

*Relationship Between Religiosity and Receptive Attitude Toward Muslims  
Among Japanese Students*

Sachiko Nakano, Yamaguchi University, Japan  
Tomoko Tanaka, Okayama University, Japan

The Asian Conference on Psychology & the Behavioral Sciences 2022  
Official Conference Proceedings

**Abstract**

With a growing Muslim population in Japan, there is an increasing need to understand and foster a positive attitude to live in harmony with Muslims. However, reports show that Japanese people are confused by specific religious views of Muslims in their interactions (Nakano & Tanaka, 2017). They also refrain from discussing religion as they consider it private, keeping their distance from Muslims (Nakano & Tanaka, 2018). This study explored factors contributing to Japanese people's acceptance of Muslims by incorporating religious views and examining their relationship with receptive attitudes. We believed that Japanese people's views on religion would be vital in identifying their attitude toward Muslims. The questionnaire survey covered these scales: typical religiosity; curiosity; general acceptance of others, and moreover, image of Muslims; receptive attitude toward Muslims; and knowledge about Muslims. Valid responses were obtained from 194 Japanese university students. Covariance Structure Analysis showed that: (a) the stronger the religiosity about being protected by God and Buddha, the more receptive they were, (b) the more negative their view of Muslims, the lower the level of acceptance was, and (c) greater interaction and knowledge reduced negative images. Furthermore, curiosity and acceptance of others did not significantly affect receptive attitudes; this suggests that: (a) the strength of unique religiosity of Japanese people related positively to receptive attitudes toward Muslims, who were seen as highly religious, (b) although Muslims are perceived as a special out-group for Japanese, opportunities to interact or gain correct knowledge reduced negative images and fostered receptive attitudes.

Keywords: Muslim in Japan, Receptive Attitude, Religiosity

**iafor**

The International Academic Forum  
[www.iafor.org](http://www.iafor.org)

## **Introduction**

### **Muslims in Japan**

With a growing Muslim population in Japan, there is an increasing need to foster a positive attitude and enhance harmony between communities. According to the “Statistics on the Foreigners Registered in Japan,” the Muslim population in the country was estimated to be around 200,000 at the end of June 2018 (Tanada, 2020). Although this is less than 1% of the total population, it is expected to increase in the future with the Immigration Control Law being revised to accept foreign skilled workers, and the increase in the number of international students.

With the number of international students from Islamic countries at Japanese universities increasing, efforts are underway to meet the religious needs of Muslim students and to be more understanding toward them. The presence of a large number of Muslims is a relatively new phenomenon for Japanese universities and society. Muslims are a minority in Japanese society, as indicated by their population numbers. Islamophobia or prejudice against Muslims has been in the news in many parts of the world, and the rapid increase in the number of Muslims could make a non-Muslim society like Japan wary of Islam and Muslims (Yagi, 2020). In fact, it is reported that the Japanese people feel confused by the religious views of Muslims when they interact with them (Nakano and Tanaka, 2017). In addition, the Japanese people refrain from discussing religion because they consider it private, and maintain distance from Muslims (Nakano & Tanaka, 2018). This confusion and interaction distance could be because the Japanese people have little interest in religion, and many perceive themselves as having no religious beliefs (NHK Broadcasting Culture Research Institute, 2015).

### **Acceptance of Muslims by the Japanese**

What are the factors that could foster an acceptive attitude toward Muslims among the Japanese people? However, there are very few studies on perceptions and attitudes toward Muslims in Japan. According to Kondo and Mukai (2017), with an increasing number of people meeting and interacting with Muslims, with people having more stable self-identity, and with people trusting others more, people are likely to have a more receptive attitude toward an external group such as Muslims. Moreover, as more people have strong perceptions of threat in response to Muslims, and have a more stereotype to Muslims, the receptive attitude toward Muslims would worsen/be lowered. Ogan, Willnat, Pennington, and Bashir (2014) conducted a survey about the image of Muslims in the US, UK, France, Germany, and Spain and reported that the more educated people were, the more favorable they were toward Muslims. In contrast, younger and more conservative people showed a more negative attitude toward them. A study exploring the determinants of Japanese attitude toward Muslims (Okai & Ishikawa, 2011) showed that the greater the interest in other cultures and the more positive the image of Muslims, the higher the receptive attitude toward them. Although there are only a few studies related to receptive attitude toward Muslims, its determinants are not sufficiently explored (Kondo & Mukai, 2017).

Thus, this study aims to explore the factors influencing a receptive attitude toward Muslims among the Japanese people. Allport (1954) reported that devout Christian believers showed a tolerant attitude toward pagans. This shows the possibility that religiosity may influence receptive attitude toward Muslims among the Japanese as well. This study explores the

relationship between religiosity and receptive attitude toward Muslims in Japan, as a factor contributing to the acceptance of Muslims among the Japanese.

### **Japanese Religiosity**

Regarding religiosity among the Japanese, the Yomiuri Shimbun newspaper (2008, May 30) indicated that although few Japanese engage in religious behavior daily, more than half believe that the soul survives in some form after death. Japanese religiosity is not as simple as “no religious beliefs” or “atheist,” but is unique from an international perspective (Matsushima, Kawashima, and Nishiwaki, 2016).

