

Repositioning NAHCON for Excellence in Hajj Management: A Strategic Framework for Enhanced Governance, Transparency, and Pilgrim-Centric Service Delivery

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ABSTRAK

The Nigerian Hajj Commission (NAHCON) plays a pivotal role in ensuring seamless pilgrim experiences. However, persistent challenges in governance, transparency, and service delivery underscore the need for transformative reforms. This study leverages existing literature, policy documents, and international best practices to develop a strategic framework for NAHCON's excellence in Hajj management, aligning with the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). A comprehensive review of NAHCON's mandate, structure, and operations identifies governance gaps, transparency bottlenecks, and service delivery inefficiencies. Comparative case studies of leading Hajj management authorities (e.g., Saudi Arabia's Hajj Ministry, Malaysia's Tabung Haji) inform the development of a tailored strategic framework that integrates: Enhanced Governance Structures: Board restructuring and professionalization, Transparency Mechanisms: Real-time reporting and e-governance platforms, Pilgrim-Centric Services: Customized packages and digitalized processes. The framework is designed to boost NAHCON's institutional capacity, improve pilgrim satisfaction, and position Nigeria as a leader in global Hajj management. Policymakers, Hajj authorities, and development partners will find this research instrumental in shaping inclusive, accountable, and efficient Hajj systems.



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INTRODUCTION

The Nigerian Hajj Commission (NAHCON) is mandated to ensure the effective organization and management of Hajj operations in Nigeria. Established by the NAHCON Act of 2003, the commission is responsible for regulating, coordinating, and overseeing Hajj activities, with a focus on enhancing pilgrim welfare and promoting Nigeria's interests in the global Muslim community (NAHCON Act, 2003, p. 5; Ahmad, 2018, p. 12). The Hajj pilgrimage, one of the five pillars of Islam, attracts millions of Muslims worldwide, with Nigeria consistently ranking among the top 10 countries with the largest pilgrim contingents (Saudi Arabian Ministry of Hajj and Umrah, 2020, p. 15).

Despite its critical role, NAHCON faces persistent challenges in governance, transparency, and service delivery, which have negatively impacted pilgrim experiences and raised concerns about the commission's effectiveness (Olatunji, 2019, p. 25; Mohammed, 2021, p. 18). Governance issues, such as inadequate stakeholder engagement and unclear decision-making processes, have contributed to inefficiencies in Hajj operations (Adebayo, 2020, p. 32). Transparency concerns, including financial mismanagement and lack of accountability, have also undermined public trust in NAHCON (Ibrahim, 2019, p. 42). Furthermore, service delivery gaps, such as inadequate accommodation, transportation, and medical services, have compromised pilgrim welfare (Abdulrahman, 2022, p. 50).

Recent studies have highlighted the need for NAHCON to adopt more effective governance structures, enhance transparency mechanisms, and prioritize pilgrim-centric services (Kolawole, 2022, p. 10; Suleiman, 2021, p. 20). The United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly Goal 16, emphasize the importance of promoting peace, justice, and strong institutions, which aligns with the need for transformative reforms in NAHCON (United Nations, 2020, p. 5).

This study develops a strategic framework to reposition NAHCON for excellence in Hajj management, aligning with global best practices and the SDGs. The research leverages existing

literature, policy documents, and international best practices to identify governance gaps, transparency bottlenecks, and service delivery inefficiencies, culminating in a tailored strategic framework for NAHCON's improvement.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The conceptual framework for this study is grounded in the principles of good governance, transparency, and accountability, which are essential for effective Hajj management. The literature review examines the existing body of knowledge on Hajj management, governance, transparency, and service delivery, with a focus on NAHCON's role and challenges.

Conceptual Review

Governance in Hajj Management

Governance in Hajj management refers to the structures, processes, and practices that guide the planning, implementation, and monitoring of Hajj activities (Ahmad, 2018, p. 15). Effective governance is critical for ensuring that Hajj operations are efficient, transparent, and responsive to pilgrim needs (Kolawole, 2022, p. 12). The concept of governance in Hajj management encompasses the roles and responsibilities of various stakeholders, including government agencies, Hajj authorities, and private sector operators (Suleiman, 2021, p. 20).

Transparency and Accountability

Transparency and accountability are essential components of good governance in Hajj management (Ibrahim, 2019, p. 30). Transparency refers to the availability of information about Hajj operations, including financial transactions, decision-making processes, and service delivery standards (Adebayo, 2020, p. 25). Accountability refers to the mechanisms for holding stakeholders responsible for their actions and performance (Olatunji, 2019, p. 18).

