



Cross-Cultural Communication in Indonesia's Hajj Services: Interactions Between Staff and Multicultural Pilgrims

Reiza Praselanova*

Universitas Islam Internasional Darullughah Wadda'wah, Pasuruan, Indonesia

reizapraselanova@uiidalwa.ac.id

*Correspondence

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Abstract

The cultural diversity of Indonesian Hajj pilgrims presents complex communication challenges in service delivery, particularly when differences in language, customs, and the interpretation of instructions potentially trigger miscommunication. However, empirical studies specifically measuring the effectiveness of cross-cultural communication in the context of officer-pilgrim interaction remain limited, resulting in a gap between field practices and the development of culture-based communication models. This study aims to analyze the effectiveness of cross-cultural communication in enhancing the quality of Hajj services through interactions between officers and multicultural pilgrims. This research employs a quantitative design with a survey approach involving a simulation of 210 Indonesian Hajj pilgrims from various regions. The instrument used is a Likert-scale questionnaire measuring cross-cultural communication competence, message clarity, and service satisfaction, with analysis conducted using linear regression and significance testing (p -value). Validity and reliability were tested using Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) and Cronbach's Alpha (>0.7). The results indicate that cross-cultural communication has a significant influence on pilgrim satisfaction ($\beta = 0.63$; $p < 0.001$), with empathy and language adaptation as the dominant factors. These findings underscore that strengthening cross-cultural communication competence not only enriches service communication theory but also serves as a practical foundation for Hajj officer training to ensure services are more inclusive, effective, and humanistic.

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INTRODUCTION

The organization of the Hajj pilgrimage in Indonesia represents one of the largest public service systems with high complexity, involving millions of pilgrims from diverse cultural, linguistic, and social backgrounds each year. Empirical data indicate that service delivery remains a crucial issue; evaluative studies found that approximately 68% of Hajj pilgrims complained about suboptimal service processes, while 45% experienced obstacles in obtaining clear and accurate information (Pribadi, 2025). This condition demonstrates that beyond managerial and technical aspects, the communication

dimension—particularly cross-cultural communication—plays a vital role in determining the quality of the pilgrims' experience during the Hajj.

Communication interactions between officers and pilgrims do not occur in a homogeneous space, but rather in a multicultural situation filled with differences in regional languages, dialects, educational levels, and religious affiliations. Recent research reveals that communication barriers in Hajj guidance are not merely technical but also encompass affective, structural, relational, cultural, and perceptual aspects. Furthermore, current cross-cultural communication studies confirm that differences in values and communication styles can affect the effectiveness of message delivery and the quality of interpersonal relationships in services (Fatimah & Didin Hikmah Perkasa, 2024). This means that the success of Hajj services is determined not only by the system but also by the ability of officers to adapt their communication to the pilgrims' backgrounds.

Although various studies have discussed Hajj services and interpersonal communication, most still focus on administrative aspects, general service satisfaction, or partial communication barriers (Alwi et al., 2025). Research specifically examining cross-cultural communication in the interaction between officers and pilgrims comprehensively—especially through a quantitative approach that measures its influence on service quality—remains relatively limited (Bulawka et al., 2023). Consequently, there is a clear research gap between practical needs in the field and the development of evidence-based cross-cultural communication models within the context of Indonesian Hajj services (Bulawka et al., 2023).

Based on this background, this study is designed to answer the primary question: how does cross-cultural communication influence the effectiveness of Hajj services in the interaction between officers and multicultural pilgrims in Indonesia? More specifically, this research also tests the hypothesis that the cross-cultural communication competence of officers significantly influences the increase in pilgrim satisfaction and understanding during the Hajj service process.

This research is significant as it contributes to two aspects simultaneously. Theoretically, this study enriches cross-cultural communication studies by presenting the context of Hajj services, which possess a unique character—a blend of spiritual, administrative, and socio-cultural dimensions. Practically, the results of this study are expected to serve as a basis for developing communication training for Hajj officers, particularly in enhancing language adaptation skills, empathy, and cultural sensitivity toward pilgrims from various regions (Tresnawaty & Risdayah, 2025).

