



THE IMPACT OF COMMUNICATION PSYCHOLOGY IN GUIDANCE SERVICES ON PILGRIMS' TRUST TOWARD UMRAH TRAVEL AGENCIES

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Abstract :

The rapid expansion of the Umrah industry has intensified the need for high-quality guidance services that address both the logistical and psychological dimensions of pilgrimage preparation. This study investigates the impact of communication psychology on pilgrims' trust toward Umrah travel agencies, focusing on key communicative elements such as empathy, message clarity, emotional support, responsiveness, and guide credibility. Using a quantitative explanatory design, data were collected from 268 Indonesian pilgrims through validated Likert-scale questionnaires and analyzed using PLS-SEM. The findings show that communication psychology is applied effectively within guidance services and significantly enhances pilgrims' trust. Empathic interaction, understandable ritual explanations, emotional regulation, and interpersonal warmth create a supportive learning environment that reduces anxiety and increases confidence. Communication behavior that reflects credibility, transparency, and genuine care also strengthens perceptions of agency integrity and reliability. These results confirm that psychological aspects of communication play a critical role in trust formation, complementing operational service quality. The study fills an important research gap by empirically modeling communication psychology as a multidimensional predictor of trust in Umrah services and offers practical implications for agency training programs aimed at improving guide competence and pilgrims' overall experience.

Keywords : Communication Psychology; Empathy; Guidance Services; Pilgrims' Trust; Umrah Travel Agencies; Interpersonal Communication; Emotional Support; Service Quality; Credibility; PLS-SEM.

INTRODUCTION

The global Umrah industry has grown rapidly in the last decade and, with it, the complexity of the services offered by travel agencies that organize pilgrimage trips. Umrah travel agencies operate at the intersection of spiritual service and customer service: they must manage logistics, religious guidance, emotional support, and regulatory compliance while helping pilgrims achieve a meaningful religious experience. Because the pilgrimage carries deep spiritual significance, pilgrims' decisions and satisfaction are strongly influenced not only by technical service quality (such as visa processing, accommodation, and transport) but also by interpersonal interactions during pre-departure guidance and in-trip accompaniment. Effective guidance often delivered through manasik (ritual training), pre-departure briefings, and one-on-one counseling plays a critical role in preparing pilgrims mentally and emotionally for the journey,



reducing anxiety, and shaping perceptions of the travel agency's competence and integrity (Maulana, Sanusi, & Rustandi, 2024). In this hybrid service context, the psychological dynamics of communication (communication psychology) become central: empathy, active listening, emotional support, message clarity, and cultural sensitivity in the guidance process are hypothesized to influence pilgrims' trust in their agency as much as or sometimes more than purely operational service factors. Recent studies from Indonesian SINTA-indexed journals indicate that trust among pilgrims is associated with service quality and the interpersonal aspects of guidance, making communication psychology a promising explanatory variable for trust formation in Umrah services (Gustari & Angraini, 2025; Multazam: Jurnal Manajemen Haji dan Umrah, 2024).

The success of Umrah travel agencies in delivering high-quality services is not only determined by logistical efficiency and operational management, but also by the psychological dynamics of communication that occur between service personnel and pilgrims. As the demand for Umrah journeys continues to rise globally, pilgrims increasingly expect guidance services that are not only informative but also emotionally supportive. This expectation is rooted in the fact that the Umrah pilgrimage is a deeply spiritual journey that often involves emotional vulnerability, physical exhaustion, and varying levels of religious understanding. In such a context, the ability of travel agency personnel to communicate with empathy, clarity, and emotional intelligence becomes a critical factor in shaping the overall experience of the pilgrims.

Communication psychology offers an important framework for understanding how interpersonal interactions influence pilgrims' perceptions, emotions, and levels of trust. Elements such as empathy, active listening, nonverbal communication, emotional awareness, and persuasive verbal delivery play a central role in building positive relationships between staff and pilgrims. When guidance officers demonstrate these communication competencies, pilgrims are more likely to feel valued, understood, and well-supported throughout their spiritual journey. This not only reduces anxiety and confusion but also enhances their confidence in the agency's professionalism and reliability.

Pilgrims' trust toward Umrah travel agencies is a key determinant of customer satisfaction, loyalty, and long-term organizational reputation. Trust is often built through consistent emotional reassurance, transparent communication, and the perceived sincerity of the officers who accompany them. In many cases, the emotional connection formed through effective communication has a stronger impact on trust than the technical aspects of the service itself. As a result, the psychological dimension of communication emerges as a strategic component in service delivery that must be understood and managed carefully by Umrah travel providers.

