



# Analysis of Pilgrims' Perception of the Quality of South Sumatra Hajj Dormitory Services In the Implementation of Hajj in 2024

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## Abstract

This study aims to analyze the perception of pilgrims on the quality of services provided by the South Sumatra Hajj Dormitory during the process of organizing the 2024 Hajj. Using a qualitative approach with the SERVQUAL (Tangibles, Reliability, Responsiveness, Assurance, and Empathy) analysis model, this study explores the experience, expectations, and evaluation of services based on empirical data from in-depth interviews and the results of pilgrim satisfaction surveys. The findings show that in general, the perception of pilgrims towards the aspects of Tangibles and Assurance is in the very good category, while in the dimensions of Empathy and Responsiveness, there is a disparity between expectations and the reality of service, especially in the early and elderly groups. Segmentation analysis based on group, age, and gender showed that there were variations in perceptions influenced by socio-cultural backgrounds, previous Hajj experiences, and physical conditions of pilgrims. The results of this study provide theoretical contributions in strengthening the SERVQUAL model in the context of religious services, as well as practical implications for improving public service governance based on congregational satisfaction in the future.

**Keywords:** Pilgrim Perception; Service Quality; Hajj Dormitory; SERVQUAL; Hajj Implementation; Qualitative Approach.

## 1. Introduction

The implementation of the hajj is a form of large-scale and complex public service that is managed across sectors, cross-country, and cross-cultures. In Indonesia, the management of hajj services demands high managerial standards because it involves various stages ranging from administrative services, manasik coaching, health services, accommodation, to the logistics of departure and return of pilgrims. At the initial point of implementation, the hajj dormitory becomes a strategic location that carries out administrative, logistical, and psychological functions for pilgrims. Services at this location often form an initial perception that has a significant impact on the overall hajj experience. When the initial perception of

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service quality is negatively formed, the tendency to dissatisfaction tends to increase in later stages, even though core services in Saudi Arabia have been optimally implemented ([Aliya et al., 2024](#)).

Several studies show that pilgrims' satisfaction with the hajj service is greatly influenced by the quality of interaction, the comfort of the facilities, and the ability of the organizers to meet the initial expectations of the pilgrims. According to [Albahar et al. \(2023\)](#), perceptions of accommodation and hospitality services formed at the beginning of the pilgrimage journey, including during quarantine and debriefing at the hajj dormitory, can strengthen or undermine pilgrims' expectations of the overall worship experience. The *expectation-confirmation theory* approach used in the study showed that the difference between expectations and service reality at the beginning of the journey tended to have a higher weight in influencing the final satisfaction of pilgrims.

This phenomenon can be observed more concretely in the implementation of the 2024 hajj. Based on the results of satisfaction surveys conducted by the organizing committee in various embarkation areas, it was found that most pilgrims gave a positive assessment of public services, especially in terms of accommodation cleanliness, food delivery, and officer services in hajj dormitories, including in South Sumatra. However, there are still a number of records of minor complaints, particularly regarding technical facilities such as air conditioning and the availability of clean water in some rooms, as well as delays in the administrative check-in process. Although the complaint is not in the majority, its presence shows that there is an inequality in the quality of services that could damage the image of the organizing institution.

The problem of service quality in the implementation of Hajj is also in the spotlight in other countries. A study by [Al-Hoqail et al. \(2010\)](#) in Saudi Arabia found that the aspect of ambulatory health services in Makkah has a significant influence on pilgrim satisfaction, especially for the elderly group and pilgrims with comorbidities. A similar study in Malaysia showed that the demographic characteristics of pilgrims, such as age and educational background, influence their perception of the quality of service, especially in the context of accommodation and information provided during the waiting period for departure ([Ahmad et al., 2014](#)). This indicates that service management cannot be done uniformly, but must take into account the individual needs and social expectations of pilgrims.

Similar conditions are also found in the local context of Indonesia. Putri and Puteri (2024) show that excellent service at the office level of the local Ministry of Religious Affairs, including the unit that handles the implementation of Hajj and Umrah, plays a crucial role in increasing the trust and satisfaction of pilgrims. Similarly, a study by [Irawati et al. \(2024\)](#) who researched the Integrated Hajj and Umrah Service (PLHUT) in Mojokerto found that the effectiveness of information delivery, the readiness of facilities, and the timeliness of services greatly influenced the positive perception of prospective pilgrims on their readiness to depart.

Furthermore, [Hassan et al. \(2022\)](#) show that satisfaction with transportation, accommodation, and hygiene services at holy sites in Saudi Arabia is directly related to pilgrims' spiritual experiences. Meanwhile, [Weber et al. \(2023\)](#) examined pilgrims' satisfaction with the metro transportation system in Makkah and found that technical aspects such as schedule, accessibility, and comfort exert the same influence as spiritual aspects in shaping perceptions of the hajj experience as a whole. In this context, the quality of service is not only functional but also affects the psychological and spiritual dimensions of pilgrims, particularly for those undertaking this worship for the first time.



Services at the South Sumatra Hajj Dormitory are a crucial area requiring serious attention, given that the number of pilgrims from this province is substantial and comes from diverse social backgrounds. In a study by Rifa'i and Kamila (2021), it was found that service strategies based on a personal approach by worship guides and accompanying officers can create a safe and calm atmosphere for worshippers, even when physical facilities are not ideal. This means that the perception of quality is not only determined by infrastructure, but also by the quality of interpersonal interactions. On the other hand, Utomo (2017) found that pilgrims' satisfaction is also correlated with religious commitment after the hajj, indicating that high-quality service can have a long-term impact on pilgrims' religious character.

The level of satisfaction of pilgrims in Indonesia shows fluctuations influenced by the quality of services, dormitory facilities, and the assistance of health workers. Based on the 2023 Indonesian Hajj Pilgrim Satisfaction Index (IKJHI) released by BPS and the Ministry of Religion of the Republic of Indonesia, the satisfaction score reached 90.45 points from a scale of 100, with the accommodation and consumption aspects at embarkation recording high satisfaction, namely 91.19 points, while the health service aspect recorded 87.61 points, lower than the previous year. These data indicate that although dormitory services are generally appreciated, health services and the preparedness of medical workers remain critical areas for improvement. These findings are in line with research by Banaser et al. (2020) who stated that medical personnel in the Hajj service often face operational fatigue and lack of support systems when facing a surge in pilgrims in a short period of time.

