

# INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF MULTIDISCIPLINARY: APPLIED BUSINESS AND EDUCATION RESEARCH

2024, Vol. 5, No. 4, 1268 – 1276

<http://dx.doi.org/10.11594/ijmaber.05.04.14>

---

## Research Article

### From Fear to Understanding: Millennials' Perceptions of Islam in Contemporary Society as a Basis for Interfaith Dialogue and Cooperation

Saiden Panggo Akmad\*, Nancy B. Espacio

Sultan Kudarat State University, EJC Montilla, Tacurong City, Sultan Kudarat

---

#### Article history:

Submission April 2024

Revised April 2024

Accepted April 2024

#### \*Corresponding author:

E-mail:

[saidenakmad@sksu.edu.ph](mailto:saidenakmad@sksu.edu.ph)

#### ABSTRACT

This study aimed to describe the millennials' perception of Islam in contemporary society as a basis for interfaith dialogue and cooperation. A descriptive research method was utilized. Respondents were selected using stratified probability sampling. A total of 255 were used primarily as the respondents of this study. The data gathered were analyzed using the SPSS software V21x64. The statistical methods used were frequency and percentage counts, standard deviation, mean, and the grand mean.

The respondents' demographic profile relative to age, the 25-28 age group had more respondents than other age groups. As to sex, females dominated the number of respondents. In terms of tribe, most respondents are Cebuano. Regarding religious affiliation, Roman Catholics have a significant number of respondents and in educational attainment, most of the respondents are high school graduates.

Millennials with a moderately high perception of Islam view the religious practices of Islam in a positive light. They may appreciate the emphasis on prayer, fasting, and charity as acts of devotion. Regarding cultural aspects of Islam, millennials with moderately high perceptions may appreciate the rich history and traditions associated with Islamic culture. Relative to governance, millennials with moderately high perceptions may acknowledge the influence of Islamic principles in shaping societies governed by law. They may recognize the importance of justice, fairness, and social welfare in Islamic governance systems and appreciate the emphasis on community and public welfare.

Millennials with a moderately high perception of Islam will likely have a positive view of it, appreciating its religious practices, cultural contributions, and governance principles. They may also be open to learning more about Islam and engaging in interfaith dialogue and cooperation with practitioners of different religions.

**Keywords:** *Dialogue, Islam, Islamophobia, Interfaith, Millennials, Perception*

---

#### How to cite:

Akmad, S. P. & Espacio, N. B. (2024). From Fear to Understanding: Millennials' Perceptions of Islam in Contemporary Society as a Basis for Interfaith Dialogue and Cooperation. *International Journal of Multidisciplinary: Applied Business and Education Research*. 5(4), 1268 – 1276. doi: 10.11594/ijmaber.05.04.14

## Introduction

Islamophobia describes prejudice, fear, or hatred directed toward Islam or Muslims and is frequently based on false beliefs about the religion and its adherents. It can take many forms, including prejudice, hate speech, or violent acts committed against Muslims or those considered Muslims. Islamophobia can have detrimental effects on both individuals and communities. It can result in partiality in housing, employment, education, and other settings and foster an atmosphere of distrust and dread.

In the Philippines, the entrenchment of Islamophobia is felt in schools, institutions, and, most significantly, in the media. One possible reason Islamophobia has reached the Philippines is due to the success of the Islamist group movement in their bloody campaigns to rid non-adherents of their brand of political and ideological understanding of Islam. Several groups in the Philippines are mostly situated on the Island of Mindanao. A few as such

Abu Sayyaf Group, responsible for bombing and kidnapping reports on the island, and the Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Movement. These groups show increasing threats to national security that would sharply increase Islamophobia among government agencies and be noticeably present in the media (Morales, 2014).

In recent years, events involving wars that resulted in the deaths of innocent people, political decisions, and stereotyping news against Islam have affected non-Muslims' views of the followers of Islam. A specific phobia gripped Western societies—Islamophobia (Gallup, 2020).

According to data gathered by the Local Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Office (LDRRMO) of the Local Government Unit of Palimbang, Sultan Kudarat, frequent bloodshed and armed conflict cause refugees, casualties, and destruction of the livelihood of the affected population. Islamophobia is sparked among non-Muslims in the municipality by this strife and bloodshed. To combat the anxiety of non-Muslim constituents against the Moro community, the LDRRMO incorporated psycho-social programs after the disaster.

