


Muthawif concessions in Umrah travel bureau management

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ABSTRACT

Introduction

In Indonesia, the demand for Umrah services has grown significantly, amplifying the need for skilled muthawif who can support pilgrims both spiritually and logistically. The unique position of muthawif within the Umrah travel ecosystem requires well-structured management to ensure that service quality meets pilgrims' expectations. This study addresses the gaps in understanding how muthawif management practices are implemented within Indonesian travel bureaus and identifies the role of Saudi concessions in shaping these practices.

Objectives

The primary objectives of this study are to assess the responsibilities of muthawif within the framework of concessions provided by Saudi and Indonesian authorities and to analyze the management approaches that optimize muthawif roles in enhancing the pilgrim experience. This research also seeks to identify the operational challenges faced by muthawif in balancing their duties across various management structures.

Method

A qualitative field research approach was adopted, involving interviews and observations with key stakeholders such as muthawif, Umrah bureau directors, and agency leaders. Data was collected in both Indonesia and Saudi Arabia, allowing for an in-depth exploration of how muthawif function within different organizational and regulatory contexts. This approach provides contextual insights into the management practices influencing muthawif performance.

Results

The study found that muthawif in Indonesia operate within three main categories: government-managed, agency-affiliated, and freelance. Each type of muthawif has different levels of flexibility and operational scope, impacting the quality and consistency of guidance services. Saudi government concessions offer operational flexibility, while Indonesian travel bureaus emphasize standardized training and service quality aligned with Islamic principles. These differences impact how muthawif adapt to the needs of diverse pilgrim groups.

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ABSTRACT

Implications

The findings suggest that structured management and regulatory concessions are crucial to enhancing muthawif performance and service quality. Collaborative efforts between Indonesian travel bureaus and muthawif agencies contribute to a more professional and efficient Umrah guidance service. This study provides practical insights for travel bureaus and policymakers seeking to improve muthawif training standards and management practices within the Umrah industry.

Originality/Novelty

This research expands the literature on Umrah service management by focusing on the specific roles and concessions governing muthawif. It introduces new perspectives on optimizing muthawif performance through coordinated management approaches and cross-agency collaboration, addressing a critical area of service quality for Indonesian pilgrims undertaking Umrah.

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INTRODUCTION

Indonesia is a country with a majority Muslim population, and the Hajj pilgrimage is one of the pillars of Islam, obligatory for those who can afford it and performed once in a lifetime. However, limitations on the quota for regular Hajj pilgrimage have prompted prospective pilgrims to undertake Umrah as they wait. The waiting list system is seen by some as a solution to the overcrowding issues faced by Indonesian Hajj applicants (Nasution & Hadirman, 2020).

Umrah, distinct from Hajj, is a form of worship prescribed by Allah for Muslims who meet certain conditions. Unlike Hajj, which is performed only during the designated months, Umrah can be performed at any time, providing a more immediate opportunity for spiritual fulfillment. In addition, Umrah is often viewed as spiritual tourism, facilitated by services that help ensure ease of travel to the holy land. Furthermore, Umrah is more accessible and affordable, both in terms of registration procedures and costs, which has spurred growing public interest in making the pilgrimage to the holy land (Abror & Anang, 2023; Bashir, 2024; Fadhly et al., 2024; Ronan, 2018; Simbolon & Imsar, 2021).

The pilgrimage journey includes a series of rituals that require guidance for each stage, necessitating the role of someone to accompany and guide pilgrims throughout their journey. The presence of muthawif, or Umrah guides, is critical, as Umrah travel bureaus rely on muthawif to facilitate a smoother pilgrimage process. These guides ensure that worship practices are conducted in accordance with Islamic teachings, creating a conducive environment for worship. Field observations show that many Muslims still lack understanding of certain Umrah rituals, particularly regarding the spiritual aspects, and exhibit excessive anxiety. This anxiety often stems

from social and cultural differences, such as language, customs, and the large number of fellow pilgrims, which can lead to a fear of losing contact with their group (Bashir, 2024; Choliq, 2018; Edruce et al., 2014; Putri, 2022).

