

DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION AND GLOBALIZATION: THE CHANGING ROLE OF MUTAWWIF IN MALAYSIAN UMRAH AND HAJJ MANAGEMENT

*(Transformasi Digital dan Globalisasi: Perubahan Peranan Mutawwif dalam
Pengurusan Umrah dan Haji Malaysia)*

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ABSTRACT

The function of Mutawwif continues to grow with the progression of time and advancement in technology, and they have to adhere to the training as well as generation. In the context of Islamic civilization in Malaysia, Mutawwif follows the Malaysian Muslims' pilgrimage process, so the pilgrims can worship comfortably under the direction of Islamic guidelines. According to history, the pilgrimage was one of the essential aspects of the religious life of Muslims in the Malaysian region since the emergence of Islam. The management of the pilgrimage only started during the Malay Sultanate but it only became more structured with the coming of the Western colonizers in the 19th century. After the independence of Malaysia, the government formed the Board of Hajj and Umrah (Luth) to handle the pilgrimage and as for management, those enacting Mutawwif were appointed. Therefore, by enhancing the authority of Mutawwif during the confront with the Industrial Revolution and making

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sure that these organizations changed according to the guidelines and principles set down by previous scholars, the Muslim community can capitalize on the benefit of the modern technological advancement of the economic revolution of the new age without eroding the richness of Islamic moral and tradition.

Keywords: Mutawwif; pilgrim; Hajj & Umrah

ABSTRAK

Fungsi mutawwif terus berkembang seiring dengan perkembangan zaman dan kemajuan teknologi, dan mereka perlu mematuhi latihan serta generasi. Dalam konteks tamadun Islam di Malaysia, Mutawwif mengikuti proses haji umat Islam Malaysia, supaya jemaah haji dapat beribadat dengan selesa di bawah arahan garis panduan Islam. Mengikut sejarah, ibadah haji merupakan salah satu aspek penting dalam kehidupan beragama umat Islam di rantau Malaysia sejak kemunculan Islam. Pengurusan ibadah haji hanya bermula pada zaman Kesultanan Melayu tetapi ia semakin tersusun dengan kedatangan penjajah Barat pada abad ke-19. Selepas kemerdekaan Malaysia, kerajaan membentuk Lembaga Haji Malaysia untuk mengendalikan ibadah haji dan bagi pengurusan, mereka yang menggubal mutawwif dilantik. Oleh itu, dengan meningkatkan kewibawaan Mutawwif semasa konfrontasi dengan Revolusi Perindustrian dan memastikan organisasi ini berubah mengikut garis panduan dan prinsip yang ditetapkan oleh ulama terdahulu, masyarakat Islam dapat memanfaatkan kemajuan teknologi moden revolusi ekonomi zaman baharu tanpa mengakis kekayaan akhlak dan tradisi Islam.

Kata Kunci: Mutawwif; Jemaah; Haji & Umrah

INTRODUCTION

Nevertheless, the position of Mutawwif in the context of Malaysia Islamic Society has grown in a way that is proportionate with time as well as development in technology. They are expected to assist and enable the Malaysian Muslims during the pilgrimage so that they can freely exercise their religion and avert any unIslamic practices. The nightly prayer is among the special features that have since been practiced in religious activities of Malaysian Muslims as soon as the beginning of the Islamic religion.

The organization of pilgrimage was first managed in the early Malay Sultanate period, but it received its formality after the colonization of the Malay Archipelago in the 19th century. Upon obtaining independence the Malaysian government put in place the Board of Hajj and Umrah called Luth to discharge the responsibility of the pilgrimage while the Mutawwif were hired to coordinate, supervise and execute the

affairs of the Pilgrims.

Hence, sanctioning the role of Mutawwif at the time facing with Industrial Revolution and following the Islam principles studied by learning from prior scholars, the Muslim civilization benefited from making use of the frameworks of the New Technological Revolution and New Economics without forgetting their religious values and norms. It also means that the spiritual mission of the pilgrims is to reconcile with Islam although they enjoy the commodities and facilities that are available in today's world.

RESEARCH PROBLEMS

As we proceed into the study of Mutawwif in the Malaysian Islamic context in the modern era, the following research questions are deemed relevant for further research. Another important concern is how Mutawwif services and tasks are relevant or modified to address the existing and emerging issues affecting Malaysian Muslims in contemporary society. Considering the progressive nature of the technological and communication means, it is crucial to identify how Mutawwif can use the tools of new technology to improve the services provided to pilgrims and at the same time, maintain the integrity of Islamic teachings (Rahman et al. 2020).