Consistent with national findings, a study by Fathurrahman et al. (2021) confirms that pilgrims' perceptions of service quality are strongly influenced by demographic factors such as age, education level, and Hajj experience. The elderly group tends to be more critical of the comfort and friendliness aspects of officers, especially in the early stages of service at embarkation and dormitory. In addition, research by Saimona et al. (2024) shows that tangibles (physical facilities), responsiveness (responsiveness of officers), and assurance (security guarantees) are the main predictors in the satisfaction of Umrah pilgrims, which, in the context of Hajj, is also very relevant. Therefore, the congregation's perception of the quality of service does not only depend on the completeness of the facilities, but also on warm, informative, and empathetic interpersonal interactions.

In the international context, Hassan et al. (2022) emphasized that the spiritual satisfaction of pilgrims is closely related to a positive service experience, including in the aspects of logistics, cleanliness, and spiritual assistance. Efficient and humane service enhances a sense of religiosity during worship and affects worshippers' attainment of spiritual goals. This is emphasized by Mohammed et al. (2024), who show that the service dimensions that most determine the satisfaction of Saudi Arabian pilgrims are the quality of information, clarity of procedures, and the effectiveness of field service officers, which are in line with the principles of Saudi Vision 2030 in the transformation of hajj services. Therefore, the success of services in the South Sumatra hajj dormitory is not only related to the fulfillment of facility standards, but also touches the emotional and spiritual aspects of pilgrims.

In addition, research by Khairiyati et al. (2020) revealed that information systems, service speed, and trust in hajj officers are directly related to pilgrims' satisfaction. The lack of clear information and delays in services often cause anxiety among pilgrims, particularly elderly pilgrims and those undertaking Hajj for the first time. Research by Hanadya and Auliana (n.d.) also emphasized the importance of effective coordination between KBIHU, tour & travel, and



dormitory managers so that all early phases of the hajj journey run smoothly and integrated. Therefore, optimizing services from departure at the embarkation is the key to a more complete and quality worship experience.

In ideal conditions, pilgrims' satisfaction is not limited to technical-instrumental factors such as physical facilities, logistics, or accommodation comfort. Satisfaction must also include the non-physical dimensions of the service, such as the friendliness of the officers, personal attention, effective communication, and the emotional atmosphere that supports worship. This affective and relational service is important because it fosters appreciation and care for the organizers, thereby influencing the spiritual comfort of the pilgrims ([Hassan et al., 2022](#); [Khairiyati et al., 2020](#)). In the implementation of Hajj, especially at the starting point such as the Hajj dormitory, this aspect is a key element in building the first impression of the service system that will accompany the pilgrims to the Holy Land. This is supported by the results of the 2024 Indonesian Hajj Pilgrim Satisfaction Index (IKJHI), which emphasize the importance of empathy-based services and human communication, not merely administrative efficiency.

The study by Weber et al. (2023) shows that, although transportation services are well organized, pilgrims' dissatisfaction persists when interactions with officers are perceived as rigid or unempathetic. Likewise, in research by Saimona et al. (2024), the quality of spiritual services—such as worship guidance, mental strengthening, and religious atmosphere—had a significant effect on the overall perception of Umrah services. This non-physical dimension also appears in the research of [Mohammed et al. \(2024\)](#), which highlights the importance of developing service strategies based on pilgrims' emotional values and beliefs, rather than solely on procedural accuracy. Therefore, the ideal hajj service is one that integrates technical and emotional dimensions in a balanced manner to create a worship experience that is not only logistically comfortable but also spiritually meaningful.

Recognizing the importance of initial services within the hajj service chain, this study aims to examine pilgrims' perceptions of the quality of services received at the South Sumatra Hajj Dormitory during the 2024 hajj. Using a qualitative approach, this research seeks to capture the dimension of meaning that cannot be captured by statistical data alone, but through the narrative of pilgrims' lived experiences. The results of this study are expected not only to provide feedback for hajj dormitory managers and stakeholders at the regional level, but also to make a practical and theoretical contribution in strengthening public service management based on user experience.

Based on the above background, the main problems that are the focus of this research can be formulated in the form of the following questions:

1. What is the perception of pilgrims in 2024 towards the quality of services provided at the South Sumatra Hajj Dormitory?
2. What are the aspects of service that are considered to have the most influence on the satisfaction or dissatisfaction of pilgrims while in the Hajj dormitory?
3. What is the experience of pilgrims in interacting with the officers, facilities, and service systems provided in the hajj dormitory?
4. What are the implications of the perception of pilgrims on efforts to improve the quality of services in the future?

Based on the formulation of the problem, the purpose of this study is to:



1. Describing the perception of pilgrims in 2024 on the quality of service at the South Sumatra Hajj Dormitory.
2. Identify the most significant aspects of service in shaping the satisfaction or dissatisfaction of pilgrims during the departure waiting period.
3. Analyze in depth the subjective experience of pilgrims in interacting with the service system and officers in the hajj dormitory environment.
4. Compile recommendations based on empirical findings to improve and improve the quality of hajj dormitory services in an ongoing manner.

## **2. Literature Review**

### *2.1 Previous research*

Studies on service users' perceptions of the quality of public services in religious contexts, particularly the Hajj pilgrimage, have been widely examined by researchers. Most studies adopt the SERVQUAL theoretical framework ([Parasuraman et al., 1988](#)), which assesses service quality from five dimensions: tangible, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy.

In the context of Hajj implementation, [Fathurrahman et al. \(2021\)](#) conducted a study on the Pondok Gede Hajj Dormitory. They found that the tangible and empathy dimensions significantly affected pilgrim satisfaction. These findings are consistent with a study by Hasyim and Syaifullah (2022), which underscored that the comfort of physical facilities and officers' attitudes are the main factors in pilgrims' positive perceptions.

Meanwhile, research by Rahman et al. (2020) at the Medan Hajj Dormitory indicates that the reliability dimension is the primary determinant of pilgrims' trust, particularly with respect to information accuracy and departure-schedule consistency. In a similar study, Putri and Wahyuni (2021) found that assurance plays a crucial role in creating a sense of security among elderly pilgrims, given the numerous procedures involving documentation and health checks.

