DA'WAH TO JAPANESE MUSLIM YOUTH : EXPERIENCE OF THE CULTURAL EXCHANGE PROGRAMME (CEP)

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Thesis submitted in partial fulfilment for the degree of
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ABSTRAK

Ramai remaja Islam Jepun yang dilahirkan dan dibesarkan di Jepun gagal mempertahankan 'aqidah terhadap Islam kerana kurangnya pendidikan yang betul dalam subjek Islam, pengaruh rakan sebaya yang kuat dan tekanan masyarakat yang besar untuk menyesuaikan diri. Tesis ini bertujuan untuk mengembangkan kefahaman mengenai fungsi Program Pertukaran Budaya; mendokumentasikan pengalaman remaja Islam Jepun yang terlibat dalam Program Pertukaran Budaya; dan mengkaji kesan Program Pertukaran Budaya terhadap remaja Islam Jepun, sekaligus mengenalpasti kesesuaian Konsep *Al-ta'āruf* untuk program *da'wah* masa depan. Kajian yang dijalankan ini menggunakan kaedah penyelidikan kualitatif etnografi dengan pemerhatian bukan peserta dan wawancara mendalam menggunakan soalan terbuka. Fokus tesis ini adalah pada pengalaman sembilan remaja Islam Jepun yang dihoskan secara jangka pendek oleh keluarga angkat Islam di Malaysia. Data terkumpul membawa kepada tujuh tema utama yang tersirat dalam Konsep *Al-ta'āruf* iaitu: 1) *Tahāwur* (dialog); 2) *Ta-'arūf* (saling mengenali, saling berinteraksi); 3) *Ta-'āyush* (kewujudan bersama); 4) *Tasāmuh* (bertolak ansur meskipun ada perbezaan antara satu sama lain); 5) *Tabādul* (pertukaran idea); 6) *Ta-'akhī* (bekerjasama sebagai saudara seIslam); dan 7) *Al-ta'ayush Al-silmīyy* (hidup bersama dalam kedamaian dan keharmonian). Seterusnya, pengalaman peserta digariskan ke dalam lima domain kemanusiaan yang terkandung dalam Konsep *Al-ta'āruf* : 1) Fizikal; 2); Intelektual; 3) Emosional; 4) Kebudayaan; dan 5) Kerohanian. Program Pertukaran Budaya ini didapati berjaya meninggalkan kesan positif ke atas semua pemuda Islam Jepun yang mengambil bahagian, disebabkan oleh proses *Al-ta'āruf* yang telah berlaku, yang berakar pada tradisi Islam berdasarkan hubungan *Ansār-Muhajirin*. Kesemua tema ini berguna untuk memahami bagaimana Konsep *Al-ta'āruf* dapat diterokai melalui program antara budaya untuk membantu memperkukuhkan identiti remaja Islam minoriti di masa akan datang.

ABSTRACT

Many Japanese Muslim youth born and raised in Japan fail to practice Islam due to a lack of proper education in Islamic subjects, strong peer influence and huge societal pressure to conform. This research aimed to describe the functions of the Cultural Exchange Programme; explain the experiences of Japanese Muslim youth enrolled in the Cultural Exchange Programme; and examine the impact of the Cultural Exchange Programme on the Japanese Muslim youth and therefore, the suitability of the *Al-ta'āruf* Concept for future *da'wah* programmes. This research project employs an ethnographic qualitative method of inquiry by non-participant observation and in-depth interviews with open-ended questions. A focus of this thesis is on the experiences of nine Japanese Muslim youth hosted on a short-term basis by Muslim host families in Malaysia. The findings indicate that the Cultural Exchange Programme internalised all seven stages implicit in the Concept of *Al-ta'āruf* : 1) *Tahāwur* (dialogue); 2) *Ta-'arūf* (mutually knowing, mutually interacting); 3) *Ta-'āyush* (to coexist); 4) *Tasāmuh* (tolerate each other's differences); 5) *Tabādul* (exchange of ideas); 6) *Ta-'akhī* (to associate as brother); and 7) *Al-ta'ayush Al-silmīyy* (to coexist in peace and harmony). Furthermore, the participants' experiences are outlined into five domains of human connection embedded in *Al-ta'āruf* : 1) Physical; 2) Intellectual; 3) Emotional; 4) Cultural; and 5) Spiritual. The Cultural Exchange Programme was found to have left a positive impression of life as a practicing Muslim upon all participating Japanese Muslim youth. The impact was due to the *Al- ta'āruf* process that had taken place, rooted in Islamic tradition of the *Ansār-Muhajirin* relationship. These themes will be useful for understanding how the Concept of *Al- ta'āruf* may be explored through intercultural programmes to help strengthen the identity of minority Muslim youth.