The unique Japanese religious attitude is measured by Kaneko (1997). The Japanese religious attitude (Kaneko, 1997) is found to consist of three factors: “Pro-religiousness,” “Belief in Soul,” and “Belief in Guardianship. “Pro-religiousness” is a factor that indicates whether a person has a positive or negative attitude toward religion generally. High scores on this factor indicate an easy acceptance of or tolerance toward religious objects, while low scores indicate an aversive behavior toward religious objects. The “Belief in Soul” is a factor that expresses respect for the dead and belief in an afterlife. It is the belief that the spirits of the dead will be possessed if offerings are not made to them, and that these possessions will not disappear unless they are exorcised through magical rituals. This is unique to the Japanese. The “Belief in Guardianship” is a factor that expresses gratitude to God and Buddha for protecting us in every aspect of our lives. It is the idea that one's life is possible because of God and Buddha. This measure of Japanese religious attitudes has been used by numerous researchers and found to be highly reliable (Matsushima et al., 2016). Kaneko’s scale is an example of accurately expressing the religiosity of the Japanese. In this study, we will incorporate three elements of religiosity—“Pro-religiousness,” “Belief in Soul,” “Belief in Guardianship”—into our analysis as a measure of Japanese religious attitudes.

### **The Research Processes**

The research has two steps: preliminary investigation and main survey. First, examining the image of Muslims among Japanese students. Since previous studies have shown that image influences receptive attitude, we examined the effects of the image. Subsequently, the results of the preliminary survey—which explored the image of Muslims among the Japanese people through open, descriptive questions—were used in the analysis of the main survey. The preliminary items hypothesized to be related to receptive attitude are as follows: curiosity, acceptance of others, interest in foreign countries, interest in Islam. From the previous study (Kaneko, 1997; Kondo & Mukai, 2017; Quillian, 1995), the above variables were considered to influence acceptance attitudes. The results of the correlation analysis indicated that “curiosity” and “acceptance of others” were the likely determinants of receptive attitude; therefore, the present survey added “curiosity” and “acceptance of others” to “religiosity” to analyze their relationship with receptive attitude.

Main survey examines the effects of the image of Muslims, Japanese religiosity, curiosity, acceptance of others, gender, age, contact experience with Muslims, and knowledge of Islam on “receptive attitude toward Muslims” by the Japanese.

## **Preliminary Investigation**

### **Purpose**

The purpose of the preliminary investigation is to clarify the image that the Japanese people have of Muslims and to identify the variables that may be associated with the receptive attitude toward Muslims.

### **Method**

#### **Participants and Procedures**

We conducted a questionnaire survey with 51 Japanese undergraduate and graduate students (20 male and 31 female participants), asking, image of Muslim, receptive attitude toward Muslims, curiosity, acceptance of others, interest in a foreign country, interest in religion and interest in Islam. A qualitative analysis was conducted to explore the image of Muslims using the KJ method (Kawakita, 2005). The other questions were answered on a 5-point scale (1: I do not agree with it at all; 5: I strongly agree with it). Moreover, we examined the correlations between the variable items.

### **Instrument**

#### (a) Image of Muslims

The respondents were asked, "*What image do you have of Muslims?*" and told to write their responses on a total of 12 cards.

#### (b) Receptive attitude toward Muslims

The respondents were asked the following items: "I think I can be friends with a Muslim" and "I think I can marry a Muslim" and were asked to rate their responses on a 5-point scale (1: I do not agree it at all; 5: I strongly agree with it).

#### (c) Curiosity

The respondents were asked to answer a 5-point scale for the items "*I am curious*" and "*I get excited when I encounter new things.*"

#### (d) Acceptance of others

The respondents were asked to rate their response on a 5-point scale for the item, "*I do not care if my friends think differently than me.*"

#### (e) Interest in a foreign country

The respondents were asked to rate their response on a 5-point scale for the item "*I want to live in a foreign country.*"

#### (f) Interest in religion

The respondents were asked to rate their response on a 5-point scale for the item "*I am interested in religion.*"

#### (g) Interest in Islam

The respondents were asked to rate their response on a 5-point scale for the item "*I am interested in Islam.*"

## Results

### 1. Image of Muslims

A total of 101 cards was obtained by analyzing the comments of Japanese students. From the analysis, nine primary categories were summarized pertaining to the image of Muslims: “rigorous,” “difficult to engage,” “unknown,” “frightening,” “pious,” “disdainful of women,” “mercantile,” “happy,” “large in numbers.” The results show that the image of Muslims was relatively negative. These are further detailed in Table 1. Other smaller categories were identified are as follows: “serious,” “strict in precepts,” “hard work,” “zealous in faith,” “follow religious rules,” “scary,” “extremist,” “terrorism/war,” “out of touch with Japanese,” and “not sure.”

(a) Rigorous (32)	(b) Pious (24)	(c) Frightening (19)	(d) Unknown (7)	(d) Difficult to engage (6)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• serious (8)</li> <li>• strict in precepts (17)</li> <li>• hard work (7)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• zealous in faith (6)</li> <li>• follow religious rules (18)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• scary (6)</li> <li>• extremist (7)</li> <li>• terrorism/war (7)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• not sure (5)</li> <li>• out of touch with Japanese (2)</li> </ul>	
(e) Large in numbers (4)	(f) Disdainful of women (7)	(g) Happy (1)	(h) Mercantile (1)	(i) Large in numbers (4)

Table 1: The categories of image toward Muslims.