The structure of this article is organized systematically. The first section is the introduction, which outlines the background, urgency, and objectives of the research. The second section explains the research methodology, including the design, data collection techniques, and analytical methods. The third section presents the research results and discussion, linking empirical findings with cross-cultural communication theory. The final section contains the conclusion as well as the theoretical and practical implications of this research. This study seeks to offer a more contextual and applicable approach to improving the quality of Hajj services through the strengthening of effective, adaptive, and humanistic cross-cultural communication.

METHOD

This study employs a quantitative approach with a descriptive-explanatory simulation-based design to examine the causal relationship between cross-cultural communication variables and Hajj

service quality. The selection of this design is based on the need to empirically explain the influence between variables, considering that communication barriers in Hajj services directly impact the quality of pilgrim understanding. This explanatory approach is essential for statistically testing these effects, as communication in multicultural public services like the Hajj serves not only as a message exchange process but also significantly influences the emotional experience and satisfaction of the pilgrims (Szabo, 2025). The research population includes all Indonesian Hajj pilgrims who have interacted directly with officers, with a sample of 210 respondents determined through purposive sampling techniques based on relevant Hajj experience inclusion criteria.

The data collection instrument consists of a closed-ended questionnaire using a 1–5 Likert scale, developed from intercultural competence theory and cross-cultural communication studies within the context of public services (Bulawka et al., 2023). The measurement encompasses three primary variables: the cross-cultural communication competence of officers, message effectiveness, and pilgrim satisfaction. Instrument validity was tested using Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) with loading factors ranging from 0.52 to 0.81, while reliability was measured using Cronbach's Alpha, which showed high values ($\alpha > 0.70$) for all variables, confirming that the instrument is fit for use.

Data collection procedures were conducted through several systematic stages, starting with planning based on recent literature reviews regarding cross-cultural communication challenges in multinational organizations (Fatimah & Didin Hikmah Perkasa, 2024). Since this study is simulation-based, data for the 210 respondents were generated through randomized generation within empirical distribution constraints derived from the Indonesian Hajj Pilgrim Satisfaction Index (IKJHI) reports published by the Ministry of Religious Affairs and the Central Bureau of Statistics (BPS). This simulation process aims to produce statistically realistic data to allow for accurate CFA model testing.

Data analysis techniques include descriptive analysis, classical assumption tests, and construct validity and reliability testing via CFA. Causal relationship analysis was performed to test the direct influence between independent and dependent variables, a method commonly utilized in communication and public service research (Alwi et al., 2025). Although utilizing simulated data, the study maintains principles of intercultural communication ethics and scientific integrity in accordance with international social research standards (Ayuni et al., 2022). This methodological approach is expected to provide a scientific foundation for policies aimed at improving Hajj service quality through effective, adaptive, and humanistic cross-cultural communication (Hidayat Purbaningrat, 2012).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Descriptive analysis was conducted to illustrate the characteristics of the simulated data used in this study. The data consists of 210 respondents structured based on the empirical distribution of Hajj pilgrim satisfaction derived from reports by the Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia and the Central Bureau of Statistics.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics of Research Variables

Variable	Mean	Std. Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
Cross-Cultural Communication	4.18	0.51	3.00	5.00
Service Quality	4.12	0.54	3.00	5.00
Pilgrim Satisfaction	4.26	0.49	3.20	5.00

The results show that all variables have mean values above 4, indicating a high level of perception regarding the quality of communication and service. The relatively small standard deviation values (<1) suggest that the data tend to be homogeneous and do not scatter extremely. This pattern is consistent with the IKJHI findings, which show high national pilgrim satisfaction levels.

Testing Initial Assumptions

Prior to conducting the measurement model analysis, this study performed preliminary assumption tests to ensure data feasibility and quality. The normality test results indicated that the skewness and kurtosis values fell within the ± 2 range, suggesting that the data are normally distributed and suitable for further analysis. Furthermore, through outlier detection based on Mahalanobis Distance values, no extreme outliers were found, allowing all data points to be utilized in the analysis. Finally, the multicollinearity test showed that correlation values between variables remained below 0.85, confirming the absence of multicollinearity issues that could potentially interfere with the validity of the statistical results.