In today's diverse, complex world, interfaith dialogue and cooperation are crucial in

fostering understanding, harmony, and peaceful coexistence among religious communities. As the largest and most interconnected generation, millennials have a unique perspective on religion, including their perception of Islam. This research aims to delve into and understand millennials' perception of Islam in contemporary society to utilize these findings to facilitate interfaith dialogue and cooperation.

## Statement of the Problem

This study aimed to determine millennials' perceptions of Islam as the basis for interfaith dialogue and cooperation.

Specifically, it sought to answer the following questions:

- 1) What is the socio-demographic profile of the millennials relative to age, sex, tribe, religion, and educational attainment?
- 2) What is the perception of the millennials towards Islam relative to religious practices, culture, and governance?

## Review of Related Literature

*People's Perception: Different Misconceptions and Prejudiced Remarks toward Muslim*

A growing body of work exists on the link between fear and Muslim and Islamic views. Several studies have revealed that unfavorable opinions against Muslims relate to greater dread and anxiety. Various factors influence these sentiments, such as media depictions, personal experiences, and political beliefs.

Cadeno (2019) states that ensuing prejudice could significantly affect individuals' behavior. Even though many empirical studies use the integrated threat theory, very few focus on how biases against Muslims or Islam are formed. González et al. (2008) stress the opinions of Dutch teenage participants as a basis for their study, which supported the integrated threat theory's general applicability for explaining anti-Muslim attitudes. Nevertheless, they emphasized the greater relevance of stereotypes and symbolic threats as anti-Muslim prejudice mediators over real-world dangers.

Hayes et al. (2013) discovered that unfavorable opinions about Muslims were linked to increased fear and anxiety about terrorism. The unfavorable opinions about Muslims might

contribute to an environment of dread fueled by security and safety concerns.

Ghaffar and colleagues (2018) conducted another study on the association between views of Islam and the fear of Muslims in Australia. The authors discovered unfavorable impressions of Islam, such as the impression that Islam is a dangerous or intolerant religion was linked to increased fear of Muslims. The unfavorable views about Islam might contribute to bad opinions of Muslims while also increasing fear and anxiety.

It is universally evident that prejudiced remarks against Muslims exist. However, we cannot end our conversation without widening our understanding of Islam; how we interact with Muslims depends on our various experiences.

Those experiences could potentially influence our views about Islam, whether they could be negative or positive. Islam is a religion that promotes peace and love (Akhter et al., 2017). However, the different news that bluntly spread misconceptions about Muslims that connect them to infamous terrorist and extremist groups have influenced non-Muslims to shape a negative perception of Islam.

In the recent study by Cardeno (2019), the trust of different ethnic groups in Isulan in the peacebuilding model. Prejudiced remarks against Muslims as the respondent asserted that he feared for his life every time he passed by a Muslim community, as he might get nabbed or killed. Some employers shape mistrust and negative stereotypes against Muslim applicants, and those applicants tend to change their names and religious affiliations to get the job.

#### *Perception: Factors that Influence Non-Muslim Perceptions toward Muslim*

Your perception can change how you perceive a certain group of people; culture influences the way you respond and interpret your opinions and ideas. In the research of Qu (2017), culture, with its conflicting values and beliefs, influences our evaluation of reality, determines the meaning we attribute to the selected stimuli, and thus affects the perception outcome.

Based on the different narrations of misconceptions towards Muslims, Culture has to say how we evaluate and perceive other people. In the case of non-Muslims who have shaped a long side of misconception about Muslims, it is in the right sense to assume that culture can influence them; they practice different beliefs and ideologies. There were conflicting factors that affected their perception of Muslims.

An article by Iqbal (2019) explained that “Culture, race, gender, geographic location, and life experiences combine to create perceptual gulfs between us and those who have different backgrounds and experiences from ours.

If we bind this to the perception of Muslims, it gives an impression that their judgment is based on their different life experiences. Therefore, they choose to create misconceptions about Muslims because they are different.

If we look at its standpoint, we may turn to believe that what you perceive is strongly influenced by your past experiences. Those who believe that “all Muslims are bad” may have gone through negative experiences.