[Mohammed et al.'s \(2024\)](#) research emphasizes the importance of an integrative quantitative-qualitative approach to evaluating perceptions of religious-based services. This is supported by Saepudin (2022), who applied thematic analysis to explore the meaning of pilgrims' spiritual experiences in the hajj dormitory and found that personal narratives reveal more emotional aspects and interpersonal relationships than conventional surveys.

Furthermore, a study by Kartika and Hidayat (2019) noted that pilgrims' satisfaction is not only related to physical services but also to how these services strengthen the intention to worship. In a comparative study in Malaysia, Sulaiman et al. (2021) found that services at hajj transit centers that emphasize Islamic values and kinship approaches improve perceived service quality, despite not having superior physical facilities.

In terms of institutional management, Wahab and Nurhayati (2022) found that the interagency coordination system and continuous training for officers significantly affect the quality of hajj dormitory services. This study is in line with the findings in South Sumatra, where the availability of consistent information and communication between units determines the perception of service reliability.

Based on these studies, it can be concluded that pilgrims' perceptions of hajj dormitory services result from a complex interaction among the quality of physical services, the competence of officers, sensitivity to individual needs, and the accompanying socio-religious context. This research strengthens this understanding and provides additional perspectives by integrating thematic and quantitative approaches to analyze pilgrims' experiences holistically.

### *2.2 Service Quality Theory (SERVQUAL)*

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In examining pilgrims' perceptions of the services provided by the South Sumatra Hajj Dormitory, this study adopts the Service Quality Theory (SERVQUAL) framework. This theory was developed to measure the gap between customer expectations and their perception of the services received. The model focuses on five main dimensions: *Tangibles*, Reliability, Responsiveness, Assurance, and Empathy (Parasuraman et al., as cited in [Shi & Shang, 2020](#)).

The use of SERVQUAL in the context of hajj dormitory services enables researchers to evaluate services systematically and objectively, not only in terms of physical facilities but also by examining relational and emotional dimensions between officers and pilgrims. As emphasized by [Prakash \(2024\)](#), SERVQUAL provides an effective analytical tool for assessing customer-experience-based services in the public and spiritual sectors, such as hajj services.

Research by [Dinia et al. \(2024\)](#) shows that *the dimensions of reliability and responsiveness* are strong predictors of customer satisfaction, particularly in the context of services that require time-sensitive and accurate information. This is relevant in the context of hajj dormitory services which involve the accuracy of departure schedules, the efficiency of administrative processes, and facility preparedness. In the study by [Maharani et al. \(2023\)](#), *assurance and empathy* emerged as dimensions that significantly influence service users' perceptions of trust and comfort, two important factors in preparing for the spiritual and emotional departure of the Hajj pilgrimage.

Furthermore, [Bustamante et al. \(2020\)](#) emphasized that SERVQUAL can identify gaps between expectations and service realities, particularly in the delivery of social and religious services. In this case, the SERVQUAL model supports evaluation based on pilgrims' actual perceptions, rather than solely on administrative indicators. This is supported by the study by Febriyanti and Setyawan (2024), which shows the importance of clear service communication and complete information in creating a positive perception of services in the service sector.

In addition, [Dehghan \(2013\)](#) notes that the compatibility between the SERVQUAL dimensions and the local cultural context is crucial for explaining loyalty and service satisfaction in the public sector. Therefore, the application of the SERVQUAL theory in the context of the hajj dormitory not only serves as a technical measurement tool but also as a means to understand social and spiritual dynamics in worship services. Imawati (2010) emphasized that the SERVQUAL method is suitable for service quality surveys because it systematically captures differences in experience based on subjective customer perceptions.

In conclusion, the SERVQUAL theory provides a robust conceptual framework for assessing service quality at the South Sumatra Hajj Dormitory. This approach supports an analysis that is not only technical-instrumental but also encompasses the dimensions of trust, security, spiritual comfort, and empathy, which are essential needs of pilgrims in performing the hajj. Thus, this theory enables the development of a more measurable, comprehensive, and satisfaction-oriented service improvement strategy for pilgrims, the end users of Hajj services.

#### 2.1.1. Tangible Dimensions

The *tangible dimension* in the SERVQUAL model refers to the physical aspects of services such as the condition of the facilities, supporting facilities, cleanliness, neatness, and appearance of service provider staff ([Shi & Shang, 2020](#); [Bustamante et al., 2020](#)). In the context of the South Sumatra Hajj Dormitory service, *tangible factors play a key role in shaping pilgrims' initial perceptions of the overall quality of service*. Adequate physical facilities, such as clean rooms, hygienic dining rooms, comfortable places of worship, and well-



organized transportation, directly contribute to pilgrims' sense of security and mental readiness before the departure of the Hajj.

Several studies confirm that visual representation and physical comfort are early indicators of satisfaction of public service users. [Dinia et al. \(2024\)](#) found that perceptions of cleanliness, up-to-date facilities, and the regularity of facilities affect expectations and trust in other services. This aligns with the findings of [Weber et al. \(2023\)](#) on metro operations during Hajj, which emphasize that professional-looking, well-maintained infrastructure is an indicator of the reliability of the service system as a whole. In spiritual experiences such as the Hajj, physical space is not only understood functionally but also as a supporting element of inner peace ([Hassan et al., 2022](#)).

Local research in Indonesia also underscores the importance of tangible assets. [Mustofa et al. \(2021\)](#) identified that the comfort of waiting rooms, bed quality, and the availability of clean water in hajj dormitories have a significant impact on pilgrim satisfaction. Similarly, in the study by [Fathurrahman et al. \(2021\)](#), the presence of adequate physical facilities was directly associated with perceptions of the manager's professionalism. Even in health services during Hajj, as noted by [Banaser et al. \(2020\)](#), the physical condition of medical facilities and equipment also shapes perceptions of the organizers' concern for pilgrims' needs.

Furthermore, *tangibles* are inseparable from the psychological impact they cause. Visual aspects such as officers' uniforms, dining room interior design, or even the quality of information boards can have a symbolic effect on the institution's readiness and concern for worshippers ([Imawati, 2010](#); [Prakash, 2024](#)). In the context of religious services, physical facilities represent the values of faith and respect for worship itself ([Al-Harbi, 1998](#)).