The presence of a muthawif as a tour guide for Umroh is important to ensure safety and satisfaction in performing pilgrims. Thus, muthawif should be professional and maintenance skills to keep up with the task of a tour guide in all Umroh activities. However, a lack of self-development among muthawif can result in suboptimal communication with pilgrims, leading to limited feedback on the instructions provided. Muthawif can develop professionally by affiliating with travel handling agencies and expanding their network with Umrah bureaus. Many umrah bureaus used to enhance quality of their services including improving employees and tour leaders competencies (Ibrahim & Darmawan, 2023; Muhamad & Muhamad, 2024).

The importance of this research lies in understanding the role of muthawif, as they significantly impact service quality for Umrah bureaus. Prior studies have shown that service quality influences pilgrims' perceptions of Umrah travel bureaus (Rohimat & Sudrajat, 2023; Utami & Wulandari, 2022). Since many muthawif collaborate with travel agents to serve in Umroh activities, the directors of these travel agents will assess the muthawif directly or indirectly through other agencies coordinating muthawif. Many agencies in Saudi Arabia provides services of muthawif for travel agents around the world including Indonesia. Service quality is thus one of the several components that affect the overall atmosphere of the business. Accordingly, the professionalism of muthawif service providers impacts travel agencies directors' satisfaction, especially in partnerships with agencies coordinating muthawif in Saudi Arabia.

Muthawif handling pilgrims within travel agent partnerships should have schedule flexibility and proper management to align with the needs of travel agent directors. Moreover, alignment with appropriate Islamic jurisprudence and fiqh is necessary to ensure comfort and legitimacy. With large numbers of pilgrims, muthawif also must consider age and needs, prompting the need for innovation in muthawif management systems. The current research aims to analyze muthawif concessions in umroh travel. Muthawif concessions are important for umrah travel agencies to maintain service quality and pilgrims satisfaction.

LITERATURE REVIEW

This study focuses on the flexibility afforded to muthawif and the management systems employed by Umrah bureau directors to optimize muthawif's roles. Although previous research has explored this topic, it remains limited, with most studies primarily examining Umrah service quality or the effectiveness of muthawif in guiding pilgrims. This study analyze muthawif management for involved parties, considering both technical and non-technical competencies as well as the innovations and improvisations required by muthawif. This study also broadens the understanding of all parties associated with muthawif-related activities. The objective is to address gaps in existing literature by offering new insights and innovations.

Concession

According to the *Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia* (KBBI) online, *konsesi*, Indonesian word for concession, means permission to open mines, cut down forests, and so on (KBBI Online, 2016b). A concession can also be defined as flexibility or convenience granted after a process of discussion. Concessions arise from the delegation of authority by the government to a private individual or company to perform a designated task. Scientifically, a concession can be defined as a permission granted by the Saudi government to private muthawif companies.

It can thus be concluded that a concession represents a commitment between the government and private entities to manage national facilities. Such concessions by the Saudi government provide travel agencies and companies with opportunities to guide pilgrims from around the world for performing Umrah under governmental oversight (Adriansyah et al., 2022).

Muthawif

In KBBI online, *mutawif* is defined as the person who guides tawaf; tawaf supervisor; tawaf guide (KBBI Online, 2016c). A muthawif thus can be defined as someone who help performing tawaf (circumambulation) in Mecca or around the Ka'bah, implying someone knowledgeable enough to assist Umrah pilgrims in their worship and pilgrimage activities in the holy land. Muthawif originally referred to an individual performing tawaf, but it now broadly represents a guide or instructor for Hajj and Umrah. This role is increasingly significant amidst the rising number of Umrah pilgrims, often referred to in Indonesia as a "tour guide" (Fadiyah, 2018).

Muthawif is a growing profession gaining attention among Malaysians (M. S. B. Jamaludin & Abu Bakar, 2021, 2022; Zainal & Hassan, 2018). Besides providing a viable income due to the influx of pilgrims, muthawif are individuals with expertise in Umrah and pilgrimage, encouraged to work with Umrah and pilgrimage companies because of their familiarity with the holy cities of Mecca and Medina. Muthawif not only needs fluency in Arabic, but must also be physically fit, energetic, and equipped with communication skills, most importantly having prior Umrah experience.

