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**Identifying the Psychosocial Aspects of Crowd during Pilgrimage:
The Experiences of a Group of Pakistani Female *Hajj* Pilgrims**

**Mengenalpasti Aspek Psikososial Orang ramai Yang Bersesak
Semasa Haji: Pengalaman Kumpulan Jama'ah Haji Wanita
Pakistan**

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Abstract

Hajj is a series of activities which involve the presence of many people of diverse backgrounds in specific sites. It is an annual event which necessitates Muslims from all over the world to travel to Makkah during the *Hajj* season. The participation in *hajj* involves a number of remarkable experiences by the pilgrims who encounter various new incidents that involve their physical, psychosocial and social experiences. Despite the widely reported accounts of *hajj*, less has been conducted to study the experience of people who travel from different parts of the world to Makkah. The objective of this paper is to report the findings from a focus group discussion which examined the experiences of *hajj* among Pakistani female pilgrims. Data was collected from 11 respondents from Lahore, Pakistan. They were required to state their confrontations in *hajj* sites; and the reasons for having such experiences. They reported both positive and negative feelings during *hajj*; highlighted their and others' pattern of behaviours when performing *hajj* including commendable and hazardous actions that they observed among pilgrims and *hajj* service providers. They also reported their concerns over crowd management issues, and the pilgrims' lack of mental preparation to be with others of different cultural backgrounds. The findings serve as a basis for the development

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of interventions to help *hajj* managers, policy makers, and future *hajj* pilgrims to understand the psychological states and sociological conditions during *hajj*.

Keywords: hajj, crowd, pilgrims, psychology, emotion, cognition, behavior.

Abstrak

Ibadat haji merupakan beberapa siri aktiviti-aktiviti yang melibatkan kehadiran kumpulan manusia yang ramai datang dari pelbagai latar belakang di lokasi haji yang ditetapkan. Ia adalah aktiviti tahunan bila mana jamaah haji dari seluruh pelusuk dunia pergi ke Mekah dalam bulan haji untuk mengerjakan ibadat tersebut. Penyertaan dalam ibadat haji tersebut memberikan beberapa pengalaman yang luar biasa kepada jamaah di manamereka alami pelbagai pengalaman secara fizikal, psikososial dan sosial. Walaupun wujud pelbagai pengalaman yang dilaporkan jamaah haji, tidak banyak kajian yang dilakukan untuk mengkaji pengalaman jamaah yang datang daripada seluruh pelosok dunia ketika berada di Mekah, bercampur gaul dengan jamaah-jamaah yang berlainan budaya dan tingkahlaku. Objektif artikel ini adalah untuk melaporkan dapatan kajian hasil daripada perbincangan kumpulan berfokus untuk mengenalpasti pengalaman haji dalam kalangan jamaah wanita Pakistan. Data telah dikumpulkan daripada 11 orang responden dari Lahore, Pakistan. Mereka dikehendaki menyatakan pengalaman mereka semasa berada di lokasi ibadat haji; dan sebab mereka mengalami pengalaman-pengalaman sedemikian. Mereka melaporkan wujud perasaan positif dan negatif semasa menunaikan haji; turut menekankan bentuk tingkah laku mereka dan orang lain ketika menunaikan haji, termasuk memperihalkan tindakan terpuji dan berbahaya yang mereka perhatikan dalam kalangan jamaah haji dan penyedia-penyedia perkhidmatan haji. Mereka turut melaporkan kebimbangan mereka mengenai isu-isu pengurusan sesakan/kerumunan jamaah haji, dan kekurangan persiapan mental para jamaah untuk berhadapan dengan jamaah-jamaah lain yang berlainan latar belakang. Dapatan ini berfungsi sebagai asas bagi membangunkan kaedah-kaedah untuk membantu pengurus haji, pembuat dasar, dan jamaah haji di masa depan untuk memahami keadaan psikologi dan sosiologi jamaah semasa menunaikan ibadat haji. Cadangan kaedah-kaedah untuk menangani kesesakan jamaah haji dihuraikan pada bahagian perbincangan.

Kata Kunci: Haji, kesesakan orang ramai, jamaah haji, psikologi, emosi, kognitif, tingkah laku.

Introduction

The term crowd can be referred to the experience that individuals go through when they are in mass gathering. It involves the presence of a huge number of individuals who have common reasons for gathering at a place; or being with the crowd (Zeitz, Tan and Zeitz 2009, 32). Reicher (2002, 182) states that crowd phenomena have been associated with an awfully strange, pathological, or monstrous condition that an individual experiences when he or she is with many others. In other word, being in a crowd exposes an individual to various experiences, involving behav-

journal, cognitive and emotional aspects. In many cases, being in crowd has lead to negative consequences on human experience and wellbeing (Novelli, Drury, Reicher, and Stott 2013, 7).

