

CHALLENGES AND COMPETENCIES IN THE ISLAMIC PILGRIMAGE SECTOR: AN INVESTIGATION OF *MUTAWIF* TRAINING NEEDS IN BRUNEI DARUSSALAM

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A PEER-REVIEWED ARTICLE

(RECEIVED – 10/7/2025; REVISED – 24/10/2025; PUBLISHED – 10/12/2025)

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.65404/JAWHAR.302002>

ABSTRACT

This study investigates the challenges and competencies required for *mutawif* training in Brunei Darussalam by focusing on the absence of a structured and certified training program. It aims to determine whether a formal training program is necessary by identifying key competencies, analyzing the reasons behind the lack of an established curriculum and proposing key components for an introductory guideline. Using a qualitative approach, data was gathered through semi-structured interviews with the Department of Hajj Affairs under the Ministry of Religious Affairs (MoRA), the *Akademi Mutawwif* Training & Consultancy Sdn. Bhd. (AMTC) in Malaysia to benchmark best practices and local Bruneian travel agencies, along with document analysis. The findings indicate that Brunei Darussalam relies heavily on foreign *mutawif*, especially from Malaysia and Indonesia who reside in Saudi Arabia, due to the lack of local training. Key barriers include financial constraints, seasonal employment and limited government initiatives, which hinder the establishment of a formal program. While stakeholders acknowledge its importance, concerns regarding

sustainability remain. Therefore, a structured training program should be developed in collaboration with the Brunei government, universities and local travel agencies to enhance local expertise, create career opportunities and reduce dependence on foreign guides. It is hoped that this study will provide a foundation for enhancing Brunei Darussalam's pilgrimage services and developing a self-reliant workforce of certified *mutawif*.

Keywords: *Mutawif* Training, Islamic Pilgrimage, Competencies, Service Quality, Employment

1. INTRODUCTION

The Hajj and Umrah pilgrimages are fundamental pillars of Islam which draws millions of Muslims annually to the sacred cities of Mecca and Medina. These pilgrimages require extensive logistical coordination, spiritual guidance and practical support, wherein the *mutawif* (religious guide) plays an essential role in assisting pilgrims with the required rituals. In Brunei Darussalam, a Malay Islamic Monarchy, the significance of Muslim pilgrimage is deeply ingrained in the cultural and religious fabric of society. Despite this, the country has yet to establish a formal curriculum or certified training program for *mutawif* within its national education system. This gap is particularly noteworthy given the consistent demand for pilgrimage services. For example, according to the Department of Hajj Affairs (2023), Brunei Darussalam has an annual Hajj quota of 500 pilgrims, which is consistently filled, while Umrah pilgrim numbers have averaged approximately 1,200 individuals per year over the past five years. This steady demand creates a recurring need for qualified guides.

Currently, this need is met by relying on two primary sources: (1) local *imams*, who possess deep religious knowledge but may lack specialized training in modern pilgrimage logistics and crisis management and (2) foreign *mutawif* recruited from neighboring countries like Malaysia and Indonesia who reside in Saudi Arabia. Crucially, as noted by industry stakeholders, these foreign guides are often Islamic studies students without formal *mutawif* certification which may raise concerns about the standardisation and quality of guidance provided to Bruneian pilgrims. This reliance underscores a critical vulnerability in Brunei Darussalam's pilgrimage ecosystem. The absence of a structured training and certification program represents a significant gap in Brunei Darussalam's educational and professional framework as it not only limits potential employment opportunities for the Bruneian youth in a vital religious sector but also curtails

the nation's ability to ensure a high-quality, standardized pilgrimage experience for its citizens. Therefore, this study investigates the specific need, challenges and potential framework for establishing a local *mutawif* training program in Brunei Darussalam.

1.1 Problem Statement

This study addresses a critical gap in the professional development landscape of Brunei Darussalam: the absence of a formal, certified training program for *mutawif* (pilgrimage guides). Currently, there is no dedicated curriculum offered by higher education institutions or private travel agencies in the country (Department of Hajj Affairs, 2024). This lack forces the Hajj and Umrah industry to rely on a patchwork of solutions, including *imams* whose expertise may not extend to comprehensive tour management and foreign guides who, as identified in this research, are frequently not professionally certified *mutawif* but rather students abroad. This dependency on an informal and potentially inconsistent pool of guides creates a significant quality assurance challenge for Brunei Darussalam's pilgrimage services.