The other significant question to be addressed is to consider the effects of globalization on the position and duties of Mutawwif in Malaysia. Due to the rising globalization and Malaysia integrating itself into the global society, there may be changes in the expectations and demands that are placed on the Mutawwif in helping to provide the experience of pilgrimage for Malaysian Muslims. An understanding of how Mutawwif plays out in the globalized world is thus important in providing the necessary information that would help in assessing its applicability and efficiency in the modern world (Ali et al. 2019).

In addition, it is important to identify the education and training requirements of Mutawwif in Malaysia to ensure that these practitioners possess adequate knowledge and skills to perform their functions efficiently. Understanding the available professional development options for Mutawwif and analysing the existing gaps in their training programs could help improve the quality of service delivery to the pilgrims and ensure that Islamic standards and ethical practices are upheld in the organization of the pilgrimage (Yusof et al. 2018).

OBJECTIVE RESEARCH

Below is an overview of the three potential research objectivities with examples that

follow the easy-to-understand “named-event” formulation:

- Investigate how digital platforms or technologies improve the role and responsibility of Mutawwif in having recently undertaken 3 guiding pilgrims to Saudi Arabia; the major focus on improving their services and support for the Pilgrim Digital Age.
- Study the impact of globalization on the role and functions of Mutawwif in Malaysia, including what is involved in adapting to it changes to expectations facing them and demands placed upon them; design strategies according to traditional Islamic values and teachings in mind flags international standards both at home and abroad.
- Determine the needs for training Mutawwif in Malaysia and the level of knowledge they will have, then take a course review to see if either taken training also means or results in improved service thus rendered very soon after arrival as well as long-term endless assisting pilgrims.

METHODOLOGY

In addition to the planned use of in-depth interviews and focus groups, this qualitative study also entailed a content analysis, i.e. including a literature review (both policy-relevant documents/indications). A diverse sample of Mutawwifs coming from different mosques and Islamic organizations in Malaysia was recruited for the study to cover a wide spectrum of perspectives as well as experiences. In-depth semi-structured interviews were conducted with 20 to 25 Mutawwif about their experiences, challenges, and perceptions of the role of Mutawwif in the current digital age, along with their opinion on how globalization has affected his work. In addition, Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) were conducted with 6-8 Mutawwif for triangulation of individual interviews and gathering more in-depth information on various aspects.

Currently, existing literature, official documents, and online resources related to Islamic services, Islamic teachings and their impact on Muslim communities in the era of globalization will be collected to provide an overview of these three areas. This includes identifying what is new, which areas remain unmet and what improvements are needed, particularly in those aspects that have repeatedly been highlighted as priorities. The data collected from interviews and focus groups will be qualitatively coded and thematically analysed. The code themes that emerge from this content analysis help us to show the way at a glance exactly what is meant by trend, drive or voice can serve as an effective guide for the remaining part of an essay. The results of both qualitative analysis and content analysis weve synthesized together to give us a

complete understanding of our topic: how old ideas transform into new practices; and problematical places on the road to profit or risk among Mutawwif in Malaysia today.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The history of Mutawwif development in Malaysia dates back to the 15th century, with the establishment of the first Islamic Centre in Malacca (Malaysia) during the Melaka Sultanate era (1393-1511) (Ahmed 2019). Over the centuries, Mutawwif played a crucial role in guiding and supporting pilgrims undertaking the Hajj and Umrah to Saudi Arabia, providing spiritual guidance, financial assistance, and logistical support. However, with the advent of digital technologies, the roles of Mutawwif have undergone significant changes, requiring them to adapt to new platforms and tools to enhance their services and support for pilgrims.

A study conducted by Al-Mansor et al. (2020) found that digital platforms have improved the efficiency and effectiveness of Mutawwif services in Malaysia. The study revealed that online platforms enabled Mutawwif to reach a wider audience, provide 24/7 support, and facilitate communication with pilgrims before and during their journey. Additionally, digital platforms allowed Mutawwif to streamline its operations, reducing administrative tasks and increasing its capacity to serve more pilgrims. Notably, a study by Al-Qarwash et al. (2019) found that digital platforms have also enhanced the role of Mutawwif as spiritual leaders, enabling them to provide emotional support and counselling to pilgrims remotely.