### 2. Correlation Analysis between Receptive Attitude toward Muslims and Each Variable

A correlation analysis between receptive attitude “I can be friends with a Muslim” and the other items was conducted (Table 2). The four items that were significantly correlated were “I could marry a Muslim,” “I am a curious person,” “I get excited when I encounter new things,” and “I do not care if my friends think differently than me.” The results of the correlation analysis indicated that “curiosity” and “acceptance of others” were the likely determinants of a receptive attitude. Therefore, “curiosity” and “acceptance of others” were added to “religiosity” to analyze the relationship with receptive attitude toward Muslims in this study.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. I can be friends with a Muslim	–	.42**	.47**	.55**	.42**	.14	.16	.15
2. I could marry a Muslim		–	.15	.33*	.12	.21	.28*	.14
3. I am a curious person			–	.74**	.38**	.13	-.06	.07
4. I get excited when I encounter new things				–	.49**	.25	.11	.09
5. I do not care if my friends think differently than me					–	.10	-.01	-.07
6. I want to live in foreign country						–	.68**	.44**
7. I am interested in a religion							–	.74**
8. I am interested in Islam								–

\*\* $p < .01$       \* $p < .05$

Table 2: Correlations between each question item (n=51).

## Main Survey

### Purpose

The purpose of this survey was to identify the relationship between a receptive attitude toward Muslims and Japanese religiosity. Specifically, we examined the relationship between “Japanese religiosity,” as well as “image of Muslims,” “contact experience with Muslims,” “knowledge of Islam,” “curiosity,” “acceptance of others,” and “receptive attitude toward Muslims,” and attempted to test the hypothesized model shown in Figure 1

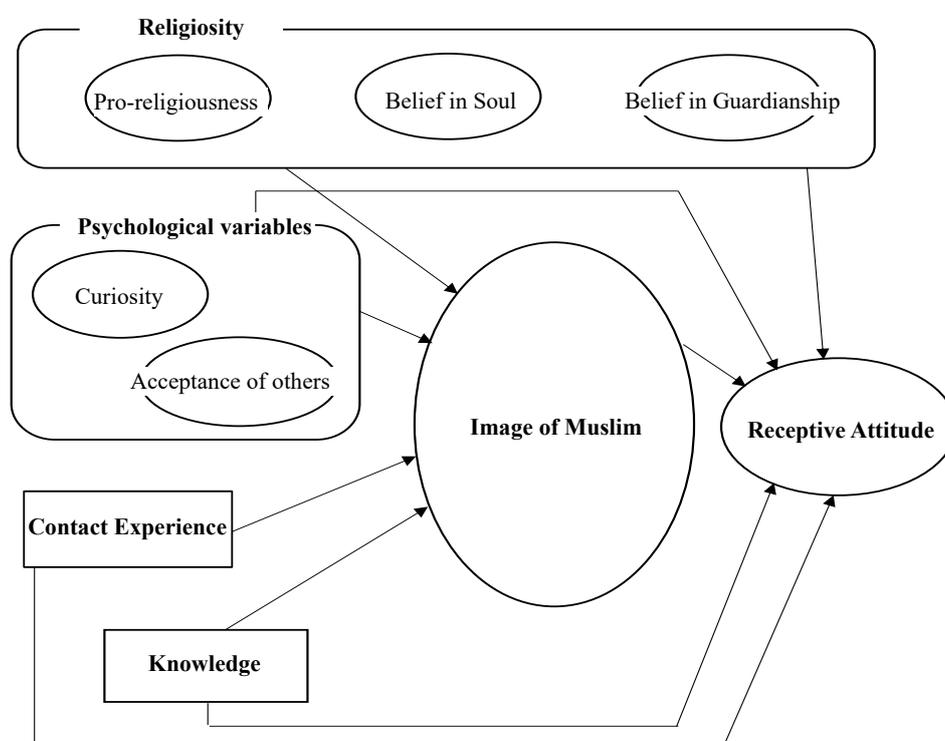


Figure 1: Hypothetical model of accepting attitudes toward Muslims.

## Method

### Participants and Procedures

A questionnaire survey of 210 Japanese undergraduate and graduate students was conducted at national universities in Japan. To avoid singling out an individual, the questionnaires were kept anonymous—no details were collected regarding individuals' identity. A total of 194 valid responses were included in the subsequent analysis (81 male participants, 112 female participants, 1 other-gender participant; Mean age 20.29 years).