From a theoretical standpoint, communication psychology integrates cognitive and affective dimensions of interpersonal exchange: what is said (message content), how it is said (tone, empathy, nonverbal cues), and how receivers interpret messages given their emotional state and religious expectations. Within the service literature, trust is a multidimensional construct

comprised of perceived competence, integrity, benevolence, and predictability. When guidance personnel convey knowledge confidently (competence), act transparently and honestly (integrity), and demonstrate concern for pilgrims' well-being (benevolence), trust is likely to increase; conversely, poor communication or insensitive messaging can trigger doubt and withdrawal (Jailani & Alkam, 2019; Utarsih et al., 2024). Empirical work in Indonesian contexts has begun documenting links between manasik effectiveness, communication practices, and pilgrim satisfaction but these studies often emphasize outcome measures like satisfaction or loyalty rather than isolating the psychological mechanisms of communication that shape trust.

Practically, the need to examine communication psychology in guidance services is heightened by market dynamics. The proliferation of digital marketing, online testimonials, and competing low-cost 'backpacker' Umrah packages increases information asymmetry and raises trust issues for prospective pilgrims. Travel agencies that invest in interpersonal guidance training staff in empathetic counseling, conflict de-escalation, and clear ritual instruction may be better positioned to differentiate themselves in a crowded marketplace. Several SINTA-indexed studies from 2022–2024 emphasize that agencies' reputations and pilgrims' loyalty are influenced by perceived honesty, clarity of information, and relational warmth provided during guidance sessions (Multazam, 2024; Al Tijarah, 2024). Yet empirical models that quantify the relative impact of communication psychology variables (e.g., perceived empathy, supportive communication, clarity, and responsiveness) on pilgrims' trust remain limited.

This study therefore responds to two interlinked needs. First, it seeks to describe how communication psychology is operationalized in guidance services of Umrah travel agencies including the specific behaviors and messaging strategies used by guides and trainers (e.g., empathic statements, narrative framing, reassurance techniques, and ritual demonstration methods). Second, it aims to analyze the influence of these communication psychological dimensions on pilgrims' trust toward their travel agencies, using quantitative measures to estimate effect sizes and test hypotheses. By shifting analytical focus from general service quality to the psychological mechanisms embedded in interpersonal guidance, the research hopes to account for variance in trust that remains unexplained in studies that operationalize service quality mainly in logistical or functional terms. Prior Indonesian research has established correlations among service quality, satisfaction, and loyalty; this project supplements that literature by isolating communication-psychology constructs as direct predictors of trust.

Research gaps motivate this inquiry. First, while several SINTA-indexed articles (2022–2024) have examined manasik effectiveness, service quality, and overall customer satisfaction in Umrah services, few studies have explicitly operationalized 'communication psychology' as a multidimensional construct (empathy, emotional support, message clarity, responsiveness) and tested its direct effect on trust. Second, existing studies often employ qualitative or descriptive methods; a robust quantitative approach that measures effect sizes and controls for confounding factors (e.g., prior pilgrimage experience,

demographic variables, and price perceptions) remains scarce. Third, as digital communication channels become integral to pre-departure guidance (e.g., WhatsApp groups, recorded tutorials), the interplay between mediated communication and face-to-face guidance in building trust is underexplored. Addressing these gaps will enrich theoretical models of trust formation in spiritual service contexts and offer actionable recommendations for agency training programs.

Thus, the present research has the following objectives: (1) to describe how communication psychology is applied in Umrah guidance services, mapping the key communicative behaviors and techniques used by guides and trainers; and (2) to analyze the effect of communication psychology dimensions on pilgrims' trust toward Umrah travel agencies, using quantitative methods to estimate the magnitude and significance of these effects. Findings are expected to contribute both to communication psychology theory in service settings and to practical guidelines for travel agencies seeking to strengthen pilgrims' trust through targeted communication

RESEARCH METHOD

This research used a quantitative correlational design to analyze how communication psychology in guidance services influences pilgrims' trust toward Umrah travel agencies. Data were collected through a cross-sectional survey from 240 Indonesian pilgrims who had completed Umrah within the last six months. Respondents were selected using purposive sampling based on their experience with professional guides (muthawif/tour leaders).

The study measured two variables: communication psychology as the independent variable and pilgrims' trust as the dependent variable. Both variables were assessed using a structured questionnaire with Likert-scale items. The instrument was tested for validity through expert judgment and factor analysis, while reliability testing showed Cronbach's Alpha values above 0.80, indicating strong internal consistency.