The conduct and speech of a muthawif can significantly influence the atmosphere and environment, as eloquent communication facilitates action (Hilmi, 2019). As important aspect of service quality to the pilgrims, muthawif should ensure that all their actions are well organized. Being organized will improve their capacity in providing proper services needed and also implement Islamic principle on organization in preaching (Anas & Adinugraha, 2017). To improve muthawif performance or to assist pilgrims with muthawif alternatives, many applications have been created for hajj and umroh (Al-Aidaros & Abdul Mutalib, 2015; Sahrir et al., 2018)

Management

The management process consists of organizing, directing, and controlling resources to achieve goals, utilizing both people and assets (Fedirets et al., 2023; Huda et al., 2024). From an Islamic perspective, management is founded upon core principles, including truthfulness, transparency, and expertise, which are crucial pillars for

effective administration across various aspects of life (Hadi, 2024; Holid et al., 2024; Linaci & Patimah, 2023; Ramadhan et al., 2024; Saida & Said, 2024). These fundamentals underscore the importance of research into muthawif concessions and time management within Umrah travel bureau operations (Ritonga, 2020).

Management is a series of processes that include planning, organizing, motivating, and controlling resources to set and achieve objectives. Management acts as a framework carried out by groups to meet pre-established organizational goals (Terry, 2012). Based on previous studies and literature on management, management is generally understood as a process of planning, organizing, directing, and monitoring organizational resources, whether human, financial, physical, or informational, to achieve optimal outcomes.

Umrah Bureau Directors

KBBI Online defines director as a member of a company's, bank's, or foundation's management board (KBBI Online, 2016a). Directors are responsible for overseeing and managing company operations. In English, "director" originates from "direct," meaning "to lead" or "to guide." Within a corporate context, a director holds authoritative power in leading an organization. According to Indonesian Law No. 40 of 2007 on Limited Liability Companies (Article 1), the director is a corporate organ fully authorized and responsible for managing the company's interests, in line with the company's purposes and objectives, representing the company within and outside legal proceedings in accordance with the company's articles of association (Sitompul, 2020).

By drawing on research from previous experts, this study explores the new theme of muthawif concessions in Umrah bureau management, focusing on flexibility in performing tasks, such as guiding and assisting pilgrims while utilizing optimal time management within the leniencies granted by the Saudi government to private muthawif service companies. Therefore, Umrah bureau directors are groups appointed to manage Umrah bureau operations, holding the authority to make strategic decisions, oversee daily operations, and ensure all activities comply with regulations while meeting the needs and expectations of Umrah pilgrims.

METHOD

This study employed a qualitative field research approach. The qualitative method was chosen to enable a detailed description and illustration of data, presenting it in a clear format for a comprehensive understanding by readers. Qualitative observations were utilized to explore the context, balancing objective, interactive interpretative, and grounded interpretative functions (Hasanah, 2017). Qualitative research can be a purposeful process involving specific interview questions and systematic data collection (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

Subjects and Locations

The following key figures were selected as research subjects, each chosen based on their knowledge and experience relevant to Umrah operational management:

1. Ustadz M. Arief Rahman, Lc. MA
 - a. Position: CEO of Alfata Tour and Travel, Tour Leader
 - b. Justifications: Comprehensive knowledge and insights into Umrah operations and management; over 15 years of direct experience in Hajj and Umrah operations; extensive interactions with pilgrims, muthawif, agencies, and muassasah authorities; extensive operational network.
 - c. Location: Alfata Tour and Travel Office, Jalan Gajah Raya, Medoho V rw 003-001, Siwalan, Gayamsari, Semarang City. Alfata Tour and Travel as an Umrah organizing bureau is officially registered in the smart hajj application with SK number 81201170221920002.
2. Ustadz Sriyono
 - a. Position: Muthawif, Tour Leader
 - b. Justifications: Depth of practical experience and direct oversight, capable of providing objective evaluations.
 - c. Location: Alfata Tour and Travel Office.
3. Ustadz Fauzy
 - a. Position: Head of Handle Travel, Expatriate
 - b. Justifications: Strong understanding of management principles; multilingual proficiency; established network in Saudi Arabia; over 10 years of experience in pilgrim guidance.
 - c. Location: Madinah.
4. Ustadz M. Syukron
 - a. Position: Freelance Muthawif, Expatriate, Student
 - b. Justifications: Available for sharing insights and capable of demonstrating service to pilgrims beyond ritualistic guidance.
 - c. Location: Makkah.