The problem is further compounded by the lack of a standardized framework to ensure that guides possess the necessary blend of religious knowledge, logistical competence, crisis management skills and cultural sensitivity required for modern pilgrimage guidance. This research posits that this training gap undermines the potential quality of the spiritual experience for Bruneian pilgrims and represents a missed opportunity for local professional development. Furthermore, within the context of national concerns regarding youth unemployment, where 24.4% of youth (ages 15 – 24) were unemployed in 2023 (DEPS, 2023), the establishment of a certified *mutawif* training pathway could create valuable skilled employment opportunities. Therefore, this study seeks to systematically investigate the competencies required, the barriers to implementation and the core components of a potential *mutawif* training program tailored to the needs of Brunei Darussalam.

1.2 Research Objectives and Questions

For this study, below are the research objectives and research questions as shown in **Table 1**:

Table 1: Research Objectives and Research Questions

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES:	RESEARCH QUESTIONS:
1. To identify the essential competencies required for effective <i>mutawif</i> training to serve Bruneian pilgrims.	1. What are the key competencies required for <i>mutawif</i> training specific to the needs of Brunei's pilgrimage sector?
2. To analyze the reasons behind the absence of a dedicated curriculum for <i>mutawif</i> training in Brunei Darussalam.	2. What are the underlying reasons behind the lack of a structured <i>mutawif</i> training program in Brunei Darussalam?
3. To propose core program components in developing an introductory guideline for <i>mutawif</i> training in Brunei Darussalam.	3. What are the core program components suitable for the development of an introductory guideline for <i>mutawif</i> training in Brunei Darussalam?

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Islamic Tourism

According to Fisol et al. (2019), Islamic tourism is regarded as a component of religion with travel being a fundamental aspect of faith in Islam. Islamic tourism allows individuals to expand their understanding of other cultures and serves as a way to deepen submission to God by appreciating the beauty and abundance of His Creations. As stated by Meirison (2019), the simple form of Islamic tourism is the availability of places of worship for Muslims that are easily accessible, the provision of *halal* food and the separation of illicit foods such as alcohol and non-*halal* foods. In addition, Islam places great importance on the act of travel as a way for Muslims to strengthen their relationship with Allah SWT. It allows individuals to recognize Allah SWT's greatness and their own humility by experiencing the world firsthand. Islamic tourism also provides opportunities for Muslims to acquire knowledge and reflect on the lessons within His creation that serves both as a sign of His mercy and a test of patience and perseverance (Abdullah et al., 2020).

Islamic tourism is a relatively new concept within the global tourism industry. Traditionally, it was mainly associated with Hajj and Umrah only. However, in recent years, there has been a significant rise in products and services specifically designed for Muslim tourists, targeting both business and leisure sectors worldwide. As mentioned by Suid et al. (2017), the Muslim tourism market has experienced rapid growth and is becoming one of the fastest-growing segments in global tourism where the Muslim tourism market expanded from approximately BND80 billion in 2006 to BND145 billion in 2014. Thus, this Muslim tourism market has a remarkable increase of 81% but this did not include the cost spent on Hajj and Umrah which is approximately BND20 to BND25 billion.

2.2. Hajj and Umrah Operations in Brunei Darussalam

As the world's only Malay Islamic Monarchy, Brunei Darussalam is uniquely positioned to promote Shari'ah-compliant Islamic tourism that appeals to Muslim families and others (Muhammad et al., 2019). This approach aligns with Brunei Darussalam's goal to diversify its economy through tourism. According to the MasterCard Crescent Rating Global Muslim Travel Index (GMTI) in 2018, the global Muslim travel spending was projected to reach \$300 billion by 2026, Brunei Darussalam has a strategic opportunity to capture part of this rapidly growing market and carve out a niche in this sector due to its rich Islamic heritage, pristine environment and political stability.

In Brunei Darussalam, the Department of Hajj Affairs under the Ministry of Religious Affairs (MoRA) plays an important role in ensuring that Bruneian pilgrims are well-supported throughout their pilgrimage. Historically, Hajj-related matters were initially overseen by the Office of Royal Customs, Religious Affairs and Welfare until the formation of the independent Religious Affairs Office in 1960 but in 1986, the government established a dedicated Hajj management division. (Department of Information, Brunei Darussalam, 2014).