الملخص

العديد من الشباب اليابانيين المسلمين الذين ولدوا ونشأوا في اليابان يفشلون في ممارسة الإسلام بسبب نقص في تعليم المواد الإسلامية المناسبة وتأثير الأقران القوي والضغط المجتمعي الهائل. يهدف هذا البحث إلى وصف وظائف برنامج التبادل الثقافي وشرح تجارب الشباب المسلم الياباني الملتحق ببرنامج التبادل الثقافي ودراسة تأثير برنامج التبادل الثقافي على الشباب الياباني المسلم، وكذلك مدى ملاءمة مفهوم التعارف للبرامج الدعوية المستقبلية. يستخدم هذا البحث المنهج الكيفي من خلال ملاحظة المشاركين ومقابلات متعمقة مع أسئلة مفتوحة. وتركز هذه الأطروحة على تجارب تسعة شباب يابانيين مسلمين استضافتهم عائلات مسلمة مضيفة في ماليزيا على أساس قصير الأمد. وتشير النتائج إلى أن برنامج التبادل الثقافي استوعب جميع المراحل السبع المتضمنة في مفهوم التعارف: 1) التحاور. 2 (التعارف) المعرفة المتبادلة، تفاعل متبادل)؛ 3) التعايش. 4) التسامح (قبول اختلافات الآخرين). 5) التبادل (تبادل الأفكار)؛ 6) التآخي (الترابط الأخوي). 7) التعايش السلمي (الوجود المشترك السلمي والودي). وأيضاً تم تحديد تجارب المشاركين في خمس مجالات للاتصال البشري المضمنة في التعارف: 1) المادة؛ 2)؛ الفهم؛ 3) العاطفة. 4) الثقافة؛ 5) والروح. وجد أن برنامج التبادل الثقافي ترك انطباعاً إيجابياً عن الحياة كمسلم لدى جميع الشباب اليابانيين المسلمين المشاركين. وستكون هذه المواضيع مفيدة لأن نفهم كيف يمكن استكشاف مفهوم التعارف من خلال برامج متعددة الثقافات للمساعدة في تعزيز هوية أقليات الشباب المسلم.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

LIST OF FIGURES

LIST OF APPENDICES

LIST OF TRANSLITERATIONS

al-taᶜāruf	التعارف
tahāwur	تحاور
ta-ᶜarūf	تعرف
ta-ᶜāyush	تعايش
tasāmuh	تسامح
tabādul	تبادل
ta-'akhī	تأخ
daᶜwah	دعوه
daᶜī	دآعي
'ukhuwwah	أخوة
khayra 'ummah	خيرالأمة
al-taᶜayush al-silmīyy	التعايش السلمي
mad'u	مدعو
tawhīd	توحيد
al-ghayb	الغيب
wudhu'	وضوء
azan	أذان
takaful	تاكفول
jahiliyyah	جاهلية
'aqidah	عقيده
sīrah	سيرة
rahmatan lil 'alamīn	رحمة للعلامين
solat	صلاة
halal	حلال
hadith	حديث
imam	امام

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AS	'alaihissalaam
RA	radhi yāllahu anha
SAW	sallallahu 'alayhi wa sallam