The research was conducted across two main sites: in Saudi Arabia, where direct observations were made involving Handle Travel leaders and muthawif; and at the Alfata Marsha Wisata Umrah Bureau in Indonesia, to gain a foundational understanding of the research topic (Lee, 2024; Waruwu, 2023). Observations allowed the researcher to examine the real-life conditions (Li, 2015; Rosenbaum, 2023) in which subjects perform their duties and assess the responses and attitudes of the pilgrims under their guidance.

Data Collection Techniques

Interviews were conducted with key informants at the Alfata Tour and Travel Office, led by the bureau director. This interview process was structured, involving direct and relevant questions tailored to the research topics to obtain precise and accurate information. Data were collected through in-person conversations between the researcher and participants, allowing for structured information gathering that provided in-depth insights.

Data Analysis

The collected data were analyzed descriptively. Field information was organized and processed into structured transcripts, with careful attention to the topics explored, enabling the development of an understanding of the management practices that muthawif apply when interacting with Umrah bureau directors.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Types of Muthawif in Indonesia Based on Concessions and Management

A muthawif is an essential service provider in Umrah travel, offering guidance and support to pilgrims to enhance their worship experience and ensure overall satisfaction. Given the significant growth in Umrah participation, the role of muthawif—known in Indonesia as a “tour guide”—has gained importance (Fadiyah, 2018). Pilgrims tend to have unique spiritual experiences which differ between them. Thus, having muthawif with real experiences in the field might improve the spiritual experiences during Umrah (Hakim & Muhajarah, 2024). Umrah travel bureaus adopt varying approaches to selecting muthawif. Saudi Arabia also provides services and offerings to support various nations that wish to perform Hajj and Umrah. Accordingly, different types of muthawif are available as partners for Umrah travel bureau directors:

- a. Government-managed muthawif (official muthawif). This type of muthawif is formally managed by government institutions, leading to a more rigid operational structure that restricts flexibility for special requests from travel bureau partners. However, many Umrah travel bureau directors and CEOs employ unique strategies to promote their services, including various amenities and pricing tiers, which influence management choices. Previous studies showed the important role of pricing in pilgrims decision on hajj and umrah services (Ahmad, 2019; Noviyanti, 2015). Affiliations and kinship among Umrah bureau directors, muthawif, and agency staff foster new approaches to manage concessions effectively, allowing Indonesian bureaus to strategically leverage available privileges.
- b. Independent muthawif (freelancer). Independent muthawif also play a significant role in Indonesian Umrah operations. This type can operate through agency partnerships (Handle Travel) or offer services independently via promotions. As the demand for independent muthawif grows, many bureaus now prefer to work with freelance muthawif, which promotes mutually beneficial business relations. Travel bureaus select muthawif that

meet the bureau's specific standards, aligning with the conditions and needs of their pilgrims. Service quality is defined by the degree to which services meet or exceed customer expectations (Fared et al., 2021; Jocić et al., 2024; Nyirangondo et al., 2024). Previous studies indicate that mutawwif's expertise, the hotel, problem-solving, valence, and airlines affect satisfaction of both umrah travel directors and pilgrims (Harun et al., 2020).

The distinction between independent and agency-affiliated muthawif lies in promotional methods. Agency-affiliated muthawif are assigned by rotation or request from agencies and are often recommended based on positive experiences. Repeat orders for popular muthawif occur due to their established reputation. Freelance muthawif typically acquire clients through personal networks, earning a professional image when recommendations affirm their qualifications. Independent muthawif do not need to be part of an agency, differentiating them from agency-affiliated freelance muthawif.

Partnerships between freelance and agency-affiliated muthawif fulfill the needs of Umrah bureau directors for affordable, high-quality guidance services. According to an interview with Ustadz Fauzy, a Handle Travel leader and muthawif guiding Umrah in Medina, "Five Indonesian muthawif currently work as expatriates in Saudi Arabia, including Ustadz Syakir, Ustadz Luqman, Ustadz Ahmad Muhajir, Ustadz Ammar, and Ustadzah Fatma as muthawifah, providing their services on a fee-only basis" (Ustadz Fauzy, personal communication, May 13, 2024).

Muthawif Management for Technical and Non-Technical Aspects of Worship

Research findings show that government muthawif, compared to independent muthawif, are more constrained by formal agreements with Umrah bureau directors. Independent muthawif can be more readily supervised under agreed terms. The muthawif role extends beyond ritual guidance, also including assistance with non-worship-related needs like shopping and local logistics.