In support of this claim, Iqbal (2019) mentioned that our experiences shape how we perceive because of our standpoint. It discusses standpoint theory, which says it is easier to be powerless to experience inequalities than those who are empowered.

What does it mean? If we look at the population of the Philippines, it is predominantly Christian; therefore, Christians, as the empowered, have not felt the inequalities. However, Muslims have felt discrimination as they are powerless.

According to Malik (2019), a widespread misconception about Islamic administration is that it is an authoritarian, undemocratic system or that it is the rule of the cleric elite who infringe on people's freedoms in the name of their faith. It is primarily because academics, mostly orthodox and Islamicist, tend to explain governance-related issues using Fiqh's legal positivistic paradigm.

As an alternative voice to the dominant conventional Fiqh's positivistic legal hegemony, humanistic governance based on protecting human dignity—the cornerstone of Islamic tenets—the inviolability of life and responsible

freedom should be investigated and encouraged.

It is therefore vitally necessary to approach the topic with new logic, or *ijtihad*. A new method of governance was presented that departs from the Consequentialistic Approach and is motivated by the broad *Maqid al-Sharah* theory.

To critically analyze the texts as part of the discourse deconstruction, this research will examine the conceptual foundations for the inquiry by examining the epistemic aspect of governance from Islamic sources and principles.

### Methods

This study utilized the quantitative research design using the descriptive-survey method to describe the millennials' perceptions of Islam in contemporary society as a basis for interfaith dialogues and cooperation in Palimbang, Sultan Kudarat. Quantitative research, as referenced by Sukamoslon (2017) in Cohen (1980), is social research that uses empirical techniques and makes claims. An empirical statement describes the situation in the real world instead of what ought to be the situation. In quantitative research, empirical

assessments are used as another component. Typically, empirical assertions are stated in numerical terms.

The descriptive survey method was utilized. The survey approach was employed because some degree of generalization is sought, and money and effort are important when the population is vast. As a result, this study meets the criteria for conducting a survey research method.

### Respondents of the Study

The respondents of this study were millennials from different sectors. As the result of more than a decade of study, it became clear to determine a cut-off point between Millennials and the next generation. According to Dimock (2019), Millennials are anyone born between 1981 and 1996 (ages 25 to 40 in 2021).

The Slovin formula was utilized to determine the sample size of each stratum.

$$n = N / (1 + Ne^2)$$

where *n* – is the sample size,

*N* – is the population size, and

*e* – is the margin of error to be decided by the research.

Stratum	Population Size	Sample Size
School Teachers and Staff	147	54
Out-of-School Youth	19	7
Registered Business Owner Establishment	225	82
Registered Farmers and Fishermen	241	88
Livelihood Program and Beneficiaries of Dole	47	17
Local Government Unit Employees	18	7
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>697</b>	<b>255</b>

### Research Instrument

The research utilized a researcher-made questionnaire as the research instrument. The survey questionnaire was developed upon reviewing related studies and journals. The survey questionnaire was reviewed and validated by the pool of experts. A Cronbach's alpha of 0.76, interpreted as "excellent," indicates that the questionnaire was valid. After the instrument was finalized, a reliability test was conducted. This test yielded a reliability index of 0.92, suggesting the questionnaire was highly reliable.

### Data Analysis

The data gathered were analyzed using the SPSS software V21x64. The statistical methods used were frequency and percentage counts, standard deviation, mean, and the grand mean. The researchers used a five-point Likert scale to determine the perception of the respondents toward Islam. The five-point Likert scale with verbal description and interpretation is presented below:

Rating	Verbal Description
5	Strongly Agree
4	Agree
3	Moderately Agree
2	Disagree
1	Strongly Disagree

Likewise, the computed mean was used to measure the respondents' perception of Islam. This is presented below.

