umrah pilgrims in their daily social and religious lives. Therefore, this study aims to fill this gap by

examining how the cultural characteristics of Arab society—including speech patterns, nonverbal expressions, and rules of etiquette—influence the way Indonesian pilgrims adapt and interact while performing their religious duties in the holy land. This research is expected to not only enrich the study of intercultural communication, but also provide practical benefits for guides and pilgrims in improving their readiness for cross-cultural communication..

RESEARCH METHOD

The research method used in this study is a qualitative method with a descriptive-phenomenological approach that aims to analyze in depth the influence of Arab culture on the communication patterns of Indonesian Hajj and Umrah pilgrims. Research data was obtained through in-depth interviews with pilgrims, worship guides (muthawwif), and Hajj/Umrah officials, supplemented by literature studies from journals, books, and official documents on the implementation of worship. Data collection techniques were supported by non-participant observation and documentation of field experiences. Data analysis was carried out through stages of reduction, thematic categorization, interpretation, and conclusion drawing based on intercultural communication theory. Data validity was maintained through source and method triangulation, as well as validation of results through member checking with informants. This study was limited to aspects of socio-cultural communication and did not discuss the dimensions of fiqh or technical regulations for the implementation of Hajj and Umrah.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Arab culture

Arab society is generally known for its assertive, straightforward, and direct communication style. This communication style stems from a cultural value system that upholds straightforwardness and honesty in conveying meaning (Nurdin, 2023). In Arab social traditions, speaking in a strong tone and with clear intonation is not a form of anger or aggression, but rather a normal expression of assertiveness and seriousness in interactions. This way of speaking differs from the communication style of Indonesian society, which tends to be subtle, indirect, and avoids confrontation. Therefore, many Indonesian pilgrims interpret the assertiveness of Arabs as being harsh or unfriendly, when in fact it is part of their cultural communication character.

In addition, Arab societies are also highly sensitive to issues related to family honor and the sanctity of the household (Anggara et al., 2025). In their culture, discussions that touch on personal matters, especially regarding marriage, marital relations, or the nuclear family, are considered private matters that should not be made the subject of jokes. This stems from the concept of 'ird (honor), which occupies a very important position in the moral structure of Arab society. Making marriage the subject of jokes can be seen as a form of demeaning the dignity of the family, so social norms encourage Arabs to always maintain seriousness on this topic (Aminudin et al., 2025).

From a gender relations perspective, Arab women have social roles that are highly protected by cultural norms and religious values. They are taught to maintain their honor

by limiting interaction with members of the opposite sex who are not mahram, especially in public spaces (Affiah, 2017). This attitude does not merely reflect conservatism, but is a form of self-respect and a symbol of family purity. Therefore, Arab women generally do not engage in casual conversation or light physical contact with men they do not know, unlike Indonesian culture, which to a certain extent still allows for relatively fluid social communication between men and women.

Thus, the communication characteristics of Arab society are greatly influenced by the values of honor (*syaraf*) and modesty in accordance with Sharia law (*haya'*), which are reflected in speech, social expressions, and restrictions on interaction between the sexes (Murtadlo & Muhid, 2025). Understanding this is important for Indonesian Hajj and Umrah pilgrims to avoid misunderstandings when communicating with local residents. This cultural awareness is also key to building harmonious communication that is in line with social ethics in Arab society.

Indonesian culture

Unlike the communication style of Arab societies, which tends to be assertive and direct, Indonesian communication culture is known to be more subtle, friendly, and prioritizes social harmony in every interaction. Traditionally, Indonesians have a tendency to protect the feelings of their conversation partners by using polite language, soft intonation, and avoiding verbal confrontation. This pattern stems from a collectivist culture that places the values of togetherness, friendliness, and social harmony as the foundation for building interpersonal relationships (Sri et al., 2021).

In addition, humor and jokes are an important part of social interaction in Indonesian society. A lighthearted and friendly attitude is often used to break the ice and strengthen relationships between people (Pangaribuan, 2021). This relational communication pattern shows that Indonesian society prioritizes emotional comfort in interactions over the effectiveness of direct message delivery. In the context of Javanese culture, for example, there are the concepts of “*ngajeni*” (respect) and “*tepa selira*” (consideration) which indirectly shape the habit of speaking indirectly so as not to offend others.

In addition to friendliness in communication, Indonesians also tend to show emotional openness through smiles and receptiveness towards others (Machendrawaty & Safei, 2001). This can be seen in the way they respond to conversations, pay attention to the person they are talking to, and rarely act indifferent in social situations. The values of politeness inherent in Indonesian society ultimately result in a more subtle, diplomatic communication style that makes extensive use of softening language (mitigation strategies) to maintain interpersonal relationships.

Therefore, the communication style of Indonesian society can be categorized as a high-context communication culture that emphasizes sensitivity, politeness, and implicit meaning in social interactions. This pattern differs significantly from Arab societies, which are more low-context, tend to be explicit, and get straight to the point. This difference often gives rise to misperceptions when the two cultures interact in the context of the Hajj and Umrah pilgrimages, especially for Indonesian pilgrims who are not accustomed to the assertive and expressive style of speech typical of Arabs. By deeply understanding the characteristics of Indonesian communication culture, the analysis of the encounter between the two cultures becomes more comprehensive and can help map areas of potential

miscommunication that may occur in the field.

Contrasting communication styles

There is a significant contrast between the communication styles of Indonesian and Arab societies. These differences are influenced not only by cultural value systems, but also by ecological factors and environmental conditions that shape the social character of a society (Farhaeni, 2023). According to Didin Chonyta, the dynamics of Arab communication styles can even change according to prevailing climatic conditions. When the weather tends to be cold, Arab people usually display a softer, calmer, and less explosive communication style. However, when summer arrives, their tone of voice becomes higher, faster, and more assertive, which may seem rude to some Indonesians.