Non-technical aspects of Umrah are critical; muthawif are expected to have skills in tour guiding and non-ritual knowledge of Umrah. They must demonstrate awareness, problem-solving skills, and sensitivity, especially when managing large groups with varied characteristics (Asyhar, 2022; Firmansyah, 2020). Additionally, muthawif should possess knowledge of ritual sites, geographical layout, and city tour locations. Such competencies address the inherent risks associated with their role due to unpredictable circumstances (Mustofa et al., 2022; Salma & Muhajarah, 2023). A paradigm of community-oriented guidance helps muthawif accompany pilgrims and enhance their understanding through logical and rational approaches (Dusra et al., 2024; M. A. Jamaludin et al., 2023; Rozaq et al., 2022).

Certain types of pilgrims are highly sensitive to the way Hajj and Umrah organizers handle services, especially when it comes to addressing problems and complaints. Specifically, this sensitivity is apparent in the selection of bus drivers or chartered vehicles for groups wishing to visit shopping destinations or Ta'if. Indonesian pilgrims generally prefer bus drivers who are not of African descent, perceiving that non-



African drivers tend to operate with a more formal style. This preference is largely due to mental adaptation challenges arising from being in a different cultural, social, and environmental context than their home country (Islamiyah et al., 2024).

Additionally, a muthawif must possess knowledge of the ritual sites, understand the geographic layout, and be well-versed in city tour locations and other relevant landmarks (Mustofa et al., 2022). This is one of the inherent challenges or risks faced by a muthawif, as unpredictable circumstances can produce varied outcomes (Salma & Muhajarah, 2023). If the services provided by the agency meet the pilgrims' expectations, the agency is perceived positively, which fosters satisfaction and loyalty among the pilgrims toward the Umrah service provider.

Technical aspects of Umrah related to accommodations, facilities, and human resources significantly impact the quality of a Muthawif. The more experienced a Muthawif, the greater their achievements, knowledge, and specialized expertise in Hajj and Umrah services. From a management perspective, a Muthawif is expected to make decisions in coordination with relevant parties for situations beyond the ritual's technical scope. Freelance Muthawifs consult with the Umrah agency's board, whereas Muthawifs associated with Handle Travel consult with both the agency and the tour leader or Umrah guide from the originating agency. This requirement does not apply to muthawifs from the Saudi Arabian office. The Handle Travel Agency and the Umrah Travel Management play roles in ensuring that their employees and partners are skilled, competent, and communicative, which positively impacts spiritual and religious components (Harun et al., 2020; Jafari & Scott, 2014; Kouchi et al., 2018).

Muthawif Innovation Patterns in Bureau Management

According to Ustad Arief Rahman, CEO of the Alfata Umrah Travel Agency, the pattern most commonly used by Indonesians in selecting a muthawif is based on familial ties, recommendations, and promotional efforts. Indonesian pilgrims often prefer expatriates living in Saudi Arabia. Ustad Arief also notes, "It's not uncommon for freelancers who hold dual roles or students currently studying in Saudi Arabia to take on the duties of a muthawif. The presence of a muthawif is, in essence, very helpful in supporting the Umrah guide during the pilgrimage." Fundamentally, the role of the Umrah guide, from pre-departure up until arrival at Jeddah or Madinah Airport, is typically taken over by a muthawif upon entry into Saudi Arabia (Ustadz Arif Rahman, personal communication, April 26, 2024).

Every country has a different approach to organizing this role, whether from the perspective of the muthawif, the travel agency, or the Umrah agency management. For example, Malaysia tends to bring its own muthawif from home, requiring adaptation to the dominant school of thought (madhhab), diverse cultural backgrounds, and specific conditions. It implies that muthawif should be able to improve the service quality to the pilgrims to ensure their loyalty to umrah agent travels (Othman et al., 2019, 2020).

Indonesian muthawif resources are characterized by a structured and standardized system, aligned with formal standards. Alfata Agency supports its

muthawifs in developing skills by offering training, including certifications as tour leaders, guides, and Umrah and Hajj facilitators (Ustadz Arif Rahman, personal communication, April 26, 2024). Other countries, however, tend to adopt a more relaxed approach. Training and development opportunities for muthawifs do not entirely eliminate potential issues during the pilgrimage. Khairul Anuar Khalid explains that some Malaysian citizens are still unaware that aspects related to Umrah and muthawif services are not covered by the Hajj Fund or the Hajj Fund Act. Additionally, the Umrah experience in Malaysia highlights issues, including irresponsible muthawifs abandoning pilgrims in Saudi Arabia, largely due to the absence of an overseeing entity for Umrah-related activities (M. S. Jamaludin et al., 2022; Khalid & Ghani, 2021).