Among the mass gatherings which involve the presence of huge volume of people in one specific site and time is *hajj*. It is a religious rite practiced by Muslims who subscribe to Islam as their belief and life system. It is an obligation upon them to observe five pillars of Islam, one of them is performing *hajj*, once in their lifetime with the exception to those who are not physically and financially capable. Given it is a mass gathering, individuals who perform *Hajj* would come across various crowd conditions which would lead them to experience certain feelings, develop specific thinking, and show particular patterns of behaviours. Like in other crowd conditions, the gathering of *hajj* involves the participation of individuals who came from diverse demographic and cultural backgrounds, hence resulting in different patterns of behaviours in *hajj* sites.

Various research on crowd reported different experiences encountered by individuals who are present in crowd conditions. This is attributable to their unfamiliarity with the locations of the event, the people they encounters, or the environment they face (Challenger, Clegg, and Robinson 2009, pp). Similarly, individuals who are performing *hajj* may also experience the same. Given the different backgrounds of individuals who are present in the *hajj* crowd, one could expect to see difference in the pilgrims' behavioural, cognitive, and emotional patterns. The difference that they observed is also due to the different perception of that they form on other people and surroundings during *hajj* time. This would lead to the formation of different attitude towards other people and the situation or place they face. The combination of external conditions and internal psychological states of the pilgrims may lead to certain untoward conditions which might be detrimental to many others, such as accidents, crowdedness, health hazards, and other negative consequence.

Reicher (2002, 182) stated that crowds actions are inherently destructive and random; and the causes of crowds are immeasurable. Similarly, the very large size of people performing *hajj* or pilgrims contributes to the condition of crowd which in turn lead to significant impacts on the psychological and sociological aspects, namely their behaviors, thinking and feelings. They are exposed to negative consequences at personal and social levels which too might cause negative consequences to all in the crowd.

As social learning theorists stated, the pattern and extent of an individual's behaviours are the function of his or her cognitive processes and emotional states (Walsh 2008, 117). In this regard, the behaviours of *pilgrims* in crowd during *hajj* could be attributed to the presence of multi-cultural pilgrims from all parts of the world. They have to deal with people of diverse socio-cultural background when performing the *hajj* rites (*Tawaf*, *Saie*, *Wuquf*, and Stoning). These rites take place in the multiple locations where the crowds are distributed. Besides, in *hajj* sites, one would come across the presence of multiple *hajj* enforcement and service agencies (the police, ambulance, fire and rescue, transport staff, local authorities and event planners). The crowd can also be attended by the presence of street souvenir sellers, or street food operators (Challenger et al 2009). The intersection of culture among them in the *hajj* sites, if not been mediated by positive thinking and feeling, would lead to negative behaviours which, in turn, might be detrimental to many in the crowd.

Although many scholars, especially in social psychology discipline, argued that crowd is a concept which is in need of explanation (Reicher 2002, 208), there has not been much research conducted to explain the crowd phenomena during *hajj* pilgrimage. The essentiality to understand the relationship between psychological and social aspects of crowds during *hajj* necessitates a study to gather information of the behaviors, emotion and cognitive processes among *hajj* pilgrims. The research also should focus on the social aspects of the crowd in that it should assess the roles of the the surroundings, and other individuals (of diverse various backgrounds) in determining the pilgrims' behaviors, cognitive processes, and emotion. It is with this necessity that this research was conducted, aimed at identifying the *pilgrims's* experience during the *hajj* activities vis-à-vis the aspect of behavior, emotion and thinking. The study also identified the contributing variables which lead to the behavior, emotion or thinking that they described.

Significance of this research

Understanding both psychological and sociological variables that contribute to the three aspects of crowd behaviors is essential to help *hajj* authorities in designing *hajj* education programmes. Such is important to equip the would-be pilgrims with desirable psychosocial attributes so that they know how to deal with crowd when they later perform *hajj*. The findings will help explain the reasons behind the diverse patterns of be-

haviors in crowd in that each individual would have different ways of evaluation on the situation, or people they encounter. Understanding the reasons and pattern of crowd behaviours will inform them on preferred or suitable direction of behaviors in crowd condition.