In response to the growing demand for Hajj and Umrah services, the Brunei government has several travel agencies licensed by the Ministry of Religious Affairs (MoRA) and Ministry of Primary Resources and Tourism (MPRT) to facilitate these pilgrimages. The management of Hajj and Umrah is overseen by these ministries which regulates the licensing, ticketing and monitoring of travel agencies involved in these pilgrimages.

These regulations are essential to ensure travel operators comply with the required standards and provide adequate services to Bruneian pilgrims. This competitive landscape necessitates that agencies not only attract but also retain customers through exceptional service. Therefore, throughout the pilgrimage, *mutawif* plays a crucial role in managing the journey from pre-departure rituals to the pilgrimage sites and return in order to ensure both spiritual and logistical needs of the pilgrims are met (Buchari et al., 2020).

According to the Ministry of Religious Affairs of Brunei Darussalam (2024), the Department of Hajj Affairs has authorized eight travel agencies to manage Hajj and Umrah service packages for three years covering the 1443 to 1445 *Hijrah cycle*. These agencies are responsible to ensure a smooth pilgrimage experience by meeting governmental regulations and providing comprehensive travel packages. The authorised companies are Darussalam Services Sdn. Bhd., Straits Central Agencies (B) Sdn. Bhd., Raudah Al-Amin Sdn. Bhd., Continental Yachting Sdn. Bhd., Dar El-Ehsan Travel & Tours Sdn. Bhd., Al-Hijrah Travel & Tours Sdn. Bhd., Titian Travel & Tours Sdn. Bhd. and At-Taqwa Travel Tours Sdn. Bhd. This authorisation aligns with the regulations established by the Sultanate of Brunei Darussalam in order to ensure that pilgrims meet the requirements for overseas travel and religious observances as outlined by the government. Prospective pilgrims are encouraged to book their Hajj and Umrah packages exclusively through these authorised companies to guarantee a seamless and organised pilgrimage experience. Thus, by entrusting specific agencies, both ministries aim to maintain high standards of safety and efficiency to ensure travelers will receive essential support throughout their Hajj and Umrah journey.

Moreover, global inflation and increased taxes in Saudi Arabia have further escalated Hajj expenses. In response to the increasing costs, the Brunei government offers subsidies to civil servants who meet specific criteria including healthcare support for pilgrims. The government of Brunei Darussalam provides a Hajj subsidy of BND4,500 to civil servants who have worked in the public sector for at least 12 years, irrespective of whether they have previously performed the pilgrimage and it is also extended to converts to ensure inclusivity and support for all segments of society (Han, 2024).

2.3. The Role and Importance of *Mutawif*

The term *mutawif* originates from the Arabic *tawaf*, referring to those who guide pilgrims during Hajj and Umrah (Jauhary, 2014). Historically, the role was inherited by Meccan families, but today, *mutawif* come from diverse backgrounds (Khalid & Ghani, 2021). Their duties extend beyond ritual guidance to include logistical support, crisis management and mediation between pilgrims and service providers (Al-Qarni & Rashid, 2020; Jamaludin et al., 2021). Competencies such as Arabic fluency, leadership and cultural sensitivity are essential, especially for first-time pilgrims (Zainal & Hassan, 2018).

In Malaysia, *mutawif* undergo formal training covering religious knowledge, crisis management, and logistics (Mohd. Faizal, 2015). This contrast with Brunei Darussalam's situation is stark, where the reliance on foreign *mutawif* and the absence of a local training curriculum highlight a critical gap in professionalizing this essential service (Department of Hajj Affairs, 2024). The role is both a profession and a religious trust which demands professionalism and accountability (Jamaludin et al., 2022). Effective *mutawif* enhances pilgrimage experiences by ensuring rituals are performed correctly while preventing issues like fraud or mismanagement.

2.4. Core Competencies for *Mutawif*

The role of a *mutawif* is integral to providing a successful completion of the Hajj and Umrah pilgrimage and guiding pilgrims through both the spiritual and logistical demands of the journey. As such, the competencies required for *mutawif* training are multi-dimensional that blends deep religious knowledge with effective leadership, cultural sensitivity and logistical expertise. As highlighted by Khalid and Ghani (2021), the qualifications for *mutawif* must address the spiritual, emotional and operational aspects of the pilgrimage experience as shown in Figure 1 below. It summarises the qualifications derived from Khalid and Ghani (2021) that serve as key requirements of competence in the field of pilgrim guidance.