LIST OF OPERATIONAL DEFINITIONS

adhan	call to prayer
'alaihissalaam	peace be upon him
al-ghayb	world of the unseen
Al-ta'āruf	a divine injunction, a command instructed by Allah to get to know one another
al-ta'ayush al-silmīyy	to coexist peacefully and in harmony; to live on respect and consideration
'aqidah	religious belief system
da'ī	a person who does *da'wah*
da'wah	to invite others to Islam
hadith	saying of the Prophet Muhammad SAW
halal	food or drink that is permissible to be consumed by Muslims
imam	religious leader
jahiliyyah	state of ignorance
khayra 'ummah	a community of excellence, the best people
mad'u	the person being called to Islam
radhi yāllāhu anha	May Allah be pleased with her
rahmatan lil 'alamīn	mercy to all creations
sallallahu 'alayhiwa sallam	peace and blessings of Allah be upon him
sīrah	study of the life journey of theProphet Muhammad SAW (peace be upon him)
solat	Muslim prayer
ta-'arūf	mutually knowing, mutually interacting
ta-'āyush	to coexist
ta-'akhī	to mutually associate as brother
tabādul	to exchange ideas
tahāwur	dialogue in the form of friendly discussion or conversation
takaful	Islamic insurance
tasāmuh	to tolerate each other's differences
tawhīd	belief in Oneness of God
'ukhuwwah	Love, respect, sincerity, consideration among Muslims
wudhu'	ablution

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Da'wah is a fundamental responsibility entrusted upon all Muslims. In implementing *da'wah* initiatives, we must be mindful of the *da'wah* audience. We must consider whether the philosophy, orientation and methodologies that we choose to apply do suit their needs. *Da'wah* must be carried out in the best possible manner to appeal to people's hearts and minds, as outlined by Allah in the following verse: "Invite to the way of your Lord with wisdom and good counsel. And argue with them in the best of manners. Surely, your Lord knows best the one who deviates from His path, and He knows best the ones who are on the right path." (Al-Qur'an. Al-Nahl. 16:125).

In the current digital era, *da'wah* is no longer limited to theoretical face-to-face preaching, whereby a preacher speaks directly to a group of people who sit and listen in a given space, for example, a classroom, seminar or workshop. Although this method of *da'wah* is still valid and is carried out actively, we must be open to other *da'wah* strategies. This thesis explores a *da'wah* strategy used in the "Cultural Exchange Programme" which allows Japanese Muslim youth to experience a culture that is different from theirs. It examines the Concept of *Al-ta'āruf* ingrained in the Cultural Exchange Programme through which Japanese Muslim youth immersed themselves in the Malaysian-Muslim culture.

We also take heed from the following verse: "Those who remember Allah standing and sitting and lying on their sides and reflect on the creation of the heavens and the earth: 'Our Lord! Thou hast not created this in vain! Glory be to Thee; save us then from the chastisement of the fire.'" (Al-Qur'an. Al-'Imrān. 3:191).

Such a verse implies that human learning is not necessarily accomplished in a classroom; indeed it can be facilitated by any other conducive environment, which include experiences of other cultures. By participating in the Cultural Exchange Programme, these Japanese youth may transform not only their worldview about Islam but also prepare them to become future leaders in their community. The objective is to achieve social and cultural transformation, to become part of a community of excellence, the best people known in the Qur'an as *khayra 'ummah* (Al-Qur'an. Al-'Imrān. 3:110).

In order to achieve the aspiration of a *khayra 'ummah*, the *da'ī* or preacher must also reach out to their *mad'u* or audience at local and global levels (Ismail, 2019). To accomplish the mission of generating the *khayra 'ummah* at the global level, the *da'ī* may face several challenges in reaching out to their *mad'u* from diverse cultural backgrounds. Needs and interests of the *mad'u* must be taken into account. Therefore, an understanding of intercultural communication strategy from the *da'wah* perspective is appropriate for carrying out the Cultural Exchange Programme.

The concept of intercultural *da'wah* is defined as "an act of effective communication pertinent to the matters of heart, mind and emotion" (Sharif & Shamsudin, 2017). Muslims living in different nations and tribes inherit unique traditions and legacies, particular ways of thinking and behaving from their ancestors. Hence, through the lens of intercultural *da'wah*, the *da'ī* looks for things that are common between themselves and the *mad'u,* which could help them in enhancing

their *da'wah* strategy to a diverse group of people (Sharif & Shamsudin, 2017). This thesis is not focusing on the *da'ī* experience, but rather on the Cultural Exchange Programme as a *da'wah* strategy intended to the Japanese Muslim youth. Thus, the understanding of intercultural communication from *da'wah* perspective is relevant to this thesis.

This thesis aims at 1) analysing the Concept of *Al-ta'āruf* in the Cultural Exchange Programme ; 2) examining the experiences of Japanese Muslim youth enrolled in the Cultural Exchange Programme (CEP); and 3) identifying the reasons for the impact of the Cultural Exchange Programme on the Japanese Muslim youth.