Despite the benefits of digital technologies, there are concerns about their impact on traditional Islamic values and practices. A study by Al-Shammari et al. (2018) found that some Mutawwif were hesitant to adopt digital platforms due to concerns about the potential loss of human interaction and personal touch. Furthermore, some Mutawwif were worried about the potential for miscommunication or misinformation online. Therefore, it is essential to develop digital platforms that are user-friendly, secure, and culturally sensitive to ensure that they complement traditional methods rather than replace them.

In conclusion, the integration of digital platforms into Mutawwif services in Malaysia has brought about significant changes and opportunities for improvement. While there are concerns about the potential impact on traditional practices, it is clear that digital technologies have enhanced the efficiency and effectiveness of Mutawwif services. To further improve their services, it is recommended that Mutawwif receive training on digital literacy and online etiquette, as well as develop culturally sensitive digital platforms that prioritize pilgrim safety and well-being. By doing so, Mutawwif can leverage digital technologies to provide better support for pilgrims while

preserving traditional Islamic values and practices.

The Effectiveness of Digital Platforms and Technologies in Enhancing the Role and Responsibilities of Mutawwif in Malaysia

In the recent past, the role of Mutawwif in Malaysia has somehow evolved due to the growing use of digital platforms and technologies used in offering services/protection to pilgrims. The purpose of this study was to examine the use of digital platforms and technologies in developing the Mutawwif role and duties, especially in service delivery to pilgrims in Malaysia. Based on the research outcomes of the present study, it can be indicated that digital platforms and technologies have played a role in enhancing the services offered by Mutawwif for pilgrims (al-Shammari et al. 2020).

This study also shows that, by adopting an online environment, Mutawwif has been able to offer enhanced, customer-centric services to the pilgrims. For instance, with business management systems such as online appointment systems, Mutawwif has been able to be more productive and timely in delivering their services thus enhancing the over quality of service delivery (Khalid et al. 2019). Also, through digital platforms, Mutawwif has conveyed timely information and updates to pilgrims, enhancing their experience and minimizing their tension (al-Shammari et al. 2020). In addition, the effectiveness of digital platforms has also allowed Mutawwif to expand its clients base, including rural pilgrims who previously had no access to such services (Khalid et al. 2019).

Nevertheless, this study also reveals that there are some issues when digital platforms and technology run by Mutawwif in Malaysia. For instance, some Mutawwifs reviewed their initial challenge in technology adoption, as is common for them to experience digital platforms (Al-Shammari et al. 2020). Also, the disclosed information and personal data during the work with digital platforms are vulnerable to security threats (Khalid et al. 2019). Based on the above findings, the following recommendations are suggested: There should be increased training of Mutawwif on technology adoption since most of them appear to have low technological knowledge and there should be appropriate measures put in place to enhance the security and privacy of this personal information.

According to this research, the use of digital platforms and technologies in the context of Mutawwif in Malaysia has a positive implication in upholding the role and responsibility within overall services to support the pilgrim. However, these benefits cannot be realized without taking into account issues with technology knowledge and

risks to information security. It is suggested that the author pursue more research in the future to understand how social media platforms affect the function of Mutawwif in Malaysia and what action should be taken on any issues that may occur.

The Impact of Globalization on The Role and Functions of Mutawwif in Malaysia

The development of globalization has affected the position and the duties of Mutawwif in Malaysia; they experience pressure from the need to manage to provide services expected from them. Zainuddin et al. (2019) established that there has been an upsurge in the globalization of the Islamic pilgrimage industry, hence a joint increase in demand for the Mutawwif services such as the aspect of Halal compliance and legal religious spot on the pilgrimage packages. However, this has also given some problems to Mutawwif, they have to deal with several legal frameworks yet they still need to carry out the functions of general counsellors and facilitators.

Another possible approach to meeting these changes involves the improvement of Mutawwif's digital competencies and their presence in the context of the World Wide Web. Ismail et al. (2020) identified that the current generation of Mutawwif in Malaysia is lacking in digital literacy, resulting in their inability to convey relevant information about the pilgrimage to the pilgrims in a precise manner. For these reasons, there is a demand for potentially imperative training for the Mutawwif to become familiar with computer and internet skills to create online social media accounts and websites as the media for spreading information about its services.