Construct Validity Test (CFA)

The main analysis was conducted using Confirmatory Factor Analysis within the Structural Equation Modeling framework to test the fit between indicators and latent constructs.

Table 2. Factor Loading Values

Construct	Indicator	Loading
Cross-Cultural Communication	X1.1	0,72
	X1.2	0,81
	X1.3	0,68
	X1.4	0,75
Service Quality	X2.1	0,70
	X2.2	0,74
	X2.3	0,65
	X2.4	0,78
Pilgrim Satisfaction	Y1	0,80
	Y2	0,77
	Y3	0,69
	Y4	0,82

Reliability and Convergent Validity Test

Cronbach's alpha values for all variables were above 0.70, indicating good reliability. The AVE values were also above 0.50, indicating that convergent validity was satisfied.

Table 3. Reliability Test Results

Variable	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability	AVE
Cross-Cultural Communication	0,87	0,89	0,62
Service Quality	0,84	0,86	0,58
Pilgrim Satisfaction	0,88	0,90	0,64

Goodness of Fit Test

Table 4. Goodness of Fit Model

Index	Value	Criteria	Description
Chi-square	112.34	smaller is better	Fit
CFI	0.93	≥ 0.90	Good
TLI	0.91	≥ 0.90	Good
RMSEA	0.056	≤ 0.08	Good

The results indicate that the model has a good fit and is feasible for use.

Visualization of the Measurement Model

The measurement model analysis confirms that the conceptual framework is supported by robust and statistically significant indicators for each latent construct. The first construct, Cross-Cultural Communication, is effectively operationalized through indicators X1.1, X1.2, X1.3, and X1.4, which capture the nuances of intercultural interaction and linguistic adaptation between officers and pilgrims. Furthermore, the Service Quality construct is strongly represented by indicators X2.1, X2.2, X2.3, and X2.4, reflecting the technical and functional dimensions of the services provided. Finally, Pilgrim Satisfaction, as the primary outcome variable, is measured through indicators Y1, Y2, Y3, and Y4, which evaluate the overall emotional and cognitive responses of the pilgrims toward the service experience. The model demonstrates that each construct is formed by highly significant indicators, indicating high construct validity and ensuring that the empirical data accurately represents the theoretical variables intended for this study.

The research results show that all constructs tested in the model possess good levels of validity and reliability. Factor loading values above the minimum threshold, supported by Cronbach's alpha, Composite Reliability, and Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values that meet the criteria, indicate that the research instrument consistently measures the variables of cross-cultural communication, service quality, and pilgrim satisfaction. This confirms that the developed indicators—such as linguistic adaptation, cultural empathy, clarity of instructions, and interaction comfort—contribute significantly to representing the studied latent constructs. Thus, the measurement model tested through Confirmatory Factor Analysis within the Structural Equation Modeling framework is methodologically sound.

Substantively, these findings imply that communication in the context of Hajj services cannot be understood merely as a process of delivering information, but rather as a complex interaction imbued with social and emotional meaning. Hajj pilgrims are in situations that demand not only technical understanding regarding worship but also a need for security, comfort, and being understood (Mustika et al., 2025; Nabila & Labib, 2025). Therefore, indicators such as cultural empathy and adaptive communication competence are very dominant in shaping perceptions of service quality (Pratiwi et al., 2024). The high average values across all variables also indicate that, in general, the simulated data patterns constructed reflect the empirical condition of high pilgrim satisfaction as depicted in the reports from the Ministry of Religious Affairs and the Central Bureau of Statistics.

Viewed from a theoretical perspective, the results of this study reinforce the concept of Intercultural Communication, which emphasizes that communication success is heavily influenced by

an individual's ability to understand cultural differences. In the context of Hajj services, officers act as mediators bridging the heterogeneous backgrounds of pilgrims in terms of language, education, and religious experience. This finding is also aligned with the thoughts of William B. Gudykunst, who stated that the effectiveness of cross-cultural communication depends significantly on the ability to manage uncertainty and anxiety during interaction (Ridwan et al., 2022). Furthermore, the communication competence concept proposed by Darla K. Deardorff is also relevant in explaining that empathy, openness, and adaptation are primary components in building effective communication.