Thus, in assessing pilgrims' perceptions of service quality at the South Sumatra Hajj Dormitory, the tangible dimension is the first aspect that can be observed, experienced, and compared. The evaluation of this dimension provides an important picture of the readiness of facilities to support the worship process, while reflecting the quality of management and the orientation of pilgrim satisfaction as the main target of services.

#### 2.1.2. Reliability Dimensions

The *reliability dimension* refers to the ability of service providers to consistently and accurately deliver promised services, including timeliness, information accuracy, and reliability of operational procedures ([Shi & Shang, 2020](#); [Febriyanti & Setyawan, 2024](#)). In the context of the South Sumatra Hajj Dormitory service, reliability is reflected in procedural certainty, clarity of the departure schedule, logistical readiness, and the alignment between the information provided and the reality of the services received by pilgrims.

A study by [Maharani et al. \(2023\)](#) shows that perceived reliability increases when public services operate without delays, are free of technical errors, and consistently respond to user needs. Hajj pilgrims, as a group of users with special needs, both spiritual and physical, rely heavily on the reliability of services when navigating the complexities of the departure and implementation processes for worship. Therefore, the reliability of the hajj dormitory is an important factor in fostering pilgrims' sense of security and confidence.

In a review by [Hassan et al. \(2022\)](#), reliable services in the context of religious travel were defined as the accuracy of schedules, the integrity of congregational data, and the speed of complaint handling. This is reinforced by [Mohammed et al. \(2024\)](#) who highlight that pilgrim satisfaction can increase significantly when all aspects of services—from registration to



accommodation distribution—are implemented according to standards and free from ambiguity. This aspect is also evident in the context of hajj services in Indonesia, as reported by Khairiyati et al. (2020), which links the information system and the accuracy of officers' services to the increasing trust of pilgrims in hajj organizers.

Reliability also entails the institution's commitment to deliver on its promises, both through initial socialization and through implementation in the field (Bustamante et al., 2020; Dehghan, 2013). For example, if the hostel promises breakfast at 6:00 a.m., the service must be available on time and up to standard. When expectations and service realization are aligned, reliability will be established gradually and continuously. This is in accordance with the findings of Yuliansari et al. (2017), who relate the reliability dimension to the formation of loyalty to religious services.

Locally, Mustofa et al. (2021) and Hanadya & Auliana (n.d.) emphasized that clear administrative procedures, reliable schedules, and officers' ability to manage pilgrim dynamics are key to creating trust in hajj service institutions. When pilgrims feel that the information they receive is accurate and that the service is on schedule, they will judge that the institution is working professionally and responsibly.

Thus, within the framework of this study, the reliability dimension is an important foundation for pilgrims' perceptions of service quality at the South Sumatra Hajj Dormitory. The ministry's reliability directly contributes to pilgrims' trust, security, and emotional calm amid complex and exhausting spiritual journeys. Evaluation of this dimension is important for determining the extent to which dormitory management can consistently maintain operational standards during the implementation of the 2024 Hajj.

### 2.1.3. Responsiveness Dimension

The *responsiveness* dimension refers to the willingness and ability of service providers to assist customers and respond promptly to requests and complaints (Prakash, 2024; Imawati, 2010). In the context of the South Sumatra Hajj Dormitory service, responsiveness reflects the speed with which officers address pilgrims' needs, the timeliness of information disclosure, and their readiness to address problems that arise before departure to the holy land.

According to Bustamante et al. (2020), responsiveness is not only a matter of speed, but also the sincerity of service and the real presence of officers when needed. Quick response to pilgrims' questions, the ability to handle minor incidents (such as transportation delays or room technical problems), and emergency preparedness are important indicators for this dimension. Hajj pilgrims, especially the elderly and vulnerable groups, need assurance that any problems they experience will be addressed promptly and with concrete actions.

In a study by Maharani et al. (2023), positive perceptions of responsiveness increased when services had clear, interactive communication channels, whether through direct (face-to-face) or indirect media (telephone, apps, or digital messages). When the dormitory provides officers who are available 24 hours a day and a complaint-handling system that is easily accessible and responds promptly, pilgrims' trust increases. This aligns with the findings of Yuliansari et al. (2017), who emphasized that responsiveness contributes to the formation of emotional loyalty among service users, particularly in institutions with a spiritual dimension, such as hajj dormitories.

Dinia et al. (2024) added that responsive public service organizations show high professionalism and concern for their consumers. In the context of the hajj dormitory, this is



evidenced by the presence of health workers ready to respond to pilgrims' physical complaints, as well as logistics officers responsible for managing equipment distribution and consumption. When pilgrims feel served quickly and efficiently, their perception of the quality of service tends to increase.

Furthermore, Febriyanti & Setyawan (2024) stated that responsiveness can be observed in officers' attitudes, namely their willingness to listen, avoidance of a defensive posture, and provision of concrete solutions. Dehghan's (2013) research also highlights that, in public service systems, emotional factors, such as willingness to listen to complaints, are often more influential than the technical solution itself.

The local context in Indonesia shows that responsiveness in religious services, such as hajj, has its own sensitivity. As explained by Khairiyati et al. (2020), pilgrims' needs are not only functional but also emotional and spiritual. Therefore, a prompt response to pilgrims' confusion, worry, or discomfort must also be delivered in an empathetic and polite manner. This underscores the value of ethics-based service, thereby strengthening the image of service as part of worship.

In the context of this study, *responsiveness* is a crucial dimension of pilgrims' perceptions because it concerns direct interaction between service providers and users. The level of responsiveness shows not only managerial quality, but also human quality in service. The evaluation of this dimension provides an overview of whether the South Sumatra Hajj Dormitory can provide prompt, empathetic, and professional services in the context of the 2024 Hajj implementation.

#### 2.1.4. Assurance Dimension

The *assurance dimension* in the SERVQUAL model includes guarantees of competence, politeness, credibility, and a sense of security provided by service providers to customers (Shi & Shang, 2020; Dehghan, 2013). In the context of services at the South Sumatra Hajj Dormitory, guarantee does not only mean the technical skills of the officers but also pilgrims' confidence that the services they receive are up to standard, safe, and meet spiritual and logistical needs prior to the departure of the hajj.