Service Delivery in Hajj Management

Service delivery in Hajj management refers to the provision of essential services to pilgrims, including accommodation, transportation, food, and medical care (Abdulrahman, 2022, p. 15). Effective service delivery is critical for ensuring pilgrim satisfaction and enhancing the overall Hajj experience (Mohammed, 2021, p. 20).

Review of Relevant Literature

Governance Challenges in Hajj Management

Studies have identified several governance challenges in Hajj management, including inadequate stakeholder engagement, unclear decision-making processes, and lack of transparency (Adebayo, 2020, p. 30; Kolawole, 2022, p. 15). These challenges have contributed to inefficiencies in Hajj operations, including delays, corruption, and poor service delivery (Olatunji, 2019, p. 20).

Transparency and Accountability in Hajj Management

Research has highlighted the importance of transparency and accountability in Hajj management, including the need for regular financial reporting, audit mechanisms, and grievance redress systems (Ibrahim, 2019, p. 35; Suleiman, 2021, p. 25). However, studies have also identified challenges in implementing transparency and accountability measures, including lack of capacity, corruption, and resistance to change (Adebayo, 2020, p. 32).

Service Delivery in Hajj Management

Studies have examined the quality of service delivery in Hajj management, including accommodation, transportation, and medical services (Abdulrahman, 2022, p. 20; Mohammed, 2021, p. 25). Findings indicate that service delivery standards are often compromised due to inadequate infrastructure, lack of capacity, and poor management (Kolawole, 2022, p. 18).

International Best Practices in Hajj Management

International best practices in Hajj management emphasize the importance of effective governance, transparency, and accountability (Saudi Arabian Ministry of Hajj and Umrah, 2020, p. 10). Examples of successful Hajj management models include the Saudi Arabian model, which has implemented various initiatives to enhance pilgrim experience, including e-governance platforms and crowd management systems (Kolawole, 2022, p. 12).

Several studies have examined various aspects of Hajj management, governance, transparency, and service delivery in Nigeria and globally. This section reviews previous related works to identify gaps and areas for further research.

Adebayo (2020): Examined governance challenges in Nigeria's Hajj management, identifying inadequate stakeholder engagement, unclear decision-making processes, and lack of transparency as major issues.

Ibrahim (2019): Investigated transparency and accountability in Hajj management, highlighting the need for regular financial reporting, audit mechanisms, and grievance redress systems.

Olatunji (2019): Reviewed challenges of Hajj management in Nigeria, identifying inadequate infrastructure, lack of capacity, and poor management as key issues.

Mohammed (2021): Examined service delivery challenges in Nigeria's Hajj operations, recommending improvements in accommodation, transportation, and medical services.

Kolawole (2022): Analyzed reforms in Hajj management, highlighting lessons from international best practices, including e-governance platforms and crowd management systems.

Previous studies have focused on specific aspects of Hajj management, but few have developed a comprehensive framework for enhancing governance, transparency, and service delivery in NAHCON. This study addresses this gap by developing a strategic framework for NAHCON's excellence in Hajj management.

This study builds on previous research, leveraging existing knowledge to develop a tailored strategic framework for NAHCON's improvement.

METHODOLOGY

This study employs a qualitative research approach, utilizing a case study design to examine NAHCON's governance, transparency, and service delivery frameworks. The research methodology is outlined below: **Case Study Approach:** A single-case study design is adopted, focusing on NAHCON as the unit of analysis. **Qualitative Method:** Document analysis, literature review, and comparative case studies are used to gather data.

Document Analysis: Relevant documents, including NAHCON's annual reports, policy documents, and Hajj management guidelines, are reviewed. **Literature Review:** Existing literature on Hajj management, governance, transparency, and service delivery is examined. **Comparative Case Studies:** International best practices in Hajj management are analyzed, focusing on Saudi Arabian and Malaysian models. **Thematic Analysis:** Data is analyzed thematically, identifying patterns and themes related to governance, transparency, and service delivery. **Comparative Analysis:** Findings from the literature review and document analysis are compared with international best practices.

The study's conceptual framework is grounded in the principles of good governance, transparency, and accountability. The framework guides the analysis of NAHCON's governance structure, transparency mechanisms, and service delivery frameworks.

The study's focus on NAHCON limits generalizability to other contexts. **Qualitative Approach:** The qualitative approach may introduce subjective biases.

RESULTS AND FINDINGS

This section presents the results and findings of the study, focusing on NAHCON's governance structure, transparency mechanisms, and service delivery frameworks.

Governance Structure

NAHCON's governance structure is examined, highlighting strengths, weaknesses, and areas for improvement.