### Instrument

The questionnaire included questions regarding religiosity of Japanese, image of Muslims, receptive attitude toward Muslims, curiosity, general acceptance of others, and moreover, and demographics, as follows:

**(a)Religiosity of the Japanese:** the scale of religious attitude by Kaneko (1997) was used in the analysis of this research to measure religiosity of Japanese students. A total of 17 items were used in this research, including 15 items related to “pro-religiousness,” “belief in soul,” and “belief in guardianship,” plus two new items: “Having faith gives one a goal in life” and “People are born again after death.” The respondents were asked to answer each item on a 5-point scale (1: I do not agree with it at all; 5: I strongly agree with it) under the instructional statement, “*How much do you agree with the following?*”

**(b)Image of Muslims among the Japanese:** eleven items were created from the most common categories of preliminary survey results. Four items were added from the scale of positive image toward Muslims using Kondo and Mukai (2017) because the results of the preliminary survey provided more negative images; finally, 15 items were used. The respondents were asked to answer each item on a 5-point scale (1: I do not agree with it at all; 5: I strongly agree with it) under the instructional statement, “*How much does your image of Muslims agree with the following statements ?*”

**(c)Receptive Attitude towards Muslims:** the social distance scale by Obara and Yamazaki (1991) was adapted for Muslims, and five items were used. For instance, “*a foreigner being a close friend of yours or your family*” was modified to “*a Muslim being a close friend of yours or your family.*” The respondents were asked to respond to these five items on a 5-point scale (1: I do not accept it at all; 5: I strongly accept it).

**(d)Psychological Variables:** since the previous study suggested that the following psychological variables were considered to influence acceptance attitudes, items to measure “curiosity” and “acceptance of others” were used. Regarding curiosity, six items were used from the diverse curiosity scale (Nishikawa & Amamiya, 2015), such as “*I like to try new things*” and “*I have a strong interest in everything.*” Regarding acceptance of others, four items were used from the “acceptance of others” scale (Fujimoto & Daibo, 2007), such as “*I respect others' opinions*” and “*I accept others' opinions as much as possible.*” The respondents were asked to answer each item on a 5-point scale (1: I do not agree with it at all; 5: I strongly agree with it) under the instructional statement, “*How much do you agree with the following?*”

**(e)Contact Experience with Muslims:** the respondents were asked about “the contact experience with Muslims” or “do you have any acquaintances who are Muslims?” They had

to answer on a four-point scale (1: I do not have any acquaintances who are Muslims; 4: I have Muslim friends with whom I can talk about anything.) If there were multiple responses, the highest number chosen was calculated as the score. The question was made such that the larger the number, the closer the participant was to their Muslim acquaintance.

**(f) Knowledge of Islam:** it was a free-description question, with the instructive statement, “Please list as many Islamic precepts as you can think of, below.” The number of responses was calculated as the knowledge score, regardless of whether the content the of responses was correct or not.

**(g) Demographics:** Demographic variables consisted of gender and age.

## Results

### 1. Creation of an Image Scale for Muslims

As a preliminary step in the analysis, a factor analysis (method of maximum likelihood, Promax rotation) was conducted on the image of Muslims found in the preliminary survey in order to measure the image of Muslims among Japanese students. A factor loading of 0.40 was used as the cutoff for inclusion, and items loaded on multiple factors were eliminated.

The result of the factor analysis yielded a 12-item measure, with a three-factor solution as the most appropriate: “negative image,” “piety image” and “positive image.” The loadings of each item on the three factors are presented in Table 3. Factor I was labeled “*Negative image*” since it included items that expressed a negative image toward Muslims, such as “scary” and “extreme.” Cronbach’s alpha for this factor was  $\alpha = .79$ , satisfactory for an exploratory study. Factor II consisted of four items. This factor was labelled “Piety image” since it included items that expressed their piety, such as “zeal for faith” or “have a sense of well-being.” Cronbach’s alpha for this factor was  $\alpha = .78$ , satisfactory for an exploratory study. Factor III was labeled “*Positive image*” since it included items that expressed a positive image toward Muslims, such as “serious” or “pure.” Cronbach’s alpha for this factor was  $\alpha = .62$ , satisfactory for an exploratory study.

	<i>Factor</i>		
	I	II	III
<b><i>FI: "Negative image" (<math>\alpha = .79</math>)</i></b>			
Scary	<b>.81</b>	-.10	.11
Extreme	<b>.66</b>	.07	.07
Calm	<b>-.62</b>	-.12	.25
I do not know how to interact with them	<b>.61</b>	-.07	.12
Difficult to understand	<b>.59</b>	-.16	.05
Generous	<b>-.47</b>	-.22	.13
<b><i>FII: "Piety image" (<math>\alpha = .78</math>)</i></b>			
Zeal for faith	-.01	<b>.89</b>	-.05
Religious precepts are strict	.07	<b>.86</b>	.01
Traditional	-.04	<b>.58</b>	.17
Have a sense of well-being	-.13	<b>.34</b>	.25
<b><i>FIII: "Positive image" (<math>\alpha = .62</math>)</i></b>			
Serious	.02	.19	<b>.63</b>
Pure	.06	.01	<b>.62</b>
<b>Factor correlation</b>			
	F I	-	
	F II	.21	-
	F III	.09	.37

Table 3: Factor Analysis of Image of Muslims.

## 2. Reliability and Correlation Analysis of Each Variable

Before testing the hypothesized model, a reliability analysis was conducted to determine if each variable was valid for the analysis. Since the religiosity scale used in this study was a simplified version of the scale of religious attitude by Kaneko (1997), we first examined its reliability. A factor analysis (method of maximum likelihood, Promax rotation) was conducted. The results were based on the following three-factor structure, with a final total of 14 items, excluding items with factor loadings of less than 3.5. The factor names are adapted from Kaneko (1997). The names of each item (table 4).