Data collection was conducted both offline and online with full ethical considerations, including voluntary participation, anonymity, and confidentiality. Data were analyzed using SPSS 26 through descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation, and simple linear regression with a significance threshold of 0.05 to determine the strength and influence of communication psychology on trust.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The findings of this study provide strong evidence that communication psychology embedded in guidance services plays a critical role in shaping pilgrims' trust toward Umrah travel agencies. The process of communication during pilgrimage is not only informational but also emotional and spiritual. For many pilgrims, Umrah represents a sacred journey that involves significant psychological preparation and sensitivity. Therefore, the quality of communication delivered by guides such as muthawif and tour leaders becomes

a central factor in determining the overall religious experience and the level of trust formed throughout the pilgrimage.

The results indicate that pilgrims generally perceive the communication skills of their guides to be highly effective. The aspects that received the most positive evaluations include empathy, clarity of message delivery, credibility, active listening, and emotional regulation. Pilgrims consistently reported feeling calmer and more understood when guides communicated with warmth, respect, and patience. Many stated that clear communication helped them gain confidence in performing their religious rituals, particularly for those who were first-time travellers to the Holy Land. This suggests that the ability of guides to interpret emotional cues and respond appropriately can significantly enhance feelings of security and preparedness among pilgrims.

In addition to their perceived communication skills, guides were also assessed for their level of professionalism, attitude, and commitment to assisting pilgrims throughout every stage of the Umrah journey. Pilgrims valued guides who demonstrated strong religious knowledge and practical understanding of ritual procedures, especially in environments that can be physically and mentally demanding such as the Masjid al-Haram and Masjid Nabawi. When guides communicated practical instructions in a calm and structured manner especially during crowded rituals such as Tawaf, Sa'i, or congregational prayers pilgrims felt safer and better protected. This perception of safety serves as a fundamental component in the formation of trust.

Trust in the Umrah travel agencies was found to be relatively high among participants. The study identifies several major factors influencing this trust, including transparency of information, reliability of travel schedules, fairness in pricing, and the agency's willingness to act in the best interest of pilgrims. Pilgrims stressed the importance of agencies providing clear information from the initial registration process until their return home. Experiences where agencies maintained honesty in explaining facilities, accommodations, and logistical arrangements contributed significantly to increasing trust.

The existence of positive interpersonal relationships between guides and pilgrims also strengthened perceptions of travel agencies as credible and customer-oriented. When pilgrims observed that guides were compassionate and willing to assist with personal difficulties such as mobility challenges, fear of crowds, or emotional distress they interpreted it as evidence that the agency prioritizes not merely business objectives but the spiritual well-being of its participants. Such interpersonal connections create emotional attachment that helps sustain trust even when unexpected challenges occur during the trip.

One of the major analytical insights of this research is the finding that communication psychology does not only influence pilgrims' trust indirectly, but rather is a direct determinant of trust formation. Pilgrims who experienced empathetic interactions were significantly more likely to trust their guides and the associated agency. Communication psychology here refers to the ability of communicators to manage their own emotions, decode others' psychological conditions, adjust message structures, and create a positive communication

environment. When these communication attributes are demonstrated, pilgrims interpret the guidance as both reliable and respectful of their emotional needs.

Pilgrims shared specific examples highlighting how communication style influenced their perceptions. For instance, some pilgrims noted that guides who used overly technical language or rushed explanations made it difficult for elderly pilgrims to understand instructions, which momentarily reduced their confidence. Conversely, guides who spoke clearly, repeated instructions when needed, and used demonstrative techniques were perceived as more competent and trusted communicators. A calm tone of voice, positive facial expressions, and consistent verbal reassurance were also reported as essential to maintaining emotional stability during rituals.

From the perspective of communication credibility, the guides' ability to demonstrate knowledge and experience was a crucial predictor of trust. Pilgrims trusted guides who could respond accurately to religious questions or logistical concerns, such as prayer schedules, local customs, and rules enforced within the holy areas. This finding aligns with the classical notion of credibility in communication studies, which incorporates two main components: expertise and trustworthiness. When either of these dimensions lacks consistency, trust becomes fragile. Therefore, the consistency of guides' behavior, fluency in answering questions, and accuracy of information became solid indicators of their expertise and reliability.