Research on the psychosocial aspects of *hajj* will enable professionals who are in charge of *hajj* management to develop better understanding on the interrelationship between behaviors, cognitive processes, and emotion among pilgrims whenever they are in crowd situations. Understanding the relationship between the pilgrims' overt behaviors (push, protecting dependants, safeguarding self) and their covert behaviors (stress, personality, anger state, anxiety etc) is essential to design interventions programmes that aim at improving pilgrims' *hajj* performance and movements.

Method

Participants

Eleven female participants from Lahore, Pakistan have been engaged to take part in a focus group discussion (FGD). The participants were selected from individuals who have performed *hajj* within the past five years. The participants consists of professionals, and housewives whose age range from 30 to 65 years. Most of them went to perform *hajj* with their spouse, family members or friends. Some of them have the experience of performing umrah too, while some of them have performed *hajj* for a number of times.

Procedure

The focus group discussion was conducted in the City of Lahore, Pakistan. The participants were invited to participate, one month prior to the FGD session. During the FGD, the researchers explained about the purpose of FGD, and the essentiality of their input in providing bases for the formulation of strategies to improve the *hajj* crowd management system. They were informed of their roles, and the anonymity condition of their participation. They were explained of the informed-consent form which they later duly signed. Permission was sought for the researchers to audio-record the discussion.

Design

This study adopted a qualitative research approach which data were gathered through the FGD, during which the pre-identified partici-

pants contributed their input to answer questions which have been developed to tap information that correspond to the research objectives. The data collection process involved semi-structured interviews with the participants, enabling the researchers to understand the experiences of pilgrims in *hajj* activities. The FGD has enabled the researchers to focus on the questions by facilitating the participants to share their experience, views, and suggestions (Jackson, Drummond, and Camara 2007, 23). The researchers who acted as facilitators in the FGD stimulated the discussion by projecting images of crowds in the four *hajj* sites (*Tawaf, Sa'ie, Wuqf, and Stoning*). Discussion with, and among, the respondents enable the researchers to gather various crowd-related issues,. The FGD also lead to detailed information on the subjects and issues discussed. The FGD also promoted interaction inside the group, influencing each FGD participant to add to the ideas shared by another participant hence enriching the input on a specific issue or subject.

Materials

The researchers projected four set of images on *Hajj* activities (*Tawaf, Sa'ie, Wuqf and Stoning*) to solicit input from the participants. For each image, the participants were asked of the following (a) What are your experiences in each scenario?; (b) What are the factors that you think contribute to the experiences; and (c) What are your suggestions to help future pilgrims in dealing with crowd during each activity?

Data Analysis

The information gathered from the FGD provides fundamental data which are turned into the FGD transcript. Researchers then analyse the transcript in order to respond to the research questions, presented in the following findings.

Findings

This section reports the female Pakistani pilgrims's experience during the four *hajj* activities vis-^{'azza}wa-^{jalla}-vis the psychosocial aspects of behavior, emotion and thinking they encounter throughout the activities. The contributing variables which lead to the behaviors, emotion or thinking were also reported, by the four categories of activities.

Tawaf Experience

In terms of the pilgrims's personal behaviors, it has been found that their behaviours were linked to

- a. The way they think or predict. A female *pilgrim* reported that she performed *Tawaf* in a vigilantly careful manner for the fear of losing ablution or *wudhu*' which may nullify the validity of the *Tawaf*.
- b. The condition of the environment. A female pilgrim reported that she found the *Mataaf* (the space around the Kaabah, where pilgrims circumambulate the *Kaabah*) at the Haram to be packed with pilgrims. This prompted her to go through the crowds in a very careful way, especially in the effort to avoid being touched by male pilgrims, or accidentally touching them while moving in the crowded condition. If this happened, then her *tawaf* is nullified a situation she did not want to encounter.
- c. The requirement for the completion of *hajj*. Pilgrims are mindful that ablution or *wudu*' is the prerequisite to the validity of *tawaf*. In the teaching of Islam, a female pilgrim will have to repeat cleansing herself with ablution (*wudu*') if her skin touches the skin of males other than that of her husband, father, son, and brothers (they are known as *Mahram*). They hence avoided crowded areas in order to avoid the nullification of ablution.
- d. The safety reasons. Female pilgrims preferred performing *tawaf* in less crowded space to a packed area. A female pilgrim avoided being physically closed to the *Kaabah* because it is too crowded that made it difficult and dangerous for pilgrims to move about when circumambulating the *Kaabah*. She and her friends found that *Tawaf* is troublesome and dangerous when the crowd caused hurts.
- e. The need for assistance. A number of FGD participants stated that there were pilgrims with physically or medically unfit foot. They are in need of assistance during *Tawaf*, hence should find alternative space which allows them to have slow pace of *tawaf* movement. Moving along with other pilgrims while one needs slow circumambulating pace would be hard as one might be pushed by the crowd from behind.