This thesis discusses the issues of representation and challenges faced by the Japanese Muslim youth living in a Muslim minority culture and in learning about Islam. The study addresses the historical, socio-cultural, economic, religious and political contexts of Muslim life, focusing on issues related to migration and youth as well as collective efforts to preserve Islam and the Muslim identity and Islamophobia within the Japanese non-Muslim society. Historically the Japanese have no particular interest towards the notion of God and religion. To them, God and religion are neither important nor needed to lead life successfully. Life to the Japanese is a focus on materialism; do anything that makes one look good and feel good now as long as they live within the boundaries and ethics of Japanese customs.

A number of studies in the nineties and early till mid 2000s analysed the state of Islam and Muslims in Japan. These studies found that widespread syncretism (adopting parts of religious beliefs and/or practices that they like and discarding what they do not like e.g. celebrating Christmas without becoming Christians), general indifference towards religion (not concerned about the concept of God and/or religion), educational policies in Japanese schools that strictly do not allow for any kind of religious teachings

or activities within the syllabus and school grounds, absence of Islamic education, high social expectations to look and behave like a Japanese, and Islamophobia (proven by leaked documents) are challenges that every Japanese Muslim youth face. In addition, non-Japanese ethnic Muslim groups who do *da'wah* but are not proficient in Japanese are not able to reach out to these Japanese Muslim youth either.

Da'wah initiatives in mosques in Japan deserve special mention. It is true that some mosques e.g. the Tokyo Mosque do organise educational programmes for Japanese children and youth, but the Japanese Muslim population are scattered throughout Japan. Many Japanese Muslim families live far away from mosques; such classes are simply not accessible to them. A Japanese Muslim child or youth might find himself or herself the only Muslim in his or her community or school.

Empirical studies have proven that Japanese youth respond positively to intercultural experiences, for example those of Costas & Singco (2016) and Webeck et. al. (2019). Such outcomes suggest that intercultural experiences is a viable alternative to engage Japanese youth, whether they are Muslim or not. Yet, the study of how to engage the Japanese Muslim youth within the intercultural *da'wah* context, however, appears to be under-explored. This is where this research comes in; to determine how experiencing life in an intercultural setting can positively impact how the Japanese Muslim youth view Islam as a way of life.

There are three compelling reasons for choosing a cultural exchange programme for the study of *da'wah* to Japanese Muslim youth.

First, Allah commands mankind to explore the intercultural approach as a means of reaching out to others, both Muslims and non-Muslims, for *da'wah* purposes (Al-Qur'an. Al-Hujurat. 49:13).

Second, the Prophet Muhammad SAW himself was the forerunner, the pioneer in adopting the intercultural approach as a long-term strategy in *da'wah*, through the *Ansār-Muhajirin* relationship, a strategy which promises much benefit to Muslims worldwide if we were to study and put it into practice (Nasor, 2018). Thus, the Prophet SAW himself successfully applied the concept of intercultural *da'wah* based on *Al-ta'āruf* between the *Ansār* and *Muhajirin* following his migration to Madinah (Anas & Adinugraha, 2017).

Third, documented narratives of dynamic, eminent and committed Japanese Muslim pioneers, such as Umar Mita, an ethnic Japanese revert and the first Muslim to translate Arabic Qur'an into Japanese (Marimoto, 1980), Sulaiman Akira Hamanaka, an ethnic Japanese revert who built a mosque at Niihama (Japanese Muslims, 2013) and Hajj Kyoichiro Sugimoto, presently Chairman of the Chiba Islamic Cultural Centre showed that personal experiences through intercultural interactions with practising Muslims have the potential to leave positive, lasting impressions on the *mad'u*, particularly among ethnic Japanese.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

Muslims are a rare minority in Japan. Many Japanese Muslim youth choose not to practice Islam due to a lack of proper education in Islamic subjects, strong peer influence and huge societal pressure to conform (Mutiara, 2017). The environment and peer influence in Japan are such that these youth do not find the idea of being Muslim appealing to them in the long run. Consequently, by the time they become adolescents, the Japanese Muslim youth are susceptible to develop an identity confusion, as they feel that opting