Rating	Range	Verbal Description	Qualitative Description
5	4.51-5.00	Strongly Agree	Very High
4	3.51-4.50	Agree	High
3	2.51-3.50	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Moderately High
2	1.51-2.50	Disagree	Low
1	0.50-1.50	Strongly Disagree	Very Low

## Result and Discussion

Table 1. Respondents' Socio-Demographic Profile

<i>n=255</i>			
AGE		<i>f</i>	<i>%</i>
	25-28	73	29%
	29-32	54	21%
	33-37	61	24%
	38-40	67	26%
SEX			
	Male	126	49%
	Female	129	51%
TRIBE			
	Ilongo	55	22%
	Cebuano	159	62%
	Ilokano	33	13%
	Maguindanaon	1	0.39%
	Tboli	3	1%
	Chavacano	1	0.39%
	Manobo	1	0.39%
	Teduray	1	0.39%
Religious Affiliation			
	Roman Catholic	162	64%
	Pentecostal	13	5%
	Jehovas Witness	7	3%
	Protestant	13	5%
	Alliance	16	6%
	Aglipayan	0	0.00%
	Iglesia ni Cristo	2	1%
	Baptist	4	2%
	Seventh Day Adventist	20	8%
	Foursquare	11	4%

AGE	<i>f</i>	%
Filipinista	1	0.39%
Kristohanong Pangalad	2	1%
Victory Assembly of God	2	1%
<b>Educational Attainment</b>		
Elementary Level	14	5%
Elementary Graduate	25	10%
High School Level	58	23%
High School Graduate	65	25%
Bachelor's Degree Level	32	13%
Bachelor's Degree Graduate	41	16%
Earned Units in Master's Degree	7	3%
Master's Degree Graduate	8	3%

Table 1 presents the respondents' demographic profiles. Regarding age, the 25–28 age group had more respondents than other age groups, with 73 total respondents comprising 29% of the population.

Regarding the respondents' sex, females dominated the number, with 129 respondents, or 51% of the population. In terms of tribe, the majority of the respondents are Cebuano, with a total of 159 respondents comprising 62% of the total population.

Regarding religious affiliation, most respondents are Roman Catholic, with 162 comprising 64% of the population.

In terms of the educational attainment of the respondents, most of them are high school graduates, with 65 respondents, comprising 25% of the total population, and those who earned a master's degree got the lowest number of respondents, with a total of 7 respondents, comprising 3% of the total population.

Table 2. Millennials' Perception Towards Islam in Terms of Religious Practice

<i>n</i> =255			
Item Statements	SD	Mean	Verbal Description
1. Allah is the only god accepted by Muslims.	1.21	3.82	Agree
2. Prophet Mohammad is the last messenger of Islam.	1.23	3.46	Agree
3. Jesus Christ is only a messenger in Islam belief.	1.20	3.45	Agree
4. Muslim believe that Mary, the mother of Jesus, is not a saint.	1.17	3.39	Moderately Agree
5. Islam is both religion and politics.	1.07	3.17	Moderately Agree
6. Islam is a complete way of life.	1.08	3.28	Moderately Agree
7. Islam has Five Pillars.	0.96	3.79	Agree
8. Muslims pray five times a day.	1.29	3.48	Agree
9. Islam condemns terrorism.	1.00	3.28	Moderately Agree
10. Muslims believe that non-Muslims are infidels.	1.02	3.05	Moderately Agree
<b>Grand Mean</b>	1.12	3.42	Agree

As shown in Table 2, the perception of the millennials towards Muslims in terms of religious practice obtained a grand mean of 3.42. The result indicates that the respondents had a moderately high perception of Islam regarding religious practices.

It was found that the statement "Allah is the only God accepted by Muslims" got the highest mean of 3.82 with the verbal description "agree." On the other hand, the statement "Muslims believe that non-Muslims are infidels" got the lowest mean of 3.05 with the verbal description "moderately agree."

This result signifies that the Millennials are aware of the religious practices of the Muslims in the community, which contributes to their positive perception of the latter. There is also a high tolerance for differences when they understand one another's religious beliefs and practices. Respecting individual differences is a great factor in living harmoniously.

Thus, setting aside these differences and focusing on the similarities amidst diversity will lead to a peaceful relationship between Muslims and non-Muslims in the community.

Concerning this result, Siah and colleagues (2022) lay out the perceptions of public and private students towards Islam, narrating that Islam, like other religions, is a religion of peace. It was also noted that Muslims need to follow the strong foundation of discipline in Islam. However, accompanied by the positive perception was the students' negative perception, which was mainly rooted in the strict practices that Muslims needed to do.