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- f. The pilgrims' health condition. A female pilgrim reported that *tawaf* would be difficult to accomplish if a pilgrim is not physically fit, being mindful that it is hard for the pilgrim to protect himself or herself when being pushed in crowded condition. She shared her *hajj* experience during which she found it was difficult for her to walk alone due to her knee injury. In effect, she had to move slowly but only to be pushed to the left and right by other pilgrims who circumambulated in a group during *tawaf*.
- g. The attitude of pilgrim. There are pilgrims who were found to care for; and did all it takes to protect their family or group members. The FGD participants reported that some pilgrims were overprotective of their group or family members at the expenses of other pilgrims' safety and comfort. Some of them even aggressively pushed others or shouted at them in order to force others to give way. There were male pilgrims who overprotected their female group or family members even by pushing other female pilgrims away from their *Tawaf* track. Besides, a participant reported that they were some pilgrims who rigidly wanted to do post-*tawaf* prayer in front of *bab al-multazam* even though the condition at *Mataaf* was packed with huge volumes of pilgrims. This has caused crowded condition in the *Mataaf* areas.
- h. The pilgrims' knowledge on *hajj* sites and procedures. Pilgrims were not informed of the passage of *Tawaf*, or the direction they should avoid. The absence of a proper guide had hindered the smooth flow of *Tawaf* in the *Mataaf*.
- i. The uncoordinated *hajj* activities. The *Tawaf* conditions would become crowded due to the uncoordinated movement of people going to and leaving the *Mataaf*. A female pilgrim reported that she observed pilgrims moving to the opposite direction when wanting to start their *Tawaf*, in that they were looking for the green-light point; or when they were leaving the *Mataaf* after completing it. They also moved to the opposite direction when they were looking for their preferred exits. Some chose to leave the *Haram* via specific exit even though there were exits near to the end point of *Tawaf* completion. This has caused slow moving pilgrims around the *Kaabah*. A female pilgrim reported that some of the doors at

the Mosque were closed at certain time. This lead to overcrowding situations at certain doors especially when they were two groups of pilgrims moving toward opposite direction; some were going out while the other were getting into the Mosque.

In terms of the feeling during *tawaf*, it is linked to the pilgrim's

- a. Previous experience. A female pilgrim reported that she was scared to perform *tawaf* on the ground floor, or *Mataaf* because she had had a bad experience being hit by wheelchairs carrying other pilgrims, to the effect of not wanting to come to the *Hajj* any more. She however was not scared of going for *umrah* in the future.
- b. Cautious action. To the FGD participants, *Hajj* is a moment of truth when one feels overjoyed of being able to witness the *Kaabah* from a close distance. They loved to be closed to the *Kaabah* but due to the crowdedness, many decided to perform *Tawaf* at less crowded points. Although they loved to kiss the black stone or *hajaral-aswad*, which is attached to one corner of the *Kaabah*, they just put aside the intention for fear of being pushed by the crowd who always struggle to get close to the *hajarul aswad* point.
- c. Acceptance of Challenges. Some participants felt that hardship is good while doing the *hajj Tawaf*. For them, *Hajj* as a ritual which puts pilgrims to certain extent of test. The hardship, discomfort or difficulties one feels are the avenue for them to feel *redha*, that is to accept what Allah grants a person with. *Redha* is also to feel pleased with Him, despite the challenges one faces.

The thinking pattern among the pilgrims when they were in *Tawaf* is linked to their

- a. Awareness of the Hajj purpose. The females FGD participants reported that they did bear one similar idea in mind during *Tawaf*, that as Muslims, they have to persevere whatever difficulties they encountered during *hajj*. They are of the belief that the difficulties, problems, and challenges they faced are forms of tests that one has to go through when performing *hajj*.
- b. Perceived Precious Opportunity. For many of them, *hajj* is a once in a lifetime opportunity which should be optimally uti-

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lised. A participant reported that she intended to perform as many *tawaf* as possible or *umrah* while in Makkah.