	<i>Factor</i>		
	I	II	III
<b><i>FI: "Pro-religiousness" (<math>\alpha = .70</math>)</i></b>			
A life backed by faith is the true way of life for a person	<b>.85</b>	.05	- .13
A person without religion is poor at heart	<b>.59</b>	.06	- .13
Religion teaches the meaning of one's existence	<b>.55</b>	- .09	.24
Faith gives you a goal in life	<b>.51</b>	- .03	.01
Religion is essential in maintaining the morality of society	<b>.36</b>	.14	.11
<b><i>FII: "Belief in Soul" (<math>\alpha = .76</math>)</i></b>			
I believe there is an afterlife	.02	<b>.80</b>	- .08
Even though people die, they are repeatedly reborn	- .01	<b>.75</b>	.01
If we do not make offerings to the dead, we will be haunted	.07	<b>.56</b>	.13
<b><i>FIII: "Belief in Guardianship" (<math>\alpha = .72</math>)</i></b>			
Sometimes I feel at home in the precincts of a shrine	- .05	- .16	<b>.76</b>
I feel a sense of familiarity toward Jizo	.02	.06	<b>.63</b>
I feel as if the spirits of nature reside in the mountains, rivers, grass, and trees	.00	.28	<b>.49</b>
I feel renewed when I see the sunrise	- .10	.23	<b>.44</b>
Religion is a good mental and physical discipline	.29	- .14	<b>.42</b>
We should have a memorial service for miscarried child	- .05	.14	<b>.35</b>
<b>Factor correlation</b>			
	F I	-	
	F II	.27	-
	F III	.45	.44

Table 4: Factor Analysis of the religiosity of Japanese students.

A correlation analysis was performed on the following 10 variables: negative image, piety image, positive image, receptive attitude towards Muslims, pro-religiousness, belief in soul, belief in guardianship, curiosity, acceptance of others and knowledge of Islam. Table 5 Reliability coefficient, descriptive statistics, and correlation coefficient for each variable. Cronbach's alpha for "positive image,"  $\alpha = .62$ , was somewhat low. However, since the number of items was extremely small, it was judged to be acceptable and included in the analysis. According to other variables, Cronbach's alpha for this factor was more than  $\alpha = .70$ , satisfactory for an exploratory study. The average "knowledge of Muslims" score was 1.75, indicating that Japanese university students know of at least two Islamic precepts. The most

common responses in the survey were “prohibition of drinking alcohol and eating pork” and “women should not show their skin to men other than their husbands.

Variables	$\alpha$	$M$	$SD$	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1. Negative image	.79	3.22	.74										
2. Piety image	.78	4.21	.65	.24**									
3. Positive image	.62	3.46	.77	.13	.43**								
4. Receptive Attitude towards Muslims	.89	4.15	.87	-.48**	.07	.10							
5. Pro-religiousness	.70	2.24	.70	.05	.05	.19*	-.02						
6. Belief in Soul	.76	2.90	1.06	.12	.12	.16*	.00	.28**					
7. Belief in Guardianship	.72	3.21	.80	.20**	.20**	.21**	.22**	.39**	.41**				
8. Curiosity	.84	3.48	.81	.12	.12	.03	.15*	.20**	.08	.29**			
9. Acceptance of others	.78	4.09	.59	.15*	.15*	.14	.21**	.05	.25**	.24**	.36**		
10. Knowledge of Islam	-	1.75	1.57	.32**	.32**	.16*	.21**	.08	.01	.23**	.06	.06	

\*\* $p < .01$  \* $p < .05$

Table 5: Correlations between each question item (n=194).

### 3. The Possibility that the Presence or Absence of Contact with Muslims Influences Each Variable

An unpaired t-test was performed between contact experience and each variable. In the t-test, those who answered, “No, I do not have any Muslim acquaintances” to the question “Do you have any acquaintances who are Muslim” were categorized as “no contact experience” and those who answered otherwise were collectively categorized as “have contact experience” to the question. The results showed significant differences in “negative image” ( $t(192) = 5.81, p < .001$ ) and “receptive attitude ( $t(192) = 2.81, p < .01$ ). The more experienced, the lower the “negative image” and the higher the “receptive attitude”. Although an unpaired t-test was also conducted among the contact experience with foreign country and gender in the same procedure, neither variable was significantly different, and hence were excluded from subsequent analyses.

### Verification of the Hypothetical Model

Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) was used to test the hypothetical model shown in Figure 1. The model with the best fit was finally adopted as the “Receptive Attitude Model toward Muslims” (Figure 2). During the analysis, the psychological variables “curiosity” and “acceptance of others” were excluded because they showed no association with any of the variables. The results indicated that this structure fit the data well: CFI=.934, RMSEA=.059, it was determined that the values were acceptable.