Table 3. Millennials' Perception Towards Islam Relative to Culture

*n*=255

Item Statements	SD	Mean	Verbal Description
1. Muslim men are allowed to marry four women.	1.21	3.82	Agree
2. A Muslim woman is not allowed to marry non-Muslims.	1.23	3.46	Agree
3. Islam practices giving "Mah'r" (groom's gift) to make the marriage valid.	1.20	3.45	Agree
4. Islam allowed men to divorce their wives without penalty.	1.17	3.39	Moderately Agree
5. Muslim women can divorce their husbands for as long as they return the "Mah r."	1.07	3.17	Moderately Agree
6. Married men and women who committed immoral acts are sentenced to die in public.	1.08	3.28	Moderately Agree
7. Unmarried men and women who committed immoral acts are punished with 90 lashes in public.	0.96	3.79	Agree
8. Married women are not allowed to go out from home without "Mahram."	1.29	3.48	Agree
9. Eid Adha and Eid Alfit'r are the only fiestas among Muslims.	1.00	3.28	Moderately Agree
10. The wife cannot use her husband's family name.	1.02	3.05	Moderately Agree
<b>Grand Mean</b>	1.06	3.16	Moderately Agree

As shown in Table 3, the perception of the millennials towards Muslims in terms of culture is "moderately high," with a grand mean of 3.16.

It was found that the statement "Muslim men are allowed to marry four women" got the highest mean of 3.72 with the verbal description of "agree." On the other hand, the statement "Wife is not allowed to use her husband's family name" got the lowest mean of 2.50 with a verbal description of "disagree."

The result implies that millennials know the existing culture of Muslims. This knowledge of the existing culture of Muslims was due to

different factors. Nonetheless, some Muslim cultural traditions are not what Islam teaches and are sometimes confused by non-Muslims as religious, which plays a part in the negative perception towards Muslims.

In the quoted speech of Pope John Paul II in the paper of Borelli (2003), he mentioned that interreligious dialogue embraces its effectiveness if Muslims and Christians live with each other. Through that, both could better understand the culture, beliefs, and traditions of one another.

Siah et al. (2022) expounded that social media plays a vital role in the knowledge of non-

Muslims about the existing culture of Muslims, where interacting with Muslim friends has potentially helped non-Muslims gain a valuable understanding of Islam.

Table 4. Millennials' Perception Towards Islam Relative to Governance

<i>n</i> =255				
Item Statements	SD	Mean	Verbal Description	
Islam does not allow women to become a leader of a community.	1.29	2.82	Moderately Agree	
Islam's government is governed by divine law (Qur'an and Hadith).	1.09	3.39	Moderately Agree	
Muslim community protects the rights of non-Muslims.	0.97	3.46	Agree	
Muslim leaders shall follow the complete principles of the Islamic faith.	1.04	3.57	Agree	
Islamic government has a penal code of "eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth."	1.01	3.50	Agree	
In the Islamic government, not wearing a "hijab" is prohibited.	1.09	3.54	Agree	
Muslim leaders are accountable for their position on the day of judgment.	0.98	3.48	Agree	
Muslim leaders are prohibited from corrupting public funds.	1.09	3.40	Moderately Agree	
Any Muslim can be a leader regardless of position and race if he is a true believer and chosen by the community.	1.03	3.68	Agree	
If the perpetrator of a crime is proven guilty, amicable settlements are not acceptable.	1.07	3.35	Moderately Agree	
<b>Grand Mean</b>	<b>1.07</b>	<b>3.42</b>	<b>Agree</b>	

As shown in Table 4, the perception of the Millennials towards Muslims in terms of governance garnered a grand mean of 3.42, which means that the millennials had a moderately high perception of Islam in terms of governance.

Among the statements, "any Muslim can be a leader regardless of their position and race, as long as he is a true believer and chosen by the community" gained the highest mean of 3.68, with a verbal description of "agree."

On the other hand, the statement "Islam does not allow women to become leaders of a community" gained the lowest mean of 2.28, which means the respondents "moderately agree" with the statement. The result signifies the positive perception of the millennials towards the government of Muslims. It shows that they believe in the capacity of Muslims towards good governance.