According to Bustamante et al. (2020), *assurance* is the result of a combination of personnel expertise, transparent information systems, and systematic risk management. In this case, the Hajj dormitory officer must be able to provide accurate information on the departure schedule, rules, health, and accommodation in a clear and unambiguous manner. When pilgrims receive information clearly, delivered by officers who appear competent and polite, trust in the institution increases (Prakash, 2024).

Research by Febriyanti & Setyawan (2024) states that guarantees are an important indicator in mass and routine public services such as transportation and pilgrim accommodation. In this study, the guarantee also encompasses pilgrims' trust in the system's readiness, including the security of the dormitory, the availability of medical facilities, and the clarity of departure procedures. This assurance is especially important given the large number of elderly pilgrims and their concerns about complex systems and the risk of failure.

Furthermore, Imawati (2010) emphasized that *assurance* is also related to the emotional dimension, namely the extent to which service users feel "calmed" by the attitudes and information they receive. In the context of the hajj, the dormitory is not only a stopover but



also a starting point for a worship experience of profound spiritual significance. Therefore, services that are convincing and provide a sense of security are needed.

Maharani et al. (2023), in their study on public service, stated that a sense of security is determined not only by physical facilities but also by the professional attitudes of officers, who can build relationships of mutual trust. This includes the ability to answer questions consistently, to provide valid written or verbal guidance, and to maintain pilgrims' confidentiality and comfort while in the dormitory.

As stated by Dinia et al. (2024), the *assurance aspect* is an important indicator of long-term customer loyalty and satisfaction. Pilgrims who feel physically and psychologically secure during the quarantine or transit period in the dormitory will tend to give a positive assessment of the overall hajj service. In these cases, the roles of staff training, clear SOPs, and formal oversight, such as by the Ministry of Religious Affairs and local security authorities, are crucial.

In addition, Yuliansari et al. (2017) emphasized the importance of assurance through proactive communication. For example, the open and systematic dissemination of information on departure and vaccination procedures will provide pilgrims with a sense of security. When pilgrims feel involved and valued in the service process, they perceive this institution as not only professional but also trustworthy.

Thus, in this study, the assurance dimension reflects the extent to which the South Sumatra Hajj Dormitory can instill confidence in pilgrims that they will be dispatched to the holy land in safe, orderly, and dignified conditions. An evaluation of this dimension will assess whether the level of professionalism and credibility in service delivery meets the expectations of pilgrims who are diverse in age, educational background, and spiritual experience.

#### 2.1.5. Dimension of Empathy

The *empathy* dimension in SERVQUAL theory emphasizes service providers' ability to demonstrate care, personal concern, and a genuine understanding of each service user's unique needs (Shi & Shang, 2020). In the context of the South Sumatra Hajj Dormitory, empathy can be manifested through humane interactions between officers and pilgrims, services that respect age, culture, and health backgrounds, and personalized responses to pilgrims' concerns prior to hajj departure.

According to Febriyanti and Setyawan (2024), the *empathy* dimension is one of the key indicators for assessing the quality of human-based services, particularly in the transportation and public accommodation sectors that serve large groups of people with high levels of vulnerability. In the case of pilgrims, the elderly, women, and novice pilgrims often require a gentler, patient, and inclusive approach. Therefore, officers' empathetic attitude is a crucial factor influencing pilgrims' perceptions of service satisfaction.

Imawati (2010) added that *empathy* is not limited to formal hospitality, but includes *listening capacity*—the ability of officers to listen and understand complaints or questions of pilgrims without judgment. In a dormitory environment that serves as a place of spiritual transit, the presence of officers who listen to and answer the congregation's questions with empathy helps foster a sense of appreciation and care.

Research by Dinia et al. (2024) shows that empathy-oriented services will create *emotional bonding* between customers and service providers, which ultimately strengthens long-term loyalty and positive perceptions. In this context, when pilgrims feel that the officer treats them



personally and not as a "queue number", then the services provided are not only functional, but also emotional and spiritual.

Furthermore, [Maharani et al. \(2023\)](#) found that in complex public services such as administrative systems or security services, the dimension of empathy is often marginalized. This can create a service gap that produces a bureaucratic, inhumane, or rigid impression. Therefore, in the hajj service that is full of religious and emotional values, the dimension of empathy must receive special attention in human resource training and service SOP design.

[Yuliansari et al. \(2017\)](#) also noted that empathy-oriented nursing services can increase patient satisfaction and trust. This finding is in line with the needs of pilgrims who often experience emotional distress, physical exhaustion, and confusion due to a long process. Officers who show simple concern—such as asking about health conditions, reexplaining procedures, or providing personal assistance—can make the pilgrim experience more meaningful.

[Bustamante et al. \(2020\)](#) stated that empathy is also manifested in the availability of time and personnel to serve without haste. Pilgrims tend to be more satisfied when they perceive that the officer is serving out of duty, rather than merely carrying out administrative obligations. This distinguishes high-quality services from those that prioritize efficiency alone.

[Prakash \(2024\)](#) emphasizes the importance of *personalized communication* in the context of health services and the public. In this study, a similar approach can be used—for example, tailoring approaches to young and elderly pilgrims, or providing special assistance for pilgrims with disabilities. Empathy entails adapting the service style to individual needs, rather than merely meeting general standards.

Thus, the empathy dimension in this study reflects the extent to which the South Sumatra Hajj Dormitory provides services that are not only professional but also socially and spiritually oriented. Evaluation of this dimension is important to ensure that the Hajj service does not become an impersonal, bureaucratic process but rather part of a comfortable, attentive pilgrimage.

### **3. Research Method**

#### *3.1 Approaches and Types of Research*

This study employs a descriptive qualitative approach to explore pilgrims' perceptions of the quality of services at the South Sumatra Hajj Dormitory during the 2024 Hajj. This approach was chosen because it allows researchers to understand the subjective experiences, personal meanings, and emotional perceptions of pilgrims in depth on the aspects of the services provided ([Creswell, 2013](#)).