- c. Presence of ‘difficult’ pilgrims. The *hajj* positive experience is ruined by the presence of what they identified as selfish individuals who were only thinking of themselves, greedy, and disrespectful of others when performing *hajj*. For instance, they did not want to form queue when entering toilet, causing havocs at toilet areas. A participant said that this is not the spirit of *Hajj* which requires pilgrims to be nice to each other, show tolerance to other pilgrims, and respect one another.

Sa’ie Experience

With regard to the *Sa’ie* experience, the female *pilgrims* reported that their behaviours were linked to:

- a. Condition of the *Sa’ie* tracks. The pilgrims said that they walked along the *Sa’ie* walkway or *Mas’a* for seven rounds. To the FGD participants, it is a less crowded area compared to the *Mataaf*. A participant reported about the condition of floor in *Mas’a*, in that there are certain points along the track which have small gaps between the flooring tiles. This hurts the pilgrims’ feet, to the extent of causing minor injury to their feet. Some of the female pilgrims prefer the tracks on the second level to the ground level because of the flat flooring on the former. Being on the second floor also allowed them easy handling of wheelchair.
- b. Pattern of pilgrims’ movement. The FGD participants reported that *Mas’a* is a less hassle space because the crowd are scattered along the *Sa’ie* tracks. Although *Sa’ie* is a less hassle activity, the pilgrims had to be careful of the fast-moving individuals or groups who utter loud supplication when walking throughout the *Mas’a*. When they encountered such condition, female pilgrims would avoid the huge moving group in order to give way to them.
- c. Pilgrim’s physical condition. *Sa’ie* has lead some of the pilgrims to have feet injury due to the need to walk through the seven rounds of *Sa’ie*. This is relatively long a distance far for certain people. *Sa’ie* is not as weary experience as the *Tawaf* because pilgrims found it to be a comfortable and smooth activity. This is also attributable to the availability and accessi-

bility of the *zamzam* water dispensing station in case they need to drink or wash their face. They also reported that they can rest at any time while performing *Sa'ie* as it was neither a requirement nor a need to rush in completing *Sa'ie*.

- d. Pilgrim's perseverance. A participant said that pilgrims should be mentally strong in order to complete *Sa'ie*. An FGD participant said that one needs to have strong stamina to comfortably perform *hajj* activities, especially the rites that involve physical movement such as *Sa'ie*.
- e. Other pilgrims' behaviours. Crowded conditions occur occasionally in the *Mas'a* because pilgrims would come to stand in the prayer lines, getting ready to perform congregational prayers when the call or *azan* for prayers were recited. Pilgrims who were performing *Sa'ie* would have their passage blocked, hence could not continue with the *Sa'ie*. This has caused crowded condition at certain points along the *Mas'a*. In addition, some pilgrims performed prayer at the end of the *Sa'ie* passage (*Safa and Marwah*) while others would offer their supplication on completing the final round of the *Sa'ie*. This has caused minor congestion at the *Marwah* point and slowed down the movement of pilgrim in *Sa'ie*.

In terms of their feeling states during *Sa'ie*, they are linked to

- a. Other pilgrims' behaviors. The participants reported that they were a bit disturbed by the loud recitation of supplication by the other pilgrims, especially on the first floor of *Mas'a*. Some of them were walking in a big crowd. On the other hand, they felt that they should focus on their own prayer without giving much attention to the actions of others.
- b. Less burdensome activity. The pilgrims thought that *Sa'ie* is a much easier rite or activity when they compared it with *Tawaf*, which posed them some extent of hardship and challenges.
- c. *Sa'ie* requirement. *Sa'ie* gave them an enjoyable moving activity which did not require them to think for the need to maintain themselves in ablution (Ablution or *Wudu'* is not required when performing *Sa'ie*).

Wuqf Experience

With regard to the *Wuqf* experience, the female pilgrims reported that their behaviours were linked to:

- a. Knowledge on the requirement of *Wuqf* in *Hajj*. *Wuqf* is the most important moment for the *hajj* rites. Some participants reported that they could not spend much time for the *wuqf* period in the designated site *Arafah* because they arrived there late, due to transportation problem.
- b. *Hajj* Service Operators. A participant described that she had a nice *Wuqf* experience in *Arafah* but highlighted an issue regarding the movement of pilgrims entering *Arafah*. She cited their difficulties with chartered transportation, and difficulties faced by bus drivers in getting to the location of the assigned pilgrims' tent. In effect, the pilgrims had to spend their *Wuqf* period on their bus. Another participant informed that it was difficult to reach *Arafah* by train for there was no officials to guide the pilgrims on the way to their destinations. A participant reported that even when there is a guide at the train station, he knew little about the place.
- c. *Hajj* Management. A participant found that the movement from *Makkah*, *Mina* or *Aziziyah* entering *Arafah* was not properly managed in that many pilgrims could not arrive at the allocated place before the *Wuqf* time. On the other hand, a participant who went for *Hajj* with a travel agent reported easy movement to 'Arafah, and the *Wuqf* experience was a comfortable one for her. A participant described a challenging experience she encountered when using the train to enter 'Arafah. She and her friends had to spend about four hours in order to board the train.
- d. Weather condition. Another participant reported that the weather on the *Wuqf* Day was extremely hot to the extent that some pilgrims had fainted. The elderly pilgrims were the most to be affected by the hot weather.
- e. Misunderstanding of *Wuqf* Requirement. Some participants complaint that could not hear the call to prayers (*azan*) and sermon (*khutbah*) on the *Wuqf* as they were lack of audio speakers to accommodate big crowd of Pakistani pilgrims. They did not know that being at the mosque or listening to *khutbah* in *Arafah* are not the *Wuqf* requirement.

The FGD participants reported different feelings during *Wuqf*, which are:

- a. Feeling of Relief. They felt relieved for having reached the most important place on time, without any hassle.
- b. Fearful. Some participants felt fearful, for not being able to reach the assigned *Wuqf* place before the *Wuqf* time (before the sunset), failing which would disqualify them from completing the *hajj*.
- c. Guilty. Another participant reported her feeling of guilt, for not being able to attend the 'Arafah *Khutbah* (Sermon). Many were rushing to be at Namirah Mosque to listen to the *Khutbah* on the Arafah Day. Most of the pilgrims thought that it is an obligation upon them to listen to the *Khutbah*. In actual fact, many did not know that attending or even listening to the *khutbah* was not compulsory.
- d. Sadness. There were also participants who reported the feeling of sadness, for being placed at the edge of Arafah where the voice of *Muazzin* calling for prayers, or *Khatib* giving sermon of Arafah could not be heard. A female participant reported that many females were crying because they could not listen to *khutbah* as they thought that their *hajj* was not complete because of the failure to listen to the *khutbah*.

Stoning Experience

As far as the stoning ritual is concerned, the behaviours of pilgrims are linked to the following

- a. Lack of knowledge on the right procedure of stoning. A participant found that many pilgrims did not know the right way of stoning, in that many of them ended up hurting other pilgrims while throwing pebbles in the *Jamarat*.
- b. Lack of signages or guide. Participants stated that there were pilgrims who did not have proper direction of movement on the *Jamarat*; and did not know the position they should be taking when performing the stoning ritual.
- c. Hazardous acts. The participants reported that they saw the pebbles thrown by some pilgrims did not hit the *Jamrah* but hurt other people in front of them.
- d. Tiredness. The female participants reported that some of them did not perform the stoning for themselves but delegat-

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ed it to their husband. This was the case because some female pilgrims could not walk from their Mina tent, located far from the *Jamarat*. Some avoided walking because they injured their foot in the preceding *hajj* ritual (*Sa'ie*).

- e. Thrilled feeling. To some participants, the feeling of joy took precedence over the feeling of anxiety when attending the gathering of pilgrims in 'Arafah, Mudzalifah and Mina. Although some female pilgrims initially decided to delegate the stoning to their husbands (as it is allowed by the religion), many later changed their mind upon knowing that it was not that hard to complete the stoning in the three *Jamarat*.

With regard to the feeling that the pilgrims experienced during the stoning activity, the following were highlighted

- a. Pre-conceived ideas about the condition of *Jamarat*. A female participant reported that she felt fearful when she reached the time and place for *hajj* stoning. She later found out that the stoning place was convenient; and the situation in *Jamarat* was not as bad as it was described to them by the others who have performed *hajj* before them.
- b. Pleasant-feeling with the Hajj authorities. Another participant commended the way the *hajj* authorities managed the movement of crowd during the stoning time. They organized the movement of crowd by allowing them to enter the *Jamarat* sites in staggered manner.

With regard to the pilgrims' thinking pattern on the *Wuquf* Day, it was found that the pilgrims were thinking of

- a. Their ability and possibility to accomplish the whole *hajj* rites. They were thinking of whether it was possible for them to complete the *hajj* before the *hajj* time period ended. This was due to the fact that *Wuquf* time happens for only a short period of time. Failing to be in 'Arafah within the *Wuquf* time would prevent them from completing the *hajj*.
- b. The behaviours of others in the surrounding, Their focus on *hajj* has been distracted by the huge crowd of people whose behaviours affected their focus on *hajj* activities.
- c. The risk of being in hot weather. Besides causing them uncomfortable condition, the heat has made them thinking on the ways to cool themselves, get drinking water, avoid dehydration, or empty their bladder.