This phenomenon shows that climate factors also play a role in shaping the verbal and nonverbal expressions of Arab people. Living in an environment with extreme temperatures for centuries has caused them to develop an efficient and direct communication style as a form of adaptation to physical and social conditions. This is in contrast to Indonesians, who live in a humid tropical climate with relatively stable and moderate temperatures, resulting in a communication style that is more subtle, comprehensive, and often uses indirect communication.

Social and Communication Patterns of Congregants with Officials

In the context of interactions between Indonesian Umrah pilgrims and Arab officials in the Holy Land, there are fundamental differences in communication patterns that often lead to misunderstandings. Arab officials generally use a communication style characterized by strong body language, assertive gestures, and relatively high-pitched intonation (ISA et al., 2025). For Arab society, these characteristics are a normal, efficient form of communication and do not have negative connotations. However, for most Indonesian pilgrims, who come from a culture of polite, subtle communication and tend to avoid loud voices, this style of communication is often perceived as rude, authoritarian, and even disrespectful.

In contrast, Indonesian pilgrims are accustomed to indirect communication, which is characterized by the use of subtle language, a great deal of small talk, and the implied expression of meaning. This communication pattern often creates barriers for Arab officials who are accustomed to direct and explicit communication. As a result, requests, complaints, or questions from Indonesian pilgrims are not always immediately understood, and the responses given by officials are less than satisfactory to the pilgrims (Dusra et al., 2024).

These differences in communication styles demonstrate the importance of cross-cultural communication competence for both officials and congregations. Understanding the socio-cultural background of each party is necessary to minimize misinterpretation, build harmonious relationships, and create a more conducive worship experience. Thus, education on intercultural communication ethics, basic language training, and increased cultural sensitivity are urgent in the implementation of Hajj and Umrah services to prevent distortion of meaning and interpersonal conflict during the service process.

Arab cultural adaptation in the social media era

Cultural changes in the Arab world in the social era show a shift in traditional values, norms, and practices influenced by the use of digital technology and the wave of

globalization. Arab culture, which previously relied on communal life and direct interaction, is now also present in the virtual world through social media as a new means of displaying their cultural identity. Young Arabs utilize various digital platforms to adapt cultural elements—such as language, dress style, and art—while still maintaining basic principles such as modesty, respect for family, and social bonds (Triandani et al., 2024).

This change has given rise to what is known as mixed culture, which is the integration of old values and modern elements. This shift shows that Arab culture is not rigid, but rather able to adapt while maintaining its basic principles despite facing rapid social change (Remaja et al., 2025). However, this adaptation process has also sparked debate between those who uphold tradition and those who encourage reform, especially in terms of morals, concepts of progress, and cultural authenticity. Thus, the adaptation of Arab culture in the digital age is not only a form of acceptance of global influences, but also an effort to reshape cultural identity so that it remains relevant in a technology-based society.

Transportation patterns Communication in performing the Umrah pilgrimage

Transportation plays a vital role in the success of the Umrah pilgrimage, both during the departure from the country of origin to Saudi Arabia, transfers between important cities such as Mecca, Medina, and Jeddah, and the mobility of pilgrims in the areas of the Grand Mosque and the Prophet's Mosque. In this regard, coordination and communication between pilgrims, religious guides (muthawwif), travel agencies, and organizing institutions are key elements to ensure that the journey proceeds safely, smoothly, and on time. Clear communication is essential to explain technical details such as departure times, luggage regulations, meeting locations, the use of prayer buses, and the mechanisms for moving between various rituals such as tawaf, sa'i, and visiting the Prophet's Mosque. (Article, 2024)

Advances in digital technology have made this pattern of communication even easier, for example through the use of instant messaging applications, WhatsApp groups, loudspeakers in vehicles, and official information systems from travel agencies. Language is also a concern, especially for pilgrims who do not speak Arabic, so the role of the mutawwif or tour leader as an information mediator is very important. Inadequate communication can potentially lead to problems such as delays, pilgrims getting lost, or disruptions to the solemnity of worship. Therefore, synergy between well-managed transportation services and structured communication is key to ensuring a smooth, safe, and sharia-compliant umrah pilgrimage.

CONCLUSION

The above discussion shows that cultural differences between Arab and Indonesian societies greatly influence the communication patterns of Hajj and Umrah pilgrims, particularly in social interactions, services, and the performance of worship in the Holy Land. Arab societies have a firm, direct, and expressive communication style, born of cultural values of frankness, honor, and the influence of ecological conditions such as climate. Meanwhile, Indonesian society tends to use subtle communication, full of pleasantries, and oriented towards social harmony.

These fundamental differences often lead to misinterpretations when the two cultures interact. For Indonesian pilgrims, the Arabic officials' style of speaking is often

considered harsh, even though it is a normal part of communication in their culture. On the other hand, the indirect communication style used by Indonesian pilgrims can cause confusion for Arabic officials who are accustomed to straightforward and explicit instructions.

In the context of Hajj and Umrah services, especially those related to transportation and technical coordination of worship, effective communication is a determining factor in the smooth running of the journey. The use of digital technology helps speed up the delivery of information, but cultural mediators such as mutawwifs are still needed to prevent misunderstandings due to differences in language and communication styles.

Overall, understanding the nature of cross-cultural communication is very important for both pilgrims and officials. Cultural education, communication training, and increased social sensitivity are necessary to ensure that interactions during worship are harmonious, efficient, and remain within the ethical boundaries of Sharia law. Thus, cultural differences are no longer an obstacle, but can be managed as part of the dynamics of diversity in the implementation of Hajj and Umrah.

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