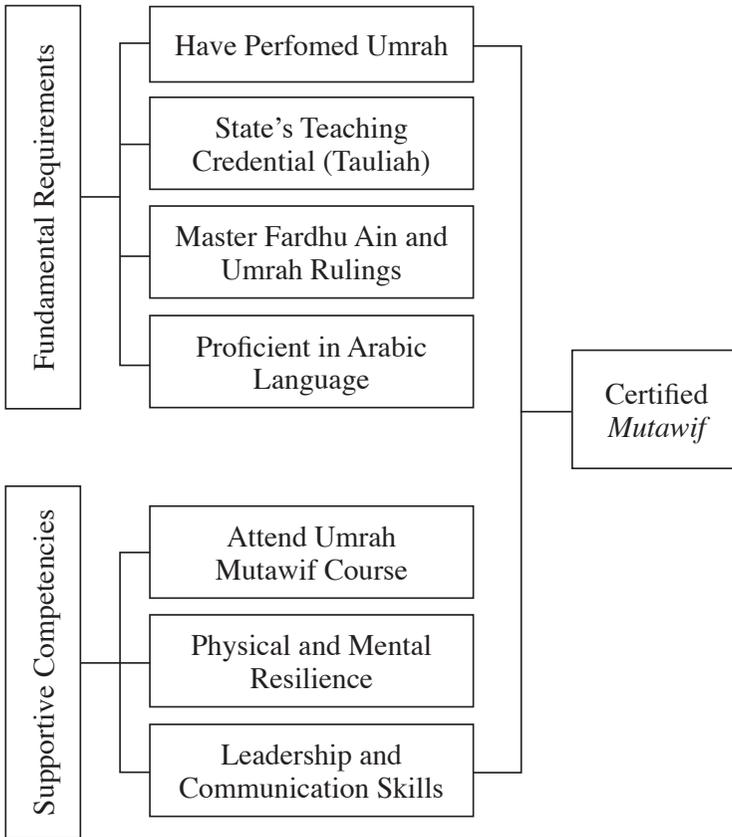


Figure :1 The Qualification Guideline for Umrah *Mutawif*

3. METHODOLOGY

This study utilizes a qualitative research design, which is particularly suited for examining complex phenomena like curriculum development and training needs. This approach allows for a deep exploration of the experiences, perspectives and expectations of stakeholders involved in the pilgrimage sector. The primary data collection method was semi-structured interviews, supplemented by document analysis. This methodology is relevant due to the religious and cultural importance of the *mutawif* profession, where stakeholder experiences are crucial for shaping training requirements.

A key objective was to triangulate perspectives from three critical stakeholder groups within the pilgrimage ecosystem: the regulatory body, local industry practitioners and an established training provider. Participants were selected based on specific criteria to ensure a comprehensive understanding of the problem, as detailed in **Table 2** below.

Table 2: Participant Selection Criteria and Justification

INFORMANTS:	JUSTIFICATION:
<p>Regulatory Body: Department of Hajj Affairs, Ministry of Religious Affairs, Brunei Darussalam (DHA)</p>	<p>The role of the DHA in managing pilgrimage policy and authorizing travel agencies is crucial for understanding the regulatory framework and official stance on <i>mutawif</i> training. Their input is essential for identifying systemic gaps and ensuring any proposed curriculum aligns with national religious standards and government priorities.</p>
<p>Local Industry Practitioners (Travel Agencies): Al-Miqat Travel and Tours Sdn. Bhd. (AMTT) Hayya Travel and Tours Sdn. Bhd. (HTT) Straits Central Agencies (B) Sdn. Bhd. (SCA)</p>	<p>These agencies were selected as they are directly involved in managing Hajj and Umrah pilgrims for Brunei, making them acutely aware of on-the-ground challenges. Interviewing them was critical to obtain firsthand data on the practical difficulties in recruiting and managing guides, the specific shortcomings of the current reliance on foreign <i>mutawif</i>, and the precise competencies needed from a local workforce. Their feedback grounds the study in real-world operational needs.</p>
<p>Benchmarking Institution:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Akademi Mutawif Training and Consultancy Sdn. Bhd. (AMTC), Malaysia 	<p>AMTC was purposefully selected for a complementary reason as they serve as a benchmark for the best practices in curriculum design and training delivery instead of focusing on daily operational issues. As a specialized <i>mutawif</i> training academy, their insights are invaluable for understanding the components of a successful training program, which is the ultimate aim of this study. This perspective is distinct from, but complementary to, the insights from Bruneian agencies and the DHA.</p>

