

A CASE STUDY ON THE PROCESS OF INTERPERSONAL RELATIONSHIP FORMATION BETWEEN MUSLIMS AND JAPANESE HOSTS

Sachiko Nakano
Yamaguchi University (Japan)

Abstract

This study aims to explore the process of interpersonal relationship formation between international Muslim students and their Japanese hosts in Japan. I conducted a semi-structured interview with eight Muslim international students in Japan, and analyzed the data by using the Trajectory Equifinality Model. Results showed that, step by step, the students underwent seven similar experiences in the interpersonal relationship formation process with Japanese hosts: (1) assumption of cultural differences, (2) consideration of coping policy, (3) contact with the Japanese, (4) perception of cultural differences, (5) occurrence of difficulties, (6) consideration of coping strategies, and (7) coping strategies. Difficulties based on cross-cultural conflict hindered the formation of relations with hosts. The results suggested, therefore, that the key to building relationships is learning how to cope with difficulties. In addition, the combination of cultural preservation and interpersonal relationship formation was divided into three types. The first was to adjust criteria for the observance of religious mandates, so as to also become acquainted with Japanese religious customs. The second was to limit relations with the Japanese, because religious discipline and compliance with mandates is top priority. The third option was not to give up on exchanges with the Japanese or on culture preservation, so as to be able to explain the norms of their own culture and to carry them out with understanding. This study revealed effective skills that make it possible to both preserve the mother culture and form relationships.

Keywords: *Muslim students in Japan, interpersonal relationship, cross-cultural contact.*