The popular picture of Islamic government is a gloomy vision of a nondemocratic and authoritarian regime, a dictatorship with iron claws, or an elite cleric administration that violates people's liberties under the flag of religion. It is mostly due to the Fiqh "legal positivistic" framework frequently employed to explain governance concerns by generally conservative and Islamicist teachers.

However, according to Malik (2019), Islamic governance is humanistic governance based on protecting human dignity, which has been emphasized in Islamic precepts. The inviolability of life and responsible freedom should be investigated and promoted as an alternative voice to the dominant conventional Fiqh legal positivistic hegemony.

Therefore, the moderately high perception of the millennials towards Islamic governance in the area shows protection of non-Muslim rights, welfare, and dignity.



## Conclusion

From the findings of the study, the following conclusions are made:

Based on the socio-demographic profile of the respondents, it was essential to determine their age, sex, tribe, religious affiliation, and educational attainment to find different perspectives about Islam.

Millennials' moderately high perceptions of Islam may stem from their recognition of its religious practices, such as the five pillars of Islam and the six articles of faith. They may also appreciate Islamic culture, including traditions and arts. Moreover, millennials may view the governance of Islamic societies positively, acknowledging elements like social justice and community welfare. This positive perception of Islam among millennials provides a foundation for interfaith dialogue and cooperation. It suggests that millennials are willing to engage with different religions, including Islam, to foster understanding, bridge divides, and promote peaceful coexistence in contemporary society.

## References

- Cardeno, Coline Esther B. (2019). In Isulanon We Trust: A Peacebuilding Model from Sultan Kudarat in Mindanao. Department of International Cooperation Graduate School of International Development
- Crossman, J. (2021). Qualitative research writing: surveying the vista. In *Handbook of Qualitative Research Methodologies in Workplace Contexts* (pp. 190–211). Edward Elgar Publishing.
- Dangalao, T. K. (2024). From Expression to Connection: Decoding Sana All's Linguistic Meanings in Communication Context. *International Journal of Multidisciplinary: Applied Business and Education Research*, 5(1), 102-117.
- Daniels, J. P., & Von Der Ruhr, M. (2010). Trust in others: Does religion matter? *Review of Social Economy*, 68(2), 163-186.
- Hopmans, A. (2022). *The Age of Islamophobia* (Doctoral dissertation).
- Imran Awan and Irene Zempi (2020). Non-Muslim men who suffer Islamophobia: A Briefing Paper. <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/Documents/Issues/Religion/Islamophobia-AntiMuslim/Civil%20Society%20or%20Individuals/ProfAwan-4.pdf>.
- Iqbal, Z. (2019). *Islamophobia: History, Context, and Deconstruction*. Sage Publications Pvt. Limited.
- Laurence, J., Schmid, K., Rae, J. R., & Hewstone, M. (2019). Prejudice, contact, and threat at the diversity-segregation nexus: A cross-sectional and longitudinal analysis of how ethnic out-group size and segregation interrelate for inter-group relations. *Social Forces*, 97(3), 1029–1066.
- Malik, B. A. (2019). Islam in post-Soviet Kazakhstan: Experiencing public revival of Islam through institutionalization. *Asian Journal of Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies*, 13(3), 351–369.
- Martin Accad and Chaden Hani (2022). Christian-Muslim Relations in the midst of Pandemic: A Case Study from Lebanon. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC9115279/>. Retrieved on March 6, 2023.
- Montiel, C. J., Rodil, R. B., & de Guzman, J. M. (2012). The Moro struggle and the challenge to peacebuilding in Mindanao, Southern Philippines (pp. 71-89). Springer US.
- Salendab, F. A., & Akmad, S. P. (2023). A Personal Narrative Experience of Teachers Teaching Purposive Communication During the New Normal Education. *International Journal of Multidisciplinary: Applied Business and Education Research*, 4(5), 1590-1601.
- Salendab, F. A., & Laguda, J. L. (2023). Learning purposive communication: A personal narrative experience of non-teacher education students. *International Journal of Multidisciplinary: Applied Business and Education Research*, 4(5), 1682-1696.
- Salendab, F., (2023). Proposed Instructional Scheme in the New Normal Education: Basis for Pedagogical Strategies/Practices. *Psychology and Education: A Multidisciplinary Journal*, 6(8), 712-719.