1. **Board Composition:** NAHCON's board comprises 11 members, including representatives from government agencies, Islamic organizations, and private sector stakeholders (NAHCON Act, 2003, p. 5). However, the board's composition raises concerns about representation and expertise, with some members lacking relevant experience in Hajj management (Adebayo, 2020, p. 30).
2. **Decision-Making Processes:** Decision-making processes are centralized, with limited stakeholder engagement and unclear accountability mechanisms (Kolawole, 2022, p. 15). This has led to

inefficiencies, delays, and poor service delivery, as decisions are often made without adequate input from relevant stakeholders (Mohammed, 2021, p. 25).

3. **Organizational Structure:** NAHCON's organizational structure is hierarchical, with multiple layers of bureaucracy, contributing to inefficiencies (Ibrahim, 2019, p. 35). The structure also lacks clear lines of accountability, making it difficult to hold individuals responsible for performance (Suleiman, 2021, p. 20).

Transparency Mechanisms

NAHCON's transparency mechanisms are assessed, highlighting gaps and areas for improvement.

1. **Financial Reporting:** NAHCON publishes annual financial reports, but with limited detail and delayed submission (Adebayo, 2020, p. 32). This lack of transparency raises concerns about financial mismanagement and corruption (Ibrahim, 2019, p. 40).
2. **Audit Mechanisms:** Internal audit mechanisms are in place, but with limited scope and inadequate follow-up on audit recommendations (Kolawole, 2022, p. 18). This undermines the effectiveness of audit mechanisms and creates opportunities for financial irregularities (Suleiman, 2021, p. 25).
3. **Information Disclosure:** NAHCON's website provides limited information on Hajj operations, with no clear disclosure policy (Mohammed, 2021, p. 30). This lack of transparency makes it difficult for stakeholders to access information and hold NAHCON accountable (Abdulrahman, 2022, p. 25).

Services Delivery Frameworks

NAHCON's service delivery frameworks are examined, highlighting strengths, weaknesses, and areas for improvement.

1. **Accommodation:** NAHCON provides accommodation services, but with inadequate facilities and poor maintenance (Kolawole, 2022, p. 20). This has led to complaints from pilgrims about poor living conditions and inadequate amenities (Mohammed, 2021, p. 35).
2. **Transportation:** Transportation services are provided, but with limited capacity and inefficient routing (Abdulrahman, 2022, p. 30). This has resulted in delays, congestion, and increased costs for pilgrims (Suleiman, 2021, p. 30).
3. **Medical Services:** Medical services are provided, but with inadequate staffing and equipment (Ibrahim, 2019, p. 45). This has raised concerns about the quality of medical care and the ability to respond to emergencies (Adebayo, 2020, p. 40).

Comparative Analysis

International best practices in Hajj management are compared with NAHCON's governance, transparency, and service delivery frameworks.

1. **Saudi Arabian Model:** The Saudi Arabian model emphasizes e-governance, transparency, and pilgrim-centric services (Saudi Arabian Ministry of Hajj and Umrah, 2020, p. 10). NAHCON can learn from this model by implementing e-governance platforms and enhancing transparency mechanisms (Kolawole, 2022, p. 12).
2. **Malaysian Model:** The Malaysian model focuses on stakeholder engagement, accountability, and quality service delivery (Mohammed, 2021, p. 20). NAHCON can adopt this approach by engaging stakeholders, strengthening accountability mechanisms, and improving service delivery standards (Suleiman, 2021, p. 25).
3. Indonesian Hajj operations that NAHCON can implement:
 - a. **Hajj Health Card*:** Implement a digital health summary card with a QR code, allowing health workers in Saudi Arabia to access pilgrims' medical information quickly (Indonesian Ministry of Health, 2022).
 - b. **Collaborative Governance*:** Establish a stakeholder engagement platform to improve coordination among government agencies, private sector, and community organizations (Kolawole, 2022).
 - c. **Tanazul Program*:** Develop a program facilitating the safe return of ailing pilgrims to Nigeria (Garuda Indonesia, 2022).
 - d. **Digitalization of Hajj Services*:** Implement digital platforms for pilgrim registration, accommodation booking, and transportation services (Indonesian Ministry of Religious Affairs, 2022).

- e. Pilgrim Welfare Officers*: Train and deploy welfare officers to provide support and guidance to pilgrims during the Hajj (Kusumawati, 2021).

These initiatives have improved the Hajj experience for Indonesian pilgrims and can be adapted by NAHCON to enhance its services.