- d. The attitude of other pilgrims. Two participants reported that there were a number of disturbance or discomfort, which in their view, are attributed to the attitudes of pilgrims. A participant said that the disturbance on the *Wuquf* Day was due to the behaviours of pilgrims who throng the Namirah Mosque. Most of them were stuck in the congestions of pedestrians whose movement were restrained due to the huge volumes of pilgrims moving towards the mosque.
- e. The idea on good way to perform stoning. Many pilgrims believed that they were actually stoning devil or *shaitan* hence were thinking of the best way to hit the *Jamarah* with the pebbles they brought. Many did not aware of the real concept of stoning as many of them held tight to the idea that they have to hurt the *syaitan*.
- f. the others' reaction during inconvenient condition. By and large, in many instances, the state of thinking among the female pilgrims affected their feelings. For instances, the thinking that their husbands would become angry with the pilgrims who pushed, or shouted at his wife made them feel afraid to inform their husbands of what they experienced during hajj.

Factors of the Hajj Experiences as reported by the Pilgrims

An objective of this research is to gain insight from the female participants on the contributing variables of the experiences they described. They stated many contributing conditions which are summarised in the following points:

- a. The lack of training among *hajj* pilgrims. The participants attributed the negative experience they encountered mainly due to inadequate knowledge or training they received from the *hajj* organiser or manager. A participant informed that there was only one class which they attended before going for *hajj*. The main focus was on the ritual of *hajj* instead of on the spiritual meaning of *hajj*, the philosophy of *hajj*, and the relationship among pilgrims and woth others during *hajj*.
- b. The age factor of pilgrims. Most of the pilgrims were elderly people whose physical and intellectual capacity hampered their effective functions when moving in crowded *hajj* sites. Pakistani pilgrims were reported to be mostly aged. They re-

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- quired assistance while performing *Tawaf*, and *Sa'ie*. They too needed help from others during *Wuquf* or being represented by others when performing the stoning.
- c. Traffic Issues. Transportation problems, for instance, contributed to the existence of crowd condition during *hajj* time. They were cases when bus drivers did not know the location of the tent allocated to pilgrims. Inexperienced *hajj* managers would create unnecessary stress to the pilgrims, instead of facilitating their *hajj* performance. Many pilgrims were stuck in traffic congestion because many had been assigned to certain chartered buses. They were so many buses moving towards 'Arafah hours before the *Wuquf* time began.
 - d. Intersection of culture. Pilgrims, *hajj* workers, and authorities of different cultural and language backgrounds had communication barriers. Some *hajj* workers, such as bus drivers, did not understand the language of people from different nationalities, causing communication breakdown between pilgrims and the workers. Besides, although sign boards were made available by the authorities to guide the movement of pilgrims, they could not be understood by many pilgrims who could not understand the languages used.
 - e. Human factors. Many pilgrims were not aware of the real concept of *hajj*. For instance, many pilgrims held tight to the belief that they were actually stoning devil or *shaitan* hence felt obliged to hit the stone in the strongest possible manner. Some pilgrims carried luggage with them or brought along their children when being in huge crowd. This did not only worsen the situation but caused danger to the children. The selfish attitudes among pilgrims had made it difficult for the authority to manage them during crowd. In fact, it is their attitude that contributes to the occurrence of crowdedness. For instance, a participant has taken the initiative of asking her fellow pilgrims mate to form a que to enter toilet, only to receive long gaze from the people she was addressing.

Discussion and Conclusion

The information in this study were gathered from participants who involved directly with the ritual of *hajj*. The discussion provided a genuine set of qualitative data which is expected to provide valuable in-

put for *hajj* policy makers, *hajj* authorities, or *hajj* operators to improve *hajj* services. The following are four sets of suggestions which could be utilised by them in designing interventions to deal with crowd-related issues, and in turn improve *hajj* experience among pilgrims.