The research does not aim to generalize to the population; rather, it explores the construction of meaning around public services based on spirituality and the collective experience of worshippers ([Yin, 2016](#)). This is in line with the nature of SERVQUAL, which is not only quantitative but can also be used to analyze narratives and perceptions about service quality ([Bustamante et al., 2020](#); [Prakash, 2024](#)).

#### *3.2 Research Location and Time*

This research was carried out at the South Sumatra Hajj Dormitory, Palembang. This location was chosen because it is the main transit point for pilgrims from the Southern Sumatra region.

The research was conducted from June to August 2024, during the crucial moments of pilgrims' departure and return.

### *3.3 Research Informant*

The main informants in this study are regular pilgrims in 2024 who have used hajj dormitory services, with a purposive sampling approach ([Sugiyono, 2017](#)). The criteria for informants include:

Have participated in activities at the Hajj Dormitory for at least one night.

Follow all procedures for departure/return of Hajj.

Willing and able to explain their experience in depth.

A total of 10-15 informants were selected based on gender diversity, age, education level, and embarkation group. This diversity is important to ensure variation in perceptions of service dimensions such as empathy, assurance, and responsiveness ([Yuliansari et al., 2017](#); [Shi & Shang, 2020](#)).

### *3.4 Data collection techniques*

Data collection is carried out through:

Semi-structured in-depth interviews. The interview guide is designed based on the five dimensions of SERVQUAL: tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy ([Parasuraman et al., 1985](#); [Imawati, 2010](#); [Febriyanti & Setyawan, 2024](#)).

Direct observation of the physical environment, officer interaction, and service atmosphere at the location.

Documentation in the form of photos, field notes, and data on the 2024 pilgrim satisfaction survey collected by the organizing team (in file: *Satisfaction Survey Jamaah.xlsx*).

The survey results showed that the Empathy and Responsiveness dimensions received the highest scores in the assessment of pilgrims, while the Tangibles aspect (physical facilities) received mixed responses. This finding is used as a starting point for identifying themes in the excavation of informant narratives.

### *3.5 Data Analysis Techniques*

The analysis is carried out through thematic analysis techniques ([Braun & Clarke, 2006](#)), with the following steps:

Transcribing and re-reading of interview results.

Open coding based on the five dimensions of SERVQUAL and the theme of the survey findings. The development of themes through the grouping of similar narratives. Interpretation of meaning based on the personal experience of pilgrims and the context of the hajj service. Contextualization of findings through triangulation with observational data and quantitative survey documents.

This approach strengthens the integration between the empirical results and the SERVQUAL conceptual framework, which has been applied to public and religious services in various prior studies ([Fathurrahman et al., 2021](#); [Mohammed et al., 2024](#)).

### *3.6 Data Validity*

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To maintain the validity of the data, the following are carried out:

Triangulation of sources (interviews, observations, documentation).

Member checking, which involves confirming the results of interviews with informants.

Peer debriefing is a discussion between researchers about field findings.

Trail audit, systematic recording of the analysis process (Miles et al., 2014).

### 3.7 Research Ethics

Researchers ensure the confidentiality of informants' identities, obtain informed consent, and adhere to social and religious research ethics (Orb et al., 2001).

## 4. Result and Discussion

### 4.1 General Description of Respondents

This study involves respondents from various pilgrim groups in South Sumatra Province in 2024. The general characteristics of the respondents are presented to provide an initial overview of the socio-demographic background of pilgrims who assess the quality of Hajj Dormitory services. The aspects considered include age, gender, regional origin, education level, and work background.

#### 4.1.1. Respondent Age

The ages of the respondents in this study ranged from 30 to over 70 years. The majority of respondents are over 50 years old, with a significant proportion being elderly. This age group is particularly relevant because they tend to have more specific service needs, particularly regarding accommodation, comfort, health, and officer attention. Elderly pilgrims are usually more sensitive to physical conditions such as bathing water facilities, room temperature (AC), and room accessibility.

#### 4.1.2. Gender

Respondents were men and women in equal proportions. There was no significant difference in the number of items in the two groups, but the interview observations indicated that female pilgrims were more expressive in conveying their impressions of the officers' friendliness and the food service. Meanwhile, male pilgrims highlighted the comfort of the sleeping rooms and the functions of the religious facilities in the Hajj Dormitory.

#### 4.1.3. Origin of the Region

All respondents were from various districts/cities in South Sumatra, including Palembang, OKI, Musi Banyuasin, Banyuasin, Lahat, and Lubuklinggau. This distribution reflects the representative distribution of all hajj group delivery zones in this province. Regional origin influences perceptions of services, particularly in the context of cultural expectations and prior experiences with public services.

#### 4.1.4. Final Education

Most pilgrims have a secondary-level education, such as junior high or high school, with a small percentage holding college degrees. The level of education appears to affect how pilgrims express complaints or satisfaction. Pilgrims with higher levels of education tend to provide more systematic and detailed evaluations, particularly in qualitative interviews.

#### 4.1.5. Work Background

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Most respondents were retired civil servants and self-employed individuals, followed by housewives and private-sector workers. Work is correlated with the experience of receiving formal services. For example, retired civil servants show higher expectations for service procedure standards and transparent information systems.

#### 4.1.6. General Interpretation

These demographic characteristics provide an important context for the results of the pilgrims' assessment. Age and employment background contribute significantly to the assessment of the Empathy and Tangibles dimensions, whereas prior education and experience further influence the assessment of the Assurance and Responsiveness dimensions.

#### 4.2 Results of Pilgrim Perception Survey Based on SERVQUAL Dimensions

The assessment of service quality at the South Sumatra Hajj Dormitory is conducted using the five dimensions of SERVQUAL: *Tangibles*, *Reliability*, *Responsiveness*, *Assurance*, and *Empathy*. The analysis was conducted using a quantitative approach based on survey results and supported by qualitative findings drawn from excerpts of in-depth interviews with several pilgrims.

##### 4.2.1 Tangibles (Physical Evidence)

The *Tangibles dimension* includes physical aspects that can be directly observed by worshippers, such as the condition of the building, the condition of bedrooms, the availability and quality of air conditioning, the quality of bath water, and the quality of food facilities.

Among the 502 respondents, 97.41% rated the cleanliness of the accommodation as good. Ratings of air conditioning and bathroom facilities are also high, although there are a few complaints about water pressure or room temperature.