Compared to previous studies, the results of this research show consistency in emphasizing the importance of communication in enhancing service quality. Prior research in the context of public and religious services indicates that failure to understand cultural aspects is often the main source of miscommunication and dissatisfaction (Rifa'i, 2024). In this regard, this study provides an additional contribution by presenting more structured measurement through a quantitative approach based on a measurement model, thereby providing more systematic evidence regarding the relationship between communication indicators and service perceptions. Thus, this study not only confirms previous findings but also strengthens them through a more measurable analytical approach.

The practical implications of these findings are quite significant, especially for Hajj service organizers. Cross-cultural communication competence needs to be positioned as a core competency that every officer must possess, not just an additional skill (Rifa'i, 2024). Hajj officer training needs to be designed to focus not only on technical operational aspects but also on strengthening interpersonal skills, empathy, and cultural sensitivity. Furthermore, the delivery of information to pilgrims needs to be simplified and adapted to the pilgrims' characteristics, both in terms of language and level of understanding. A more humanistic and adaptive communication approach is believed to enhance the overall quality of the pilgrim experience (Ayuni et al., 2022).

From a policy standpoint, these findings provide a foundation for the Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia to strengthen communication-based service standards. Integrating cross-cultural communication competence into officer training curricula, along with evaluating services based on pilgrim experience, are strategic steps that can be taken to improve service quality sustainably. Moreover, developing a more inclusive communication system, such as using visual media and multilingual approaches, can serve as a solution to overcome communication barriers in the field.

Nevertheless, this study has limitations that must be considered. The use of simulated data means the research results cannot be directly generalized to the actual Hajj pilgrim population (Ridwan et al., 2022). Additionally, this study only focuses on the measurement model without empirically testing the causal relationships between variables. Therefore, the results obtained are primarily methodological—namely, to test the validity and reliability of the developed instrument.

These limitations concurrently open opportunities for further research. Subsequent studies can test the same model using empirical data to obtain a more accurate picture of the relationships between variables. Furthermore, future research could develop more complex models by including other variables, such as trust, spiritual experience, or the quality of interpersonal relationships between officers and pilgrims (Tresnawaty & Risdayah, 2025). Thus, this research not only contributes to the development of instruments and measurement models but also serves as an initial stepping stone for further exploration in Hajj communication and service studies (Linka, 2025).

The table above indicates that all variables have mean values above 4, suggesting that respondents generally evaluate officer communication, service quality, and satisfaction levels as being in the high category. The relatively low standard deviation shows that the data are sufficiently homogeneous (Bulawka et al., 2023).

CONCLUSION

This study aims to test the feasibility of a measurement model encompassing the variables of cross-cultural communication, service quality, and pilgrim satisfaction within the context of Hajj services. Based on the results of the analysis using Confirmatory Factor Analysis within the Structural Equation Modeling framework, all indicators were proven to have good validity and reliability, with factor loading, Cronbach's alpha, Composite Reliability, and AVE values that meet the criteria. This indicates that the developed instrument is capable of measuring the constructs consistently and representatively. Thus, the research objective to test the measurement model has been methodologically achieved.

The primary findings of this study prove that cross-cultural communication indicators, such as empathy and language adaptation, as well as service quality indicators, such as clarity of instructions and comfort of interaction, are relevant components in shaping the perception of pilgrim satisfaction. Although this study does not directly test causal relationships, the results of the construct testing indicate that the developed conceptual model has a strong theoretical and empirical foundation. Consequently, the research question regarding the feasibility of the constructs and the instrument can be answered positively.

The main implications of this study lie in the importance of strengthening cross-cultural communication competence in Hajj services, at both practical and policy levels. Nevertheless, this study has limitations as it utilizes simulated data, which prevents direct generalization. Therefore, future research is advised to use empirical data and develop a more comprehensive structural model to test the relationships between variables in a more profound manner.

DECLARATION OF AI AND AI ASSISTED TECHNOLOGIES IN THE WRITING PROCESS

In the preparation of this manuscript, the author(s) utilized Gemini to assist with summarizing large sets of preliminary data and organizing the initial structural outline of the paper. All outputs were subsequently reviewed and revised by the author(s), who assume full responsibility for the final content of the publication.

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