Human Process Intervention

The human process-based intervention focuses on improving interpersonal, intragroup and intergroup relation among individuals who are on certain mission in a group (Werner and DeSimone 2011, pp). Among the strategies for this intervention are:

- a. Educational activities or programmes for individuals going for *hajj* should be provided. The content of such programme should be designed to include essential aspects of *hajj*, namely
 - i. Knowledge of the true concept of *hajj*. Participants expect that people going for *hajj* be equipped with *Hajj*-related knowledge especially the spiritual aspect of *hajj* experience instead of only focusing on the ritualistic aspects of *hajj*.
 - ii. Guidance and counselling sessions for individuals going to *hajj*,
 - iii. Sharing session with individuals with *hajj* experience,
 - iv. Team building among individuals going to *hajj*.
 - v. Training (refer to the following point)
- b. Series of structured *Hajj* Training. The training modules should take into account the need to emphasise on the psychosocial aspects of crowd. The content of *Hajj* Training should encompass the proper way to perform *Tawaf*, *Saie*, *Wuquf*, and Stoning. The training may also train the pilgrims on the ways to recite prayers when performing *hajj*; and relevant *dua* to be recited during each activity.
- c. Using communication channels to educate pilgrims. Letter, pamphlet, emails, websites and social media could also be used to inform pilgrims of do's and don'ts during *hajj*. It should also provide guides on the ways to move from one place to another; the need to uphold cleanliness; or to create good relationship with pilgrims of diverse background.

Technostructural Intervention

This intervention involves the effort to leverage on technological innovation and structural change to develop effective *hajj* management and enhance the pilgrims' wellbeing. It should involve changes in work processes by changing the technology used, and structure of *the hajj* management system (Cummings and Worley 2001). Among the suggested strategies to form coordinated mechanism in managing *hajj* crowd are:

- a. The mosque management may improve the system to monitor pilgrims movement; such as informing them of the closure of doors in advance. The use of CCTV and other technology-assisted tools could be optimised.
- b. The public address system could be installed at certain strategic places for the benefits of pilgrims. It might be useful for crowd management.
- c. Pilgrims should be managed in small groups. This will make it easy for *hajj* operators and *hajj* guide to control their movement hence reducing crowded condition and danger associated with it.
- d. Open transportation system in that pilgrims must not stick to certain bus operators. Pilgrims could be transported to Arafah or Mina by using open shuttle bus service instead of chartered buses.
- e. The information signages should be placed at strategic places. More electronic billboard should be installed. Short documentary on the proper way of stoning, safety and security matter, hygiene information can be showcased on the billboard.

Human Resources Interventions

This involves the efforts to develop of competencies of *hajj* managers, *hajj* guides, *hajj* service operators. This could be done via proper training and orientation programme for *hajj* workers e.g drivers must be made familiar with road conditions and site locations. Besides, it is also suggested that the following strategies be considered.

- a. Recruitment of competent personnel at all sectors. They must have the right knowledge, relevant skills, correct attitudes, and desirable characteristics to be in *hajj* service job.

- b. Design and conduct appropriate training to develop competencies, and initiate innovation that would enable pilgrims to have hassle free *hajj* and wellbeing while performing *hajj*.
- c. Take appropriate efforts to maintain *hajj* workers' well-being and improve their job satisfaction, being aware of their taxing demands which may effect wellbeing and health.

Strategic Interventions

This intervention involves multiple engagements with various parties in order to provide thoughtful solutions for crowd management. It requires smart partnership with various parties to address arising issues or invent products/solutions that improve the wellbeing of pilgrims. For a holistic intervention, involvement of experts of various backgrounds, institutions and disciplines should be leveraged. Among the strategies are:

- a. Future pilgrims: Muslims should be encouraged to perform *hajj* when they are still at young age. They should be educated that *Hajj* requires healthy body, strong stamina, and high level psychological readiness in order to face various types and levels of challenges.
- b. *Hajj* authorities: The number of individuals allowed to perform pilgrimage should be controlled so that pilgrims could have comfortable experience while in the *hajj* sites. The *hajj* authorities in countries where pilgrims come from should be engaged to discuss the issues, and solutions.
- c. *Hajj* service providers. The *hajj* education programmes could be coordinated by establishing smart partnership between *hajj* operators (travel agents), *hajj* authorities (Islamic Office/ Religious department/ Mosques), and individuals going to *hajj*.

The experience identified in this paper, the factors that lead to the experiences have, in fact, provided important information on the strengths and weaknesses in the *hajj* management, especially that pertain to *hajj* crowd issues. It also shed some light on the opportunities which should be leveraged and potential threats to be avoided when dealing with pilgrims. The information have provided bases for the formulation of interventions, the above being some of the strategies which could be considered by *hajj* managers, policy makers, and future *hajj* pilgrims when strategizing the efforts to improve *hajj* experience.

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