One of the respondents from Kloter 11 said:

*"The room is clean, the bed is neat, but the water in the bathroom is a bit small in the morning. But in general, it's very decent."* (Interview, Batch 11)

Visually, the Tangibles dimension received a very good assessment in almost all aspects, indicating that the physical facilities of the Hajj Dormitory were considered adequate by the majority of pilgrims.

##### 4.2.2 Reliability

This dimension assesses the reliability of the Hajj Dormitory in consistently providing services as promised. The pilgrims assessed aspects such as the timeliness of food distribution, the regularity of activities, and the suitability of facilities with previous information.

As many as 91.57% of respondents rated the bathroom water quality as good. Although this is the lowest score among all indicators, most pilgrims still feel that the service is consistent and reliable.

Respondents from Kloter 3 stated:

*"All services are on schedule. Eating on time, room sharing is also not complicated."*

This means that even though there are slight shortcomings in certain aspects, overall, the service is considered consistent and reliable.

##### 4.2.3 Responsiveness

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Responsiveness refers to officers' readiness to respond to pilgrims' needs and complaints. This dimension shows the highest score, with 100% of respondents giving a *good rating*.

Pilgrims generally feel well cared for and served promptly. This reflects the effectiveness of officer training and a prompt service system.

The following quote confirms these findings:

*"Officers are quick if we need help. I asked for help sliding the mattress because it was difficult to climb, and I was immediately helped."* (Interview, Batch 17)

This shows that the responsiveness dimension is the main advantage of the service at the Hajj Dormitory.

#### 4.2.4 Insurance (Guarantee)

Assurance encompasses a sense of security, certainty of service, and the competence of officers in earning pilgrims' trust. With a score of 99.00%, this dimension also demonstrates exceptional performance.

Pilgrims feel comfortable because the officers are perceived as friendly, understand the SOPs, and are trusted. Especially for elderly pilgrims, the presence of a patient, guiding officer provides a measure of psychological comfort.

*"We feel calm because the officers always accompany. If anyone is confused about the technicalities, it will be explained immediately."* (Interview, Batch 5)

Assurance also shows the importance of spiritual and relational approaches in building trust during the Hajj departure process.

#### 4.2.5 Empathy

This final dimension encompasses officers' ability to provide individual attention, hospitality, and food service that suit pilgrims' needs. The assessment scores were 98.60% for food service and 99.80% for presentation.

The elderly pilgrims reported higher satisfaction with this dimension than the younger pilgrims, as they felt more personally cared for.

A 68-year-old respondent said:

*"Officers always greet the sick pilgrims, and come one by one. It feels like family."* (Interview, Batch 13)

This empathy factor is the most emotionally salient and memorable dimension for the pilgrims.

#### 4.3 Segmentation Analysis (Based on Age, Gender, and Cluster)

To gain a deeper understanding of pilgrims' perceptions, a segmentation analysis was conducted based on three main categories: age, gender, and departure group. This approach aims to identify specific patterns in service satisfaction and service aspects that are more concerned by certain groups.

##### 4.3.1 Segmentation by Age

The pilgrims who participated in the survey ranged in age from 30 to 75 years, with most in the older adult age group (over 60 years old). The results of the analysis show that:



The elderly age group (60 years and above) tends to give a higher rating on *the dimensions of Empathy and Assurance*. They felt greatly helped by the presence of officers who were patient, friendly, and provided personalized service.

*"I was not strong enough to stand for long, I was immediately brought a chair and helped to eat. They are very attentive."* (Interview, Kloter 14, age 66)

The productive age group (30–59 years) places greater emphasis on the dimensions of Tangibles and Reliability, particularly physical facilities, schedule reliability, and food distribution.

*"The food is delicious and on time. But bathrooms should be given more hangers."* (Interview, Kloter 10, age 42 years)

These findings show that age strongly influences perceptions of services: older adults are more sensitive to personal attention, whereas younger adults are more critical of facility aspects.

#### 4.3.2 Segmentation by Gender

Perceptions between male and female worshippers show differences in several aspects:

Female pilgrims scored higher on the Empathy and Responsiveness dimensions, primarily due to greater attention to safety, privacy, and comfort during their stay.

*"We women are very cared for, especially in room sharing and mentoring."* (Interview, Group 7, female)

Male pilgrims place greater emphasis on *the dimensions of Assurance and Tangibles*. They tend to pay attention to the quality of air conditioning, beds, and overall officer coordination.

*"I like it because it's orderly. Everything is in accordance with the SOP, and the officers are alert."* (Interview, Batch 15, male)

This analysis reinforces the importance of a gender-based approach to services, especially in the context of conducting hajj, which is collective and culturally sensitive.

#### 4.3.3 Segmentation by Cluster

The level of satisfaction between groups tends to be even, but there are certain groups that show special tendencies, for example:

Group 11 showed the highest levels of poor performance across almost all indicators, including cleanliness, air conditioning, and food taste. This may indicate technical issues or a tight service schedule at that time.

*"The food is cold. The water is also small. We feel underrated."* (Interview, Batch 11)

Groups 3 and 4 showed consistently very high satisfaction, with no significant negative scores. This can be attributed to the optimal departure time and the dormitory's technical readiness.

Groups 9 and 10, with fewer worshippers, tend to provide positive assessments across most aspects. This indicates that the service load is not overly dense, which positively affects service perception.

Segmentation by cluster is important as a basis for improving the management of departure schedules, officer capacity, and logistics evaluation within each cluster in greater detail in the future.



#### 4.4 Discussion of Findings (Associated with Previous Theories/Research)

The results of this study show that, in general, the quality of services at the South Sumatra Hajj Dormitory during the 2024 Hajj was perceived as very good by pilgrims. These findings will be discussed with reference to the SERVQUAL framework ([Parasuraman, Zeithaml & Berry, 1988](#)) and compared with the results of previous studies relevant to public services, particularly religious services and Hajj accommodation.

##### 4.4.1 Tangible Dimensions (Physical Evidence)

The *Tangibles dimension* includes environmental cleanliness, air-conditioning facilities, bathroom water, and food quality. The results of the survey showed that the average tangibles score was above 95%, which reflected the physical condition of the dormitory, which was considered very good.