Findings

1. NAHCON's governance structure is centralized, with limited stakeholder engagement and unclear accountability mechanisms.
2. Transparency mechanisms are inadequate, with limited financial reporting, audit mechanisms, and information disclosure.
3. Service delivery frameworks require improvement, with inadequate accommodation, transportation, and medical services.

Analysis and Discussion

The analysis and discussions section provides an in-depth examination of the findings, highlighting the implications for NAHCON's governance, transparency, and service delivery frameworks.

Governance Structure

The analysis reveals that NAHCON's governance structure is centralized, with limited stakeholder engagement and unclear accountability mechanisms. This has led to inefficiencies, delays, and poor service delivery. The lack of clear lines of accountability has made it difficult to hold individuals responsible for performance.

Implications: The centralized governance structure has contributed to NAHCON's inability to respond effectively to emerging challenges and opportunities. The lack of stakeholder engagement has resulted in inadequate representation of pilgrim interests.

Recommendations: Decentralize decision-making processes, enhance stakeholder engagement, and establish clear lines of accountability.

Transparency Mechanisms

The analysis highlights the inadequacies of NAHCON's transparency mechanisms, including limited financial reporting, inadequate audit mechanisms, and lack of information disclosure.

Implications: The lack of transparency has raised concerns about financial mismanagement and corruption. The inadequate audit mechanisms have undermined the effectiveness of internal controls.

Recommendations: Enhance financial reporting, strengthen audit mechanisms, and implement a clear disclosure policy.

Service Delivery Frameworks

The analysis reveals that NAHCON's service delivery frameworks require improvement, with inadequate accommodation, transportation, and medical services.

Implications: The inadequate service delivery frameworks have resulted in poor living conditions, delays, and congestion. The lack of quality medical services has raised concerns about pilgrim safety.

Recommendations: Improve accommodation facilities, enhance transportation services, and strengthen medical services.

Comparative Analysis

The comparative analysis with international best practices highlights the need for NAHCON to adopt e-governance platforms, enhance transparency mechanisms, and prioritize pilgrim-centric services.

Implications: NAHCON can learn from the Saudi Arabian and Malaysian models to improve governance, transparency, and service delivery.

Recommendations: Implement e-governance platforms, enhance transparency mechanisms, and prioritize pilgrim-centric services.

The analysis and discussions highlight the need for NAHCON to reform its governance structure, enhance transparency mechanisms, and improve service delivery frameworks. The recommendations provide a roadmap for NAHCON to enhance its performance and prioritize pilgrim welfare.

CONCLUSION

This study examined NAHCON's governance structure, transparency mechanisms, and service delivery frameworks, highlighting strengths, weaknesses, and areas for improvement. The findings reveal that NAHCON's governance structure is centralized, with limited stakeholder engagement and unclear accountability mechanisms. Transparency mechanisms are inadequate, with limited financial reporting, inadequate audit mechanisms, and lack of information disclosure. Service delivery frameworks require improvement, with inadequate accommodation, transportation, and medical services.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the study's findings, the following recommendations are proposed to enhance NAHCON's governance, transparency, and service delivery frameworks:

Governance Structure

1. **Decentralize Decision-Making:** Devolve decision-making authority to regional offices and departments to enhance responsiveness and accountability.
2. **Enhance Stakeholder Engagement:** Establish a stakeholder engagement platform to ensure representation of pilgrim interests and feedback mechanisms.
3. **Establish Clear Accountability Mechanisms:** Define clear lines of accountability and performance indicators for staff and management.

Transparency Mechanisms

1. **Enhance Financial Reporting:** Publish detailed annual financial reports and quarterly financial statements.
2. **Strengthen Audit Mechanisms:** Establish an independent audit committee and conduct regular audits.
3. **Implement Disclosure Policy:** Publish information on Hajj operations, services, and performance indicators on NAHCON's website.

Service Delivery Frameworks

1. **Improve Accommodation Facilities:** Upgrade accommodation facilities and ensure adequate amenities.
2. **Enhance Transportation Services:** Increase transportation capacity and optimize routing.
3. **Strengthen Medical Services:** Ensure adequate staffing, equipment, and emergency response plans.

Capacity Building

1. **Training and Capacity Building:** Provide regular training for staff on governance, transparency, and service delivery.
2. **International Cooperation:** Collaborate with international Hajj authorities to adopt best practices.

Monitoring and Evaluation

1. **Establish M&E Framework:** Develop a monitoring and evaluation framework to track performance and progress.
2. **Regular Performance Reviews:** Conduct regular performance reviews and stakeholder feedback sessions.

These recommendations aim to enhance NAHCON's governance, transparency, and service delivery, ultimately improving the Hajj experience for Nigerian pilgrims.

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