4. FINDINGS

The interview data underwent manual thematic analysis, which involved data familiarization, initial coding and theme development. The analysis was guided by the research objectives, specifically focusing on understanding the need for a *mutawif* training module in Brunei Darussalam. Key themes such as ‘The Need for Local Expertise’, ‘Training Barriers’ and ‘Essential Competencies’ were identified and refined through iterative validation. Contrasting perspectives on implementation were also noted. The findings are summarized in Tables 4 and 5 below, followed by a narrative synthesis that explicitly connects them to the research problem.

A central finding that cuts across all themes is the unanimous recognition of a critical gap: the absence of a local, certified *mutawif* training program is the primary reason for Brunei Darussalam’s dependence on foreign guides. Stakeholders from the DHA and travel agencies confirmed that this reliance on non-certified individuals, primarily Islamic studies students based in Saudi Arabia, creates significant challenges for ensuring consistent service quality and doctrinal alignment for Bruneian pilgrims. This consensus establishes the fundamental need for a structured training module. The following themes detail the specific dimensions of this problem.

Table 3: Key Similarities in *Mutawif* Training and Employment

KEY THEMES:	SIMILARITIES:
Recruitment and Selection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agencies prioritize Islamic knowledge, multilingual proficiency (Arabic, Malay, and English) and prior pilgrimage experience. • Foreign <i>mutawif</i> are relied upon due to local shortages with vetting by Majlis Ugama Islam Brunei for doctrinal alignment being the primary quality control measure. • The ASK (Attitude, Skill, Knowledge) framework (AMTC) and recommendations from senior <i>mutawif</i> influence selection.

KEY THEMES:	SIMILARITIES:
Roles and Responsibilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Mutawif</i> serve as religious guides, logistical coordinators, and cultural mediators. • Duties include crisis management, administrative tasks (visa processing, accommodations) and emotional support.
Training Challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Financial constraints, seasonal demand, and lack of standardized syllabi were identified as the three primary barriers hindering structured programs. • Current training relies on mentorship, self-study, and on-the-job learning, leading to inconsistencies.
Key Competencies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Essential skills include religious expertise, crisis management, language fluency and regulatory knowledge. • Basic medical training (e.g., First Aid) and leadership skills are emphasized.
Government and Industry Roles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All stakeholders advocated for government-led initiatives, highlighting the necessity of university collaboration, financial support, and official certification standards to overcome existing barriers. • AMTC's structured curriculum (diplomas or degrees) and industry partnerships serve as a potential model.
Technology and Ethics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • E-learning platforms and mobile apps (e.g., Hajj and Umrah-specific tools) could modernize training. • Ethical conduct, confidentiality, and professionalism are critical for <i>mutawif</i>.

Table 4: Key Differences in Perspectives

KEY THEMES	DIFFERENCES
Training Approaches	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AMTT supports centralized training, while HTT and SCA prefer seasonal and international collaborations. • Concerns about job sustainability for full-time <i>mutawif</i> persist.
Employment Models	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HTT and SCA argue that seasonal demand makes full-time roles impractical; AMTT believes government support could enable viability.
Financial and Certification Models	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AMTT advocates for government-funded certification; HTT and SCA favor optional certification with experience prioritization.
Pilgrim Welfare Focus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HTT emphasizes psychological support, whereas AMTT and SCA prioritize logistical and crisis management training.

4.1 Synthesis of Findings in Relation to Research Objectives

The findings from the thematic analysis provide clear and direct insights that address each of this study’s research objectives. First, in relation to **RO1**, the data reveals a strong consensus on a multi-dimensional competency framework. The key competencies outlined in **Table 3** which spans deep religious knowledge, logistical and crisis management, multilingual communication and ethical professionalism; effectively answer **RQ1**. These are not merely ideal traits but are identified by stakeholders as the essential skills currently lacking in the informal training of foreign guides, directly justifying the need for a structured curriculum to standardize these competencies.