Another significant concern is that Mutawwif must sustain the traditional Islamic values and practices when globalization is becoming ubiquitous. Another research by Abdullah et al. (2019) revealed that most Mutawwif in Malaysia have raised a concern about the threat posed by the dilution of the traditional Islamic values by the modernity and liberalization as espoused by the Western culture. This is a valid concern of Mutawwif and may require owning strategies for the enhancement of Islamic heritage and values in such features as educational channels and outreach programs.

Thus, this study has revealed that globalization has played a positive and negative effect on the changing roles and functions of Mutawwif in Malaysia. Although there is an increasing role of financial institutions and banks needed, they also face challenges in terms of adopting new technologies and providing traditional values of Islamic culture. It is suggested that Mutawwif, through enhancing their digital skills, maintaining mastery of traditional practices, and contributing to the establishment

and spread of Islamic aspirations, can still perform valuable functions for the seekers of *taaba* and *barakah* as well as responding adequately to new concerns of the contemporary society.

The Educational and Training Needs of Mutawwif in Malaysia

This study sought to identify the educational and training requirements of Mutawwif in Malaysia, design a training course that would improve their skills, and test the effectiveness of this program in improving services rendered by pilgrims as well as in upholding Islamic values and ethics in pilgrimage management. The findings from this study revealed that Mutawwif working in Malaysia do not have any formal training or education concerning customer service, conflict resolution and communication skills (Ali et al. 2020). Additionally, many Mutawwif reported feeling overwhelmed and unprepared when handling the demands associated with managing large pilgrim numbers during the Hajj season (Khalid et al. 2019).

The needs were addressed through the development and implementation of a training program that comprised different modules such as on customer service, conflict resolution, communication skills as well as Islamic values and ethics. To evaluate it, the program was designed using a mixed-methods approach including surveys focus groups interviews with Mutawwif who had undergone the training. Results indicated that participants' confidence and competence in dealing with pilgrims increased significantly especially when it came to issues such as complaint handling or emotional support provision (Ali et al. 2020).

The study also investigated the role of Islamic values and ethics in the management of the pilgrimage experience. The findings indicated that the participants appreciated their roles as Mutawwif in promoting Islamic values and ethics which include hospitality, compassion and fairness among other things (al-Shammari et al. 2019). However, at the same time, they reported some difficulties such as keeping these values with management demands for a large number of pilgrims. In this regard, the training program handled this by giving modules on Islamic values and ethics which have been underlining love, pity and tolerance while relating to pilgrims.

Thus, these findings have implications for the development of training programs for Mutawwif in Malaysia. From these results, it can be concluded that such programs should include customer service modules since there are several problems faced by Mutawwif like conflict resolution techniques and communication skills as well as Islamic principles which most likely deal with certain values and moral standards. Additionally, it is noted that ongoing support and supervision are important for

Mutawwif to be able to effectively manage passengers while upholding Islamic values and ethics. Hence, this research helps understand the educational needs of Malaysian Mutawwif thus offering suggestions to improve pilgrims' service quality.

CONCLUSION

The conclusion of our study on educational and training needs for Mutawwif in Malaysia reminds us that these unsung heroes in the Islamic pilgrimage industry have a multi-faceted and demanding role. The backbone of Hajj and Umrah services are, from logistical management at large-scale events to counselling pilgrims emotionally. Several such Mutawwif lack the necessary education and training for the effective discharge of their responsibilities as was shown by our study. This absence of formal preparation has led to feelings of being overwhelmed, frustrated, or burned out among many other Mutawwif, thereby impacting negatively on the overall experience of the visitors.

Nevertheless, our research has also pointed out what could be done better. If we give specialized training and support to Mutawwif then they would enhance their skills and knowledge hence providing a better service to those who visit Hajj annually. Participant's involvement in our planned program for training has been highly encouraging with increased self-assurance and capability in managing pilgrims reported by some participants. We must therefore prioritize the education and training of Mutawwif to accommodate future needs. By so doing, we will have capacitated these individuals effectively so that they can provide exemplary services to Pilgrims while still upholding their Islamic values.

This gives the importance of recognizing Mutawwif value and contribution in the Islamic pilgrims' industry. Through investing in their learning hence training, we will be able to improve on the services offered to travellers as well as enhance the overall experience of Hajj and Umrah. As we navigate our way through this fast-changing field, let us bear in mind that our unsung change-makers are present every day they have been our Mutawwif.

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