The “negative image” and the “belief in guardianship” had a direct and significant influence on the receptive attitude toward Muslims. Specifically, “receptive attitude” was positively influenced ( .22\*\*) by the strength of “belief in guardianship” and negatively influenced (- .55\*\*) by the “negative image.” In other words, those who have a sense of being protected by God and Buddha are more accepting of Muslims, while negative images hinder acceptance of Muslims. The other variables were found to have an indirect influence on receptive attitude through images and “belief in guardianship.” First, the positive images were significantly positively influenced by “religiosity” (.19\*\*) and “piety image” ( .50\*\*). However, there was no significant relationship with receptive attitude. The negative image was not significantly related to religiosity, but was negatively influenced by “contact experience” (- .65\*\*) and “knowledge of Muslim” (-.10\*\*), and positively influenced by “piety image” ( .31\*\*).

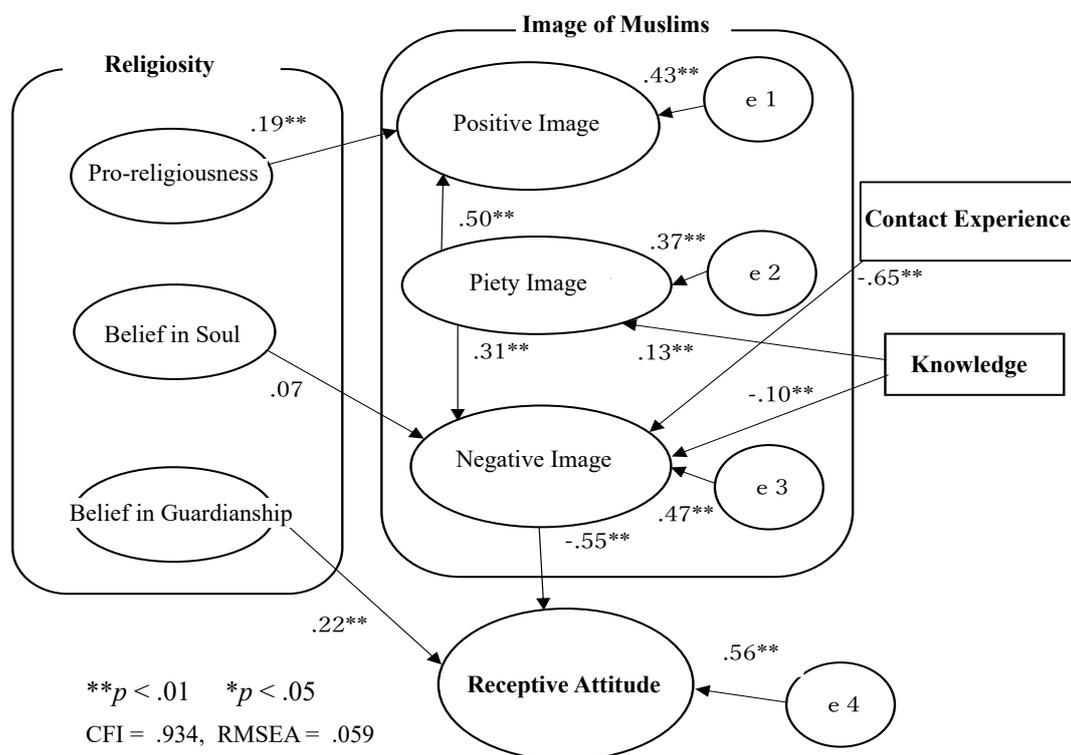


Figure 2: Path Diagram of Receptive Attitude toward Muslims.

Notes: the arrows shown in the figure represent the association between each variable. It is assumed that there is a causal relationship between the variable from which the arrow extends and the variable toward which it points. The number attached to the arrow is the path coefficient; if this value is positive, there is a positive association; if it is negative, there is a negative association. The larger the absolute value of the path coefficient, the stronger the association between the variables. The significant associations are marked with an asterisk.

## **Discussion and Conclusion**

### **1. The Relationship between Religiosity, Perceptions, and Attitudes toward Muslims among the Japanese**

This study explored the factors that influence receptive attitude by incorporating the religiosity of the Japanese people in order to investigate what is needed to promote a receptive attitude toward Muslims. The results revealed that one aspect of Japanese religiosity and images influences receptive attitude toward Muslims. The fact that “belief in guardianship” was positively associated with receptive attitude indicates that Japanese attitude toward religion can be interpreted as a determinant of receptive attitude toward Muslims. “Belief in guardianship” is awareness that one's accomplishments, one's gains, and even one's very existence are due to an entity external to oneself, a supernatural being. Therefore, the existence of out-groups such as Muslims also may have been accepted as being the intention of God and Buddha. The results suggest that “belief in guardianship” is an important personal trait in encouraging a receptive attitude toward Muslims. According to Nishiwaki (2004), fewer than 10% of Japanese are actively involved in religion or join a specific religious group, but 50-70% of Japanese engage in customary religious activities, such as visiting graves, making New Year's pilgrimages, and participating in local festivals. In fact, in Japan, various religions are mixed together in events such as Christmas and *Obon*, a Buddhist event. Various religions are accepted and there may be an aspect of tolerance toward different religions.

Furthermore, the fact that religiosity was positively associated with positive images indicates that those who have positive attitudes toward religion also have positive images of Muslims. These findings indicate that religiosity affects Japanese perceptions and attitudes toward Muslims. The results suggest that although it is difficult to control an individual's attitude toward religion, an individual's religiosity can be a clue to understanding and interpreting receptive attitude toward Muslims.