Second, regarding **RO2**, the findings pinpoint three interconnected barriers that explain the current training gap. The primary reason is not a lack of awareness but a combination of financial constraints (high cost of program development and practical training in Saudi Arabia), structural challenges (the seasonal nature of pilgrimage work discouraging

private investment), and a policy gap (the absence of a government-led initiative to create a standardized syllabus and certification). These barriers, particularly the financial and seasonal concerns voiced by travel agencies, provide a clear answer to **RQ2**, demonstrating why a market-driven solution has not emerged and underscoring the necessity for external intervention.

Finally, for **RO3**, the findings offer concrete direction. The unanimous stakeholder advocacy for a government-led model in collaboration with universities and industry (**Table 3**) suggests a core component must be a tripartite governing structure. Furthermore, the differing perspectives on implementation (**Table 4**) such as the debate between centralised versus flexible training models; do not contradict but rather inform the proposal. They indicate that a successful guideline must be hybrid by combining the academic rigor of a centralized curriculum with the practical flexibility needed for seasonal work. The endorsement of AMTC's structured pathway and the integration of technology further delineate essential components for a viable Bruneian training module, directly addressing **RQ3**.

5. DISCUSSION

The findings from the interviews with the DHA, AMTC and three local travel agencies provide direct insights into the research problem: the critical gap in local *mutawif* training in Brunei Darussalam. The analysis confirms that the absence of a formalized training structure necessitates a continuous and problematic reliance on foreign *mutawif*. This discussion synthesizes these findings to address the research objectives by grounding the analysis in the specific context of Brunei Darussalam's pilgrimage sector and recent national developments.

5.1 The Imperative for Standardized Competencies

A primary finding is the strong consensus on the essential competencies required for effective *mutawif* which encompasses deep religious knowledge, logistical management, multilingual proficiency and crisis handling abilities. This finding directly addresses **RO1** and underscores a core justification for a training program. The reliance on informally trained foreign guides, who are often students without professional certification

(DHA, 2024), results in inconsistent service quality for Bruneian pilgrims. The identified competencies provide a definitive blueprint for a standardized curriculum. As emphasized by the ASK (Attitude, Skill, Knowledge) framework utilized by AMTC (2024) and supported by scholarly work (Khalid & Ghani, 2021), a structured program is essential to ensure that every guide meets a uniform national standard, thereby elevating the overall pilgrimage experience for Bruneians. The absence of this standardized framework not only risks the spiritual integrity of the pilgrimage for first-time pilgrims but also leaves agencies vulnerable to logistical failures due to uneven guide capabilities.

5.2 Systemic Barriers to a Structured Curriculum

The study identifies several interconnected barriers that explain the absence of a local curriculum. Financially, the high cost of curriculum development, instructor salaries and practical training in Saudi Arabia presents a significant hurdle. This is compounded by the seasonal demand for *mutawif* services, which discourages private investment from travel agencies due to uncertain returns and a lack of clear full-time employment pathways (HTT & SCA, 2024). This situation contrasts sharply with countries like Malaysia and Indonesia, where larger pilgrim populations support more sustainable *mutawif* employment models.

From a regulatory standpoint, while the DHA mandates that guides possess a teaching license from MUIB, its oversight is limited to pre-departure vetting. The DHA does not directly supervise *mutawif* performance in Saudi Arabia which creates a significant gap in ongoing quality assurance (DHA, 2024). This regulatory gap, combined with the financial and structural challenges, creates a cycle of dependency that a market-based solution alone cannot break. The findings suggest that without a centralized body to assume the financial risk and establish a long-term vision, the status quo of relying on ad-hoc solutions is likely to persist.

5.3 A Collaborative Pathway Forward and National Validation

In response to **RO3**, the findings point overwhelmingly towards the necessity of a government-led, collaborative model for developing a training program. Stakeholders unanimously agreed that the DHA should spearhead efforts in collaboration with universities and travel agencies to establish certification standards. This tripartite collaboration is crucial to

overcome the identified barriers, with the government providing funding and regulatory oversight, universities contributing academic rigor and curriculum development and travel agencies ensuring practical relevance and employment pathways.

