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## THE DYNAMICS OF CROSS-CULTURAL COMMUNICATION: INTERACTIONS BETWEEN INDONESIAN PILGRIMS AND ARAB COMMUNITIES IN THE HOLY LAND

**Ahmad Shidqi Ramadhani**

Manajemen Haji dan Umroh, Institut Badri Mashduqi

Email : ahmadshidqiramadhani@gmail.com

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### Abstract :

This study aims to analyze the dynamics of cross-cultural communication between Indonesian pilgrims and Arab communities in the Holy Land during the implementation of Hajj and Umrah. The research employs a descriptive qualitative approach, with data collected through participatory observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation involving Umrah pilgrims of PT Nur Haramain, Arab communities, and religious guides. The findings indicate that interactions generally occur harmoniously despite differences in language, customs, and social norms. Communication barriers mainly arise from differing interpretations of verbal and nonverbal expressions, particularly the intonation of Arab speech, which is often misinterpreted. However, the use of nonverbal communication, digital translation tools, and the role of tour guides as cultural mediators help facilitate effective communication. Key supporting factors for successful cross-cultural communication include empathy, openness, and an understanding of Islamic religious values that emphasize patience, tolerance, and brotherhood. These communication dynamics reflect processes of adaptation and cultural learning that enrich pilgrims' spiritual experiences.

**Keywords :** *cross-cultural communication, Indonesian pilgrims, Arab communities, Hajj and Umrah, cultural adaptation.*

### Abstrak :

*Penelitian ini bertujuan menganalisis dinamika komunikasi lintas budaya antara jemaah Indonesia dan masyarakat Arab di Tanah Suci dalam pelaksanaan ibadah haji dan umrah. Penelitian menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif deskriptif dengan teknik pengumpulan data melalui observasi partisipatif, wawancara mendalam, dan dokumentasi terhadap jemaah umrah PT Nur Haramain, masyarakat Arab, serta pembimbing ibadah. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa interaksi berlangsung relatif harmonis meskipun terdapat perbedaan bahasa, adat, dan norma sosial. Hambatan komunikasi terutama muncul akibat perbedaan interpretasi ekspresi verbal dan nonverbal, khususnya intonasi bicara masyarakat Arab yang kerap disalahartikan. Namun, penggunaan bahasa nonverbal, penerjemah digital, serta peran tour guide sebagai mediator budaya mampu membantu kelancaran komunikasi. Faktor pendukung utama komunikasi lintas budaya meliputi sikap empati, keterbukaan, dan pemahaman nilai religius Islam yang menekankan kesabaran, toleransi, dan persaudaraan. Dinamika komunikasi tersebut mencerminkan proses adaptasi dan pembelajaran budaya yang memperkaya pengalaman spiritual jemaah.*

**Kata Kunci:** *komunikasi lintas budaya, jemaah Indonesia, masyarakat Arab, haji dan umrah, adaptasi budaya.*

## INTRODUCTION

Arab culture is an important element in the atmosphere of Hajj and Umrah pilgrimages, which are held in the holy land rich in Arab traditions and customs. Understanding this culture is crucial for pilgrims to be able to perform their worship properly, orderly, and without misunderstanding. The unique Arab culture influences social interactions, dress codes, communication, and ethics that pilgrims must follow while in the holy land.

Arab culture has a major impact on the Hajj and Umrah experience, both spiritually and psychologically. Spiritually, pilgrims must perform rituals imbued with religious and moral values, such as patience, sincerity, and sacrifice. From a social perspective,

intercultural interactions in a community consisting of various nations require the ability to adapt to other cultures, as well as effective communication to maintain harmony and unity among Muslims. Arab trading culture also influences pilgrims' social relationships with local traders, which often involves a process of negotiation and bargaining as part of a unique experience.

Cultural interactions between Indonesians and Arab communities in the holy land create various social and cultural realities that need to be managed properly. Diversity in language, traditions, social norms, and ethics requires pilgrims to be adaptive and tolerant in order to maintain harmony in the performance of worship. This process also demonstrates cultural acculturation that adds variety to the social life of pilgrims, while fostering mutual respect and understanding between different cultural groups. By recognizing these intercultural dynamics, Indonesian pilgrims can improve the quality of their worship and establish harmonious relationships with the Arab community in the holy land. A Said • 2025

Research on cross-cultural communication between Indonesian pilgrims and the Arab community in the Holy Land has attracted the attention of a number of academics, particularly in the context of the hajj and umrah, which involve intensive intercultural interaction. Several previous studies have provided an overview of the dynamics of communication, forms of cultural adaptation, and the potential for misunderstandings due to differences in language and cultural values. Research conducted by Rahmawati (2018) found that language differences were a major obstacle in the interaction process. However, the use of nonverbal language such as hand gestures and facial expressions played an important role in bridging communication between the two. Meanwhile, Nugroho (2019) explained in his research that Indonesian pilgrims tend to adapt by imitating the social behavior of Arab communities, especially in terms of dress code, manners, and worship habits. However, there are still difficulties in understanding the social norms of Arab communities, which are more assertive and expressive compared to Indonesian culture, which tends to be subtle and polite. Another study by Hidayat and Lestari (2020) identified that, in addition to language factors, differences in perceptions of time and discipline pose their own challenges. Indonesian pilgrims often adjust to the stricter systems and schedules in Saudi Arabia, which reflect differences in work and social cultures. Furthermore, a study by Alamsyah (2021) highlights religiosity as a factor that supports intercultural communication. He found that shared religious values between Indonesian pilgrims and Arab communities serve as an important bridge in creating harmonious relationships, despite cultural differences in daily social practices. From these various studies, it can be concluded that cross-cultural communication between Indonesian pilgrims and Arab communities in the Holy Land is a complex phenomenon involving factors such as language, values, norms, and social adaptation. However, further research is needed to explore this phenomenon during the performance of the Hajj and Umrah pilgrimages.