### **2. The Relationship between Various Variables and Perceptions of and Attitudes toward Muslims**

“Contact experience” and “knowledge” were negatively and significantly associated with “negative image.” This means that the less the contact with Muslims and the less the knowledge about Islam, the more likely the person is to have a negative image of Islam. This supports the “contact hypothesis” (Allport, 1950), which states that positive feelings toward unknown out-groups increase through more contact with the out-group. The t-test showed that those with more contact experience had lower values for “negative image” and higher values for “receptive attitude”, although “contact experience” and “knowledge” did not show any significantly relationship with “receptive attitude” in validation of the model. This can be interpreted as meaning that contact experience does not have the power to increase positive images, but it does have the effect of mitigating negative images. In other words, it cannot be said that the more positive the image, the more accepting the person is, but negative images are a hindrance to acceptance. In addition, there was a significant correlation between “knowledge” and “receptive attitude.” This follows an assertion of Arima (2015) that the amount of knowledge as well as direct contact experience with foreigners influences global awareness. “Negative image” was negatively associated with both “contact experience” and “knowledge,” and also showed a strong negative association with “receptive attitude.” This suggests that “contact experience” and “knowledge” may be indirectly related to “receptive

attitude” by mitigating negative images. Moreover, the results suggest that negative images are not necessarily related to individual religiosity, but come from experience and knowledge, and are particularly strongly influenced by contact experiences.

On the other hand, neither “curiosity” nor “acceptance of others” showed significant associations with image or receptive attitude. Curiosity and acceptance of others are generally believed to promote receptive attitude when communicating with others or foreigners (Nishikawa & Amamiya, 2015). For example, those who are more curious are better than others in accepting things (Kashdan, 2009). The results of this study imply that contact with Muslims is different from contact with out-groups in general. In other words, Muslims may not be treated as a normal out-group, but may be a special group of people in the eyes of the Japanese.

### **3. Image of Muslims**

The image of Muslims was summarized into three factors: “negative image,” “pious image,” and “positive image.” This indicates that Muslims have both positive and negative images for Japanese students in this study. The “negative image” was negatively associated with a receptive attitude toward Muslims. In other words, the more negative the image of Muslims, the lower the receptive attitude toward them. This finding agrees with Kondo and Mukai (2017), who found that the stronger perceived threat from Muslims leads to lower receptive attitude. Interestingly, “pious image” was positively associated with both “positive image” and “negative image.” In other words, the image of “Muslims are devout in their faith and devoutly follow the religious precepts” is assumed, and if this is taken in a positive way, it reinforces a positive image, such as “they are serious because they follow even strict precepts properly for the sake of their faith.” Conversely, if taken in a wrong way, it may lead to a negative image, such as “I am afraid that they might do something extreme for the sake of their faith.” The piety image reinforces both positive and negative images. In other words, it shows that positive impressions do not always make a Muslim acceptable. Furthermore, this study found that religiosity of Japanese is related to their image and receptive attitude toward Muslims. The Japanese perceive Muslims as an out-group, which may lead to a particular perception of Muslims as different from other foreigners, and this may lead to a peculiar Japanese attitude.

### **4. Suggestions for Promoting Receptive Attitude toward Muslims**

The results of this study will be used to determine what can be done to promote a more accepting attitude toward Muslims. First, increasing the contact experience with Muslims. The creation of opportunities for interaction with Muslims and contact experience are expected to reduce negative images of Muslims and promote a receptive attitude toward them.

Second, increasing correct knowledge about Islam can reduce negative images and mitigate inhibitions to acceptance. As for correct knowledge about Islam and Muslims in Japan, the Muslim Cultural Assimilator for Japanese (Nakano & Tanaka, 2018) and the brochure for understanding and accepting Muslim students and foreign Muslim tourists (International Education & Exchange Center, Nagoya University 2015; Bureau of Industrial and Labor Affairs, Tokyo Metropolitan Government, 2021) are good first steps or introductions. It has been found that obtaining correct knowledge of Muslims and essentials of socializing with them promotes willingness to interact with Muslims (Nakano et al., 2018), and it is suggested

that acquisition of knowledge may help to facilitate contact experiences with them. Furthermore, it is suggested that correct knowledge and awareness may positively change the pious image of Muslims. In fact, Nakano and Tanaka (2018, 2019) reported that the strict and pious image of Muslims changed to a flexible image through interaction with Muslims and quizzes. The piety image should not be negatively understood by increasing knowledge and contact experience through education and social outreach. It is difficult to control individual religiosity, but we can promote an attitude of acceptance toward Muslims by not regarding Islam or "religion" itself as something special, but by recalling the sense of being protected by God and Buddha that the Japanese people also have, and by respecting and empathizing with them.

## **5. A Challenge for Future Research**

It is important to conduct more precise surveys not only of students but also of Japanese people in general in the future. Since the subjects of this study were university students, it cannot be said that this study accurately represents the nature of Japanese people in general. The consistency between the actual contact situation and the attitude of acceptance through qualitative research, including participant observation needs to be confirmed. The present study did not determine how the image of Muslims, receptive attitude, and religiosity function in actual contact situations with Muslims. Further research is desirable.