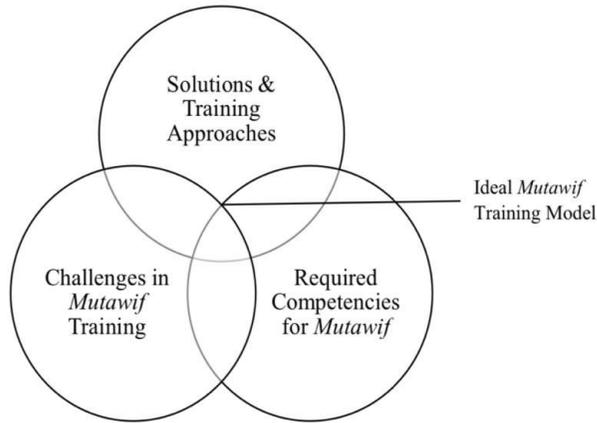
While there was no consensus on the exact implementation model, with agencies debating centralized versus hybrid approaches, the structured pathway offered by AMTC (2024) serves as a valuable benchmark. Crucially, the empirical needs identified in this study have found immediate and compelling validation in recent national policy developments. In line with this, recent developments at KUPU SB indicate a definitive move towards addressing this gap. The institution is currently establishing a “Program Sijil Latihan Profesional Haji dan Umrah,” aimed explicitly at providing accredited training for *mutawif*. This initiative, announced in March 2025, operationalizes the very collaborative model recommended by this study’s findings, with a curriculum developed in partnership with MoRA and local Hajj and Umrah operators (Salawati, 2025).

The program’s design directly addresses key barriers identified in our research. The commitment that graduates will be eligible for MUIB certification and employment with local agencies creates a clear and sustainable employment pathway, mitigating concerns about job viability. Furthermore, as clarified by the Minister of Religious Affairs, the program’s accreditation by the National Accreditation and Recognition Council provides the formal credentialing that stakeholders demanded to ensure professionalism and standardise quality (Salawati, 2025). This development is not merely an adjacent event; it is a tangible policy outcome that mirrors the core solutions proposed by this research, effectively transforming the identified challenges into a actionable national strategy.

5.4 An Integrated Model for *Mutawif* Development

The Venn diagram in **Figure 2** synthesizes these interconnected findings into a coherent framework. It visually conceptualizes how the identified **Challenges** (e.g., financial and seasonal constraints) directly inhibit the development of the required **Competencies**. The **Solutions** segment, emphasising government-led initiatives and blended learning, proposes the necessary interventions to bridge this gap. The overlapping area of all three circles highlights that accredited certification systems,

like the forthcoming KUPU SB program, are the keystone. This program serves as a real-world manifestation of the model’s core argument: that only a coordinated solution can simultaneously mitigate financial and employment uncertainties while guaranteeing that graduates possess the standardized competencies needed to professionally serve Brunei’s pilgrim community. The KUPU SB initiative, therefore, represents the practical embodiment of the integrated framework necessary to overcome Brunei Darussalam’s current limitations in *mutawif* professionalisation.



Challenges in <i>Mutawif</i> Training:	Required Competencies for <i>Mutawif</i>:	Solutions & Training Approaches:
➤ Financial constraints	➤ Religious expertise especially in pilgrimage knowledge	➤ Government-supported programs
➤ Seasonal employment	➤ MUIB credentials	➤ Industry collaboration
➤ Lack of government initiatives	➤ Language proficiency and skills	➤ Blended learning (A mix of theoretical knowledge and practical hands-on training)
➤ Comfortable with existing system	➤ Leadership and interpersonal skills	➤ Accreditation and certification
➤ Uncertainty about future professional placement	➤ Communication skills	➤ Internship and mentorship
➤ Reliance on foreign <i>mutawif</i>	➤ Logistical coordination	➤ Guarantee employment
	➤ Crisis management	
	➤ Financial and ethical integrity	
	➤ Customer service	
	➤ Basic medical knowledge	
	➤ Cultural sensitivity	
	➤ Physical and mental resilience	

Figure 2: Venn Diagram Model of *Mutawif* Training in Brunei Darussalam

The Venn diagram presented in **Figure 2** provides a comprehensive visualization of the interconnected ecosystem of challenges, competencies, and solutions identified in this study's findings. This model effectively captures the complex, non-linear dynamics that have historically impeded *mutawif* training in Brunei Darussalam, while also charting a clear path forward. The data from stakeholder interviews are not merely reflected in the diagram's segments but are embodied in the critical intersections between them, revealing the leverage points for effective intervention.