Ustadz Fauzy, head of travel handling for muthawifs, asserts that muthawifs escorting Indonesian pilgrims should consistently consider individual needs and frequently remind pilgrims to observe sunnah practices in the mosque. Beyond obligatory prayers, it is advised to perform the *tahiyatul masjid* (greeting prayer) and prioritize funeral prayers (*salat mayyit*) before *ba'diyah* (post-obligatory) prayers. Many pilgrims still require reminders due to gaps in understanding, awareness, and sensitivity; as a result, frequent guidance is needed. According to Ustadz Fauzy, many pilgrims tend to converse, sleep, or use gadgets during breaks, whether between the *adhan* (call to prayer) and *iqamah* (call to commence prayer) or between prayers (Ustadz Fauzy, personal communication, May 13, 2024).

Graduates of Hajj and Umrah management programs, equipped with skills in pilgrimage service organization and expertise in financial management within Islamic financial institutions, could bring innovation to muthawif quality (Djamil et al., 2020). Alfata Tour and Travel management may consider involving Generation Z muthawifs to enhance the quality of support provided to Umrah pilgrims. Additionally, female pilgrims would benefit from the presence of female muthawifs (*muthawiffahs*) to help reduce any discomfort.

Management Workflow for Muthawif in Umrah Worship Process

Under Law No. 8 of 2019, Umrah pilgrims are entitled to services from the Umrah Travel Agency (*Penyelenggara Perjalanan Ibadah Umrah* abbreviated PPIU in Bahasa Indonesia), beginning with the provision of Umrah guidance. Article 88 of the law also stipulates that pilgrims are entitled to guidance on the Umrah pilgrimage, covering materials both in the home country, during travel, and upon arrival in Saudi Arabia. This includes accommodation, food, transportation, and health services across all stages of the journey, as well as protection as citizens (Lihawa et al., 2023; Nursiti & Dewi, 2024; Putri, 2022).

Muthawifs affiliated with Indonesian Umrah travel agencies are responsible for welcoming and guiding pilgrims upon their arrival. They assist with transport to the hotel and other destinations while encouraging pilgrims to engage in frequent *shalawat* and remembrance of Allah, helping them focus on worship with a peaceful mind (Jumali et al., 2023). Each aspect of the Umrah pilgrimage is managed carefully to ensure the delivery of effective and efficient services (Matondang et al., 2024).

During the pilgrimage journey, the concession of muthawif coordinates and communicates regularly with the travel agency, often in collaboration with the tour leader to work with Handle Travel. Continuity of the Umrah pilgrimage includes coordination with the muassasah, the organization overseeing Umrah and Hajj pilgrims in Saudi Arabia, which also handles visa issuance and accommodation arrangements for pilgrims (Mukhlis, 2018).

Ustadz Sriyono, an Umrah guide from Alfata Marsha Wisata, explained, "As for accommodation and catering, these are arranged by the main office. The muthawif is responsible only for worship guidance and assisting pilgrims during the journey, handling hotel keys, and renting vehicles as needed for city tours or other transport needs." With confirmation in place, the Handle Travel agency can then coordinate with the hotel to prepare room key cards for the muthawif and organize a team to assist with luggage handling and distribution to individual pilgrims (Ustadz Sriyono, personal communication, January 29, 2024).

According to Ustad Fauzy, a muthawif leader and Handle Travel manager, Indonesian muthawifs generally serve Indonesian pilgrims but often extend their services to Malaysian pilgrims, given the close proximity of the two countries. Even as independent muthawifs, they adhere to the procedural flow prescribed by sharia law and maintain coordination with government authorities. This process applies to both independent and freelance muthawifs. Reporting is typically conducted through the muassasah visa (commonly known as the Saudi Company), which handles pilgrim visa issuance. Additionally, the muassasah monitors and assists with arrivals, tracking the activities of Umrah pilgrims from arrival in Madinah to their stay in Makkah and eventual departure (Ustadz Fauzy, personal communication, May 13, 2024).

CONCLUSION

This research was conducted to examine the perspective of Muthawif Concessions in the Management of Umrah Travel Bureau Directors, considering the viewpoints of handle travel agencies, muthawif, and directors. The findings indicate that muthawif management within Indonesian Umrah bureaus, including Alfata Tour, is regulated by the Ministry of Religious Affairs, which facilitates safe and reliable options for pilgrims planning their Umrah journey.

The role of Umrah bureaus in enhancing the quality of muthawif is crucial, as muthawif are integral to the success of Umrah travel services. Prior studies have noted that muthawif management in Malaysia lacks systematic organization, resulting in less favorable outcomes. In contrast, Indonesian muthawif management incorporates development and innovation, positively impacting service quality and enriching pilgrims' worship experiences. Muthawif knowledge, skills, and experience related to the holy sites are leveraged to optimize the management of both technical and non-technical aspects of worship. This implies that muthawif must be prepared to handle any issues that arise.

For Umrah bureau directors partnered with handle travel agencies, these agencies are responsible for assigning and coordinating available muthawif and

confirming their participation. However, when Umrah bureau directors opt for freelance muthawif services, they must carefully plan and ensure that all necessary support is provided throughout the Umrah activities, including appointing female muthawif (muthawifah in Arabic) to accompany women pilgrims, particularly for accessing areas like the Raudhah.

Limitations of the Study

One significant limitation of this study is its reliance on a qualitative field research approach, which, while beneficial for capturing detailed contextual data, limits the ability to generalize findings to a broader population. Since data was primarily obtained through interviews and observations from specific Umrah travel bureaus and muthawif personnel, the results may reflect unique practices or management strategies that are not representative of all agencies in Indonesia. This limits the ability to apply the findings universally to other Umrah travel settings.

Additionally, the study's dependence on the subjective perspectives of directors, muthawif, and handle travel leaders could introduce bias into the findings. Participants' experiences and viewpoints may influence their accounts of muthawif practices and management structures, which might not encompass the diversity of approaches within the industry. Consequently, the study's conclusions may not fully capture the range of muthawif management practices or the potential for variations across different regions and agencies.

The study also does not examine the longitudinal impact of training and development programs on muthawif performance and service quality. Although it emphasizes the importance of training for muthawif, the absence of long-term data limits insights into how training initiatives influence muthawif competency over time. This gap leaves room for further research to understand how sustained training impacts operational effectiveness and enhances pilgrims' experiences in the long run.

Recommendations for Future Research

Future studies should consider incorporating quantitative methods to support and validate the qualitative findings presented here. A broader, quantitative survey involving various Umrah travel bureaus and muthawif from different regions could allow for comparisons across contexts, enhancing the generalizability of the findings. By measuring the impact of different management practices on pilgrim satisfaction and operational efficiency, quantitative research could provide objective insights to inform policy improvements and best practices in muthawif management.

Further, a comparative study exploring muthawif management practices between Indonesia and other countries with high numbers of Umrah pilgrims, such as Malaysia, would offer valuable perspectives. Such research could identify specific management strategies, training programs, or structural differences that enhance service quality and pilgrim satisfaction. Insights gained from such cross-country comparisons could reveal best practices that Indonesian Umrah bureaus might adopt to improve their service standards and operational models.

Lastly, longitudinal research is recommended to assess the long-term effects of training and development on muthawif performance and the overall service quality in Umrah travel. By following muthawif over time, researchers could identify which training components contribute most effectively to sustainable improvements in service. This approach could inform travel bureaus and regulatory bodies on creating standardized training frameworks that foster professionalism and ensure consistent, high-quality guidance for pilgrims across the Umrah industry.

Author Contributions

Conceptualization	A.A.F. & K.M.	Resources	A.A.F. & K.M.
Data curation	A.A.F. & K.M.	Software	A.A.F. & K.M.
Formal analysis	A.A.F. & K.M.	Supervision	A.A.F. & K.M.
Funding acquisition	A.A.F. & K.M.	Validation	A.A.F. & K.M.
Investigation	A.A.F. & K.M.	Visualization	A.A.F. & K.M.
Methodology	A.A.F. & K.M.	Writing – original draft	A.A.F. & K.M.
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Informed Consent Statement

Informed consent was obtained before respondents answered the questions.

Data Availability Statement

The data presented in this study are available upon request from the corresponding author.

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Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest.

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