Moreover, it is hoped that further refinement of the model will be explored in the future by adding variables that were not used in this study. The model used in this study is not the only model that can be considered. Since the coefficient of determination for receptive attitude was relatively low in this study, there is room to consider other explanatory variables.

## **Acknowledgements**

This research was supported by Grant-in-Aid for Scientific Research (21K02963). We would like to thank Mr. Kyogo Furuichi for his graduation thesis, Okayama University, in 2019. We thank him for his kind permission and cooperation.

## References

- Allport, G. W. (1950). *The individual and his religion*. New York, NY: Macmillan
- Allport, G. W. (1954). *The nature of prejudice*. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley
- Arima, T. (2015). Why Japanese university students are introverted: A study of the relationship between exposure to different cultures and attitudes toward globalization. *Science Reports of Tokyo Woman's Christian College*, 65(2), 159-179
- Bureau of Industrial and Labor Affairs, Tokyo Metropolitan Government (2021). *Muslims OMOTENASHI Handbook*.  
[https://www.sangyo-rodo.metro.tokyo.lg.jp/tourism/muslims\\_omotenashi\\_2021.pdf](https://www.sangyo-rodo.metro.tokyo.lg.jp/tourism/muslims_omotenashi_2021.pdf)
- Fujimoto, M., & Daibo, I. (2007). A hierarchical structure theory of communication skills. *The Japanese Journal of Personality*, 15(3), 347-361
- International Education & Exchange Center, Nagoya University (2015). *Life of Muslim students in Nagoya University: An introduction for their advisors and peers [Revised Edition]*. <https://acs.iee.nagoya-u.ac.jp/en/doc/interculture/201510muslim.pdf>
- Kaneko, S. (1997). *Japanese religiosity: The social psychology of Okage and Tatari*. Tokyo: Shinyosha Press. (in Japanese)
- Kashdan, T. B. (2009). *Curious? Discover the missing ingredient to a fulfilling life*. New York, NY: HarperCollins
- Kawakita, J. (2005). *Way of thinking*. Tokyo: Chuokoron-sha (in Japanese).
- Kondo, F., & Mukai, T. (2017). Considering the determinants of tolerance attitudes toward Muslims by statistical method for the development of “non-Muslim studies.” *Annals of Japan Association for Middle East Studies*, 33(1), 95-117. (in Japanese)
- Matsushima, K., Kawashima, D., & Nishiwaki, R. (2016). *The psychology of religion: Religiosity among Japanese friends from the data*. Tokyo: Seishin Shobo. (in Japanese)
- NHK Broadcasting Culture Research Institute (2015). *The structure of consciousness of contemporary Japanese* (8th ed.). Tokyo: NHK Publishing
- Nakano, S., & Tanaka, T. (2018). An attempt at intercultural education using a Muslim cultural assimilator for Japanese students: From the perspective of intercultural social skills. *Bulletin of Intercultural Education Society of Japan*, 48, 146-160
- Nakano, S., & Tanaka, T. (2017). How does a Japanese host form interpersonal relationships with Muslim international students? A case study of cross-cultural conflicts and efforts to build and maintain healthy relationships. *Multicultural Relations*, 14, 59-77

- Nakano, S., & Tanaka, T. (2019). An attempt at intercultural education using a revised version of the Muslim cultural assimilator for Japanese students. *Journal of Cultural and Convivial Studies*, 18, 53-66. (in Japanese)
- Nishikawa, K., & Amamiya, T. (2015). Development of an epistemic curiosity scale: Diverse curiosity and specific curiosity. *The Japanese Journal of Educational Psychology*, 63(4), 412-425. (in Japanese)
- Nishiwaki, R. (2004). *The Japanese religious view of nature: A practical empirical study through an attitude survey*. Kyoto: Minervashobo. (in Japanese)
- Obara, Y., & Yamazaki, Y. (1991). The Japanese young generation's acceptance of foreign people. *The Annual Review of Sociology*, 4, 105-116
- Ogan, C., Willnat, L., Pennington, R., & Bashir, M. (2014). The rise of anti-Muslim prejudice: Media and Islamophobia in Europe and the United States." *International Communication Gazette*, 76(1), 27-46
- Okai, H., & Ishikawa, M. (2011). The factors influencing perceptions and attitudes toward Islam and Muslims in non-Muslim Japanese community. *Journal of Islamic Area Studies*, 3, 36-46
- Quillian, L. (1995). Prejudice as a response to perceived group threat: Population composition and anti-immigrant and racial prejudice in Europe. *American Sociological Review*, 60(4), 586-611
- Tanada, H. (2020). Estimate of Muslim population in the world and Japan, 2018. *Waseda Journal of Human Science*, 32(2), 253-362. (in Japanese)
- Yagi, M. (2020). Inclusion of Muslims in Japan, which is expected to increase, in Japanese society: Avoiding Islamophobia. *Japan Society of Social Design Studies*, 11, 13-15 (in Japanese)
- Yomiuri Shimbun Newspaper (2008, May 30). Religious attitudes survey. (in Japanese)

**Contact email:** s-nakano@yamaguchi-u.ac.jp