This finding aligns with Abdullah (2012), who emphasizes the importance of the completeness of physical facilities as the primary indicator of pilgrim satisfaction. In the context of public service, *tangible assets are also markers of professionalism and readiness for service* (Lovelock & Wirtz, 2011).

However, in certain clusters (such as Cluster 11), complaints were received regarding water and food temperatures, indicating a service gap that could be a focus of cluster-based evaluation of dormitory operations.

##### 4.4.2 Reliability Dimension

The *Reliability dimension* shows the extent to which services are performed consistently, on time, and reliably. The findings indicate that dormitory officers are perceived as capable of providing stable services, particularly in meal schedules, room arrangements, and elderly assistance.

This is consistent with SERVQUAL's theory, which posits that reliability is a core dimension of customer satisfaction ([Zeithaml et al., 1990](#)). In addition, research by Rahayu (2017) at the West Java Hajj embarkation site also shows that reliability is very important, especially in the logistics arrangements for pilgrims' departure and consumption.

##### 4.4.3 Responsiveness Dimension

In the Responsiveness dimension, all groups recorded almost perfect assessments, indicating that dormitory officers responded promptly to pilgrims' needs. These findings are reinforced by direct quotations from pilgrims who report being actively and proactively served, particularly in caring for elderly and disabled pilgrims.

This aligns with a study by Hasanah and Malik (2020), which emphasized that the response rate of hajj officers significantly influences pilgrims' spiritual and emotional satisfaction. Responsiveness is a strong indicator of a service culture that is not only administrative but also empathetic.

##### 4.4.4 Assurance Dimension (Assurance/Knowledge and Politeness)

The *Assurance dimension* refers to pilgrims' sense of security and trust in the officers. A high assessment of this dimension indicates that the officer is perceived as able to provide a sense of security, professionalism, and friendliness when explaining procedures and accompanying pilgrims.



The SERVQUAL theory explains that the competence, decency, and credibility of the officers influence the guarantees. This finding is relevant to the research of Sulaiman et al. (2015), which emphasizes that assurance is the main dimension in services that involve high emotional and spiritual needs, such as hajj.

#### 4.4.5 Dimension of Empathy

The *Empathy* dimension obtained the highest scores, particularly among the elderly and female groups. Pilgrims feel cared for personally, are provided with a comfortable space, and are not treated en masse.

These findings support Berry et al.'s (1994) argument that services that provide individualized attention increase customer trust. In Widiastuti's (2019) study on Hajj health services, empathy is also the primary determinant of service success, as it fosters a sense of appreciation and attention.

#### 4.5. Implications of the Findings

The findings of this study not only strengthen the validity of the SERVQUAL model in the context of religious services but also show that the success of hajj services depends on a combination of infrastructure readiness (*tangibles*) and emotional-social readiness of officers (*empathy* and *responsiveness*).

Furthermore, these findings underscore the importance of a segment-specific approach, particularly for older adults, women, and individuals with limited service time. The evaluation and improvement of hajj dormitory services should be directed toward strengthening reliability and adaptation to the conditions of each cluster.

### 5.1 Conclusion

Based on the results of quantitative and qualitative data analysis that have been described in Chapter IV, this study produces several important conclusions as follows:

**The quality of Hajj Dormitory Services is Very Good in General**

Pilgrims' assessment of the quality of services at the South Sumatra Hajj Dormitory during the 2024 Hajj yielded very positive results, with average satisfaction across all SERVQUAL dimensions (Tangibles, Reliability, Responsiveness, Assurance, and Empathy) exceeding 95%. Tangible dimensions such as cleanliness, air conditioning, bathroom water, and food service received high levels of appreciation from cross-group pilgrims.

**Responsiveness and Empathy Dimensions Get the Highest Score**

Officers are considered highly responsive in addressing pilgrims' needs promptly and courteously, and they show empathy, particularly toward elderly and female pilgrims. This plays an important role in creating comfort during the waiting period for the departure of the hajj.

**Some Differences in Perception Based on Cluster**

Variations in assessments across groups were observed, particularly with respect to food temperature, water pressure, and room distribution. For example, in Cluster 11 and Cluster 22 there were "poor" scores in the aspects of bathroom water and food service. This indicates the need for periodic technical evaluation.

**Segmentation by Age and Gender Indicates Special Needs**

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Elderly pilgrims (over 60 years old) highly appreciate the officers' friendliness and physical assistance, such as transporting goods and helping with stairs. Female pilgrims are more sensitive to the comfort and cleanliness of rooms and bathrooms. This segmentation indicates that successful services are adaptive to specific needs.

#### **Interview Quotes Reinforce Quantitative Findings**

In-depth interviews with several pilgrims confirmed that the comfort, attention of the officers, and quality of food and lodging greatly influenced their satisfaction. These qualitative findings reinforce the quantitative results and provide a valid narrative context to the statistical figures.

Based on the conclusions that have been outlined, the researchers provide the following suggestions for future service improvements:

#### **Periodic Maintenance and Technical Inspections**

It is crucial for Hajj Dormitory managers to conduct periodic maintenance and inspections of facilities such as water systems, air conditioning, and food distribution systems to prevent deterioration in quality for certain groups.

#### **Strengthening Personal Services Based on Pilgrim Segmentation**

It is recommended that services for elderly and female pilgrims be delivered through a personal and empathetic approach. Officers should receive specialized training in services tailored to the needs of vulnerable groups.

#### **Routine Evaluation Based on Cluster**

It is necessary to establish a rapid reporting system for each group during their stay in the dormitory, so that every complaint can be addressed immediately and not recur in the next group.

#### **Increasing the Capacity and Number of Service Officers**

Although perceived responsiveness is very high, officers' workloads are quite large. Increasing the number of officers and arranging efficient work shifts can improve service quality without reducing performance due to fatigue.

#### **Creation of Real-Time Digital Feedback System**

In the future, it is recommended that a mobile/web-based digital feedback system be developed to enable pilgrims to convey their impressions and complaints promptly and directly.

#### **Development of Special Service Standards for the Hajj Dormitory**

Based on the study's findings, the author recommends establishing a Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) grounded in the five dimensions of SERVQUAL to serve as a national benchmark for all hajj dormitories in Indonesia.

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