First, the **Challenges** segment (left circle) encapsulates the systemic barriers that create a self-perpetuating cycle of inaction. This includes the financial constraints cited by travel agencies, where the high upfront investment for a small, seasonal market renders formal training economically unviable for private entities. It also encompasses the structural and regulatory gaps, such as the absence of a standardised syllabus and the DHA's limited capacity for performance monitoring in Saudi Arabia. These are not isolated issues; they interact to create a perceived insurmountable hurdle, discouraging investment and stifling innovation in local guide development.

The critical intersection between **Challenges** and **Competencies** (the **overlapping** area of the first two circles) reveals a fundamental tension in the current system. Despite the systemic obstacles, stakeholders unanimously emphasised the non-negotiable required competencies (center circle); a sophisticated blend of religious expertise, logistical crisis management, multilingual communication, and cultural sensitivity. Presently, these essential skills are cultivated through informal, unreliable means such as self-study and ad-hoc mentorship, leading to the inconsistent service quality identified as a core problem. This **intersection** highlights that the market's failure to supply trained guides exists despite a clear and consistent demand for a complex skillset, underscoring that the status quo is inherently unsustainable for ensuring pilgrimage quality.

The pathway to resolution is mapped in the intersection of all three circles, where **Challenges** and **Competencies** are mediated by actionable **Solutions** (right circle). The proposed solutions such as government-led funding and policy support, industry-academia curriculum development

and the implementation of blended learning models are specifically designed to dismantle the barriers in the **Challenges** segment. For instance, a government subsidy directly addresses financial constraints, while a university-partnered curriculum solves the lack of a standardised syllabus. The most potent area of the model is the **central overlap** of all three circles, which represents a fully integrated system. It is here that the KUPU SB “Program Sijil Latihan Profesional Haji dan Umrah” finds its precise placement and validation. This accredited certification system acts as the keystone intervention: it mitigates financial uncertainty through public institutional backing, guarantees competency standards through a standardised, accredited curriculum and creates sustainable employment pathways by providing graduates with formal MUIB certification recognised by local travel agencies.

This visual model substantiates this study’s central thesis: that effective *mutawif* professionalization in Brunei cannot be achieved through isolated initiatives but requires a coordinated, multi-pronged strategy. This strategy must (1) mitigate systemic challenges through top-down government leadership and industry collaboration; (2) deliver comprehensive competency development via a blended learning approach that combines theological depth with practical prowess; and (3) create sustainable employment pathways through a nationally recognised accreditation system that assures quality and creates market value for graduates. The structure of this diagram, therefore, provides not just a summary but an empirical framework demonstrating how its components must interrelate to overcome Brunei Darussalam’s limitations and forge a future of self-reliant, professional pilgrimage services.

6. CONCLUSION

This study conclusively affirms the urgent need for a structured *mutawif* training program in Brunei Darussalam to end the reliance on informally trained foreign guides and standardize pilgrimage service quality. The research identifies a triad of interconnected challenges; financial constraints, seasonal employment patterns and a regulatory gap in certification, that have historically prevented the development of a local curriculum. These barriers have resulted in inconsistent competency acquisition and a vulnerable pilgrimage ecosystem for Bruneians.

The findings compellingly advocate for a government-led, collaborative model integrating MoRA, higher education, and travel agencies as the definitive solution, a framework already being validated by the new KUPU SB training program. By adopting a hybrid training model and exploring off-season career diversification, this initiative can transcend its immediate goal of creating skilled youth employment. It represents a critical investment in national religious self-sufficiency by ensuring Bruneian pilgrims receive professional guidance and that the nation reclaims stewardship of this fundamental religious obligation.

7. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I gratefully acknowledge Universiti Islam Sultan Sharif Ali (UNISSA) and the Faculty of Islamic Development Management (FIDM) for supporting this research on *mutawif* training development in Brunei. Special thanks to my supervisor Dr. Nurefnazahani binti Haji Durani for her expert guidance in shaping the research methodology and analysis. I also sincerely appreciate the *mutawif* and travel agency representatives who generously shared their professional insights. Finally, to my parents for their constant invaluable encouragement in this process. The author declares no conflict of interest in this study.

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