## RESEARCH METHOD

This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach with the aim of gaining an in-depth understanding of the dynamics of cross-cultural communication between Indonesian pilgrims and Arab communities in the Holy Land. This approach was chosen because the phenomenon of intercultural communication is complex and contextual, requiring a

holistic understanding of the behavior, experiences, and meanings constructed by the communicators. The research was conducted in Mecca and Medina, Saudi Arabia, with research subjects including Indonesian pilgrims performing the Umrah through PT Nur Haramain, tour guides or worship guides, and Arab communities such as traders, hotel staff, and mosque servants who interact directly with pilgrims. Data was collected through participatory observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation. Observations were conducted to observe verbal and nonverbal communication, while interviews were used to explore the experiences and communication adaptation strategies of pilgrims and the Arab community. Documentation in the form of field notes, photos, and travel reports was used as supporting data. Data analysis was conducted using Miles and Huberman's interactive analysis model, which includes data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. To ensure data validity, source, method, and time triangulation techniques were used. The focus of this study covers three main aspects, namely the forms of cross-cultural communication between Indonesian pilgrims and the Arab community, the barriers and communication adaptation strategies that arise during interactions, and the role of religious and social values in building harmonious relationships during the Hajj and Umrah pilgrimages.

## **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

### **The Dynamics of Cross-Cultural Communication Among PT Nur Haramain Pilgrims in the Holy Land**

The pilgrimage and umrah bring together pilgrims from various cultural, linguistic, and value backgrounds, making cross-cultural communication an integral part of the pilgrimage experience. Each pilgrim brings with them the values and cultural norms of their homeland, which, if not managed properly, have the potential to cause misunderstandings and interpersonal conflicts. In the context of PT Nur Haramain pilgrims, the dynamics of cross-cultural communication between Indonesian pilgrims and Arab communities show relatively harmonious interactions, although they are still marked by a number of cultural and linguistic challenges.

The results of the study show that the factors that hinder communication mainly stem from negative stereotypes about Arab communities, pilgrims' limited understanding of local cultural norms and values, and differences in verbal and nonverbal communication styles. One of the most common forms of miscommunication is the misinterpretation of the intonation of Arab people, which tends to be high and firm. From an Indonesian cultural perspective, this intonation is often perceived as anger or unfriendliness, whereas in Arab culture it is a normal form of communication and does not always have a negative meaning. In addition, a lack of empathy and cultural sensitivity also increases the potential for misunderstanding in social interactions.

On the other hand, this study also found a number of supporting factors that contribute to successful cross-cultural communication. The congregation's readiness to learn about Arab culture and customs before departure proved to minimize conflicts of meaning in communication. Empathy, openness, and recognition of cultural differences are the main foundations for building effective and harmonious interactions. The understanding that communication does not only depend on verbal language, but also on

cultural context and nonverbal symbols, helps pilgrims adapt to the social environment in the Holy Land.

Some pilgrims also experience culture shock, especially in the early stages of their arrival in Saudi Arabia. Culture shock manifests itself in the form of confusion, awkwardness, and disorientation due to differences in language, customs, and social interaction patterns. However, over time, most pilgrims demonstrate good adaptability through cultural learning, observation of the environment, and direct interaction experiences. This adaptation process not only improves communication effectiveness but also fosters mutual respect for cultural differences.

The role of the Umrah tour guide (muthawwif) has proven to be very strategic in bridging the language and cultural differences between pilgrims and the local community. The tour guide serves as a communication mediator, translator, and cultural facilitator who helps pilgrims understand social norms, communication ethics, and the situation on the ground. Through clear, firm, and polite communication, tour guides are able to create a sense of security, comfort, and direction for pilgrims during their worship. In addition, the increasing ability of some local officials and traders to speak Indonesian and the use of digital translation technology also support smooth cross-cultural communication.

This study also found differences in communication dynamics based on gender. The interaction between male and female pilgrims with the Arab community is limited by local social norms and religious values, particularly regarding restrictions on physical interaction, guarding one's gaze, and social etiquette. Understanding these rules is important so that pilgrims can adjust their communication behavior in accordance with the cultural and religious context in the Holy Land.

Overall, the dynamics of cross-cultural communication that occur in the implementation of the Umrah pilgrimage by PT Nur Haramain pilgrims reflect a process of adaptation, acculturation, and continuous cultural learning. Cultural diversity is not merely a challenge, but also an opportunity to strengthen the values of brotherhood in Islam. The commonality of faith and the purpose of worship are the main bonds that transcend differences in language, culture, and ethnicity, so that cross-cultural communication can develop harmoniously and enrich the spiritual experience of the pilgrims.

## CONCLUSION

This study shows that cross-cultural communication between Indonesian pilgrims and Arab communities in the Holy Land generally occurs harmoniously despite differences in language, social norms, and communication styles. Communication barriers mainly arise from differing interpretations of verbal and nonverbal expressions, cultural stereotypes, and limited understanding of Arab social values. However, effective communication is facilitated by empathy, openness, pilgrims' readiness to learn local culture, and the role of tour guides as mediators of language and culture. The processes of adaptation and cultural learning, grounded in Islamic values such as patience and tolerance, contribute to enriching pilgrims' spiritual experiences and strengthening harmonious cross-cultural interactions.

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