The study further found that emotional regulation is a vital factor that contributes to pilgrims' trust. Pilgrims often experience fatigue, jet lag, anxiety, and stress due to long flights, hot weather, large crowds, and unfamiliar environments. Under such conditions, emotional outbursts or irritation from guides could negatively impact the psychological well-being of pilgrims. In contrast, guides who remained composed, patient, and optimistic during stressful moments were perceived as strong leaders capable of managing crisis situations. These qualities established a sense of security and prevented emotional contagion that could lead to group panic or dissatisfaction.

Interpersonal relationships developed throughout the journey emerged as one of the strongest contributors to overall satisfaction. Many pilgrims expressed that they appreciated guides who remembered their names, checked on their conditions, or simply sat with them to provide spiritual encouragement. These small acts fostered a meaningful bond that transcended transactional service delivery. The findings suggest that when pilgrims feel emotionally appreciated, the relationship transforms into a spiritual companionship, which enhances both the pilgrimage experience and the travel agency's long-term reputation.

Another important aspect revealed through the qualitative data is that communication psychology also influences pilgrims' loyalty. Pilgrims reported that if they experienced supportive communication and felt genuinely cared for, they were more likely to recommend the agency to their friends and family. Achieving customer loyalty in the Umrah industry is highly valuable considering that word-of-mouth remains one of the dominant channels influencing travel decisions in religious communities. Thus, communication psychology not only

contributes to trust development but also has strategic implications for marketing success and sustainability of travel agencies.

Interestingly, the study also noted some challenges. Pilgrims come from diverse cultural backgrounds, personalities, and educational levels. Communication expectations differ between younger pilgrims, who may prefer digital information channels such as messaging apps, and older pilgrims who rely more heavily on face-to-face instruction. Miscommunication sometimes occurred when guides failed to adapt their communication style to meet the needs of specific individuals or subgroups. This highlights the importance of cultural sensitivity, adaptive communication skills, and awareness of psychosocial diversity when interacting with a multicultural group of pilgrims.

The discussion of these findings emphasizes that Umrah guidance cannot rely purely on providing technical instructions. While ritual accuracy is crucial, communication that lacks emotional sensitivity may undermine the psychological readiness of pilgrims. Consequently, agencies must reconceptualize guidance services as a holistic form of emotional and spiritual support. Guides need to be trained not only in religious procedures but also in psychology-based communication strategies such as empathetic listening, motivational speaking, conflict management, and emotional coaching.

Furthermore, the findings support the argument that communication psychology is a major source of competitive advantage in the growing Umrah travel sector. Agencies able to deliver superior communication-based guidance services distinguish themselves in a crowded market. Pilgrims are more likely to show loyalty to agencies that offer emotional reassurance and spiritual companionship rather than merely logistical arrangements. Thus, trust becomes a strategic asset shaped heavily by communication experiences rather than by marketing claims or facility quality alone.

To strengthen theoretical integration, these findings align with several established frameworks in the literature. Emotional intelligence theory explains how guides' awareness and regulation of emotions contribute to relationship building and trust. Interpersonal communication theory supports the notion that empathy, clarity, and relational closeness enhance message acceptance. Meanwhile, trust theory emphasizes that reliability, transparency, and integrity form the cognitive foundations of trust. The intersection of these theories highlights the critical importance of communication psychology in religious service delivery.

Overall, the findings underscore that successful Umrah guidance services require mastery of both technical ritual knowledge and psychological communication competence. Pilgrims view guides as representation of the agency they serve. Positive experiences with communication naturally extend to positive perceptions of the institution. Therefore, investing in psychological communication training for guides has direct implications for improving overall service quality, strengthening trust, and increasing customer satisfaction and loyalty.

In conclusion, the study reveals a strong and significant relationship

between communication psychology and pilgrims' trust toward Umrah travel agencies. Pilgrims rely heavily on the guidance of communicators who can provide both practical assistance and emotional comfort throughout the pilgrimage journey. Trust is formed through a combination of message clarity, empathetic interactions, guide credibility, emotional regulation, and meaningful relational engagement. Communication psychology emerges not as a supplementary skill but as a fundamental dimension of effective Umrah service delivery and a key factor in building sustainable customer trust and loyalty.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that communication psychology is a key factor influencing pilgrims' trust in Umrah travel agencies. Empathic interaction, message clarity, emotional control, and guide credibility significantly enhance pilgrims' sense of safety, comfort, and confidence during the pilgrimage. Trust is built not only through transparent administrative processes but primarily through positive interpersonal communication between guides and pilgrims. Strengthening communication skills and psychological sensitivity among guides is therefore essential for improving service quality, fostering loyalty, and maintaining a strong reputation within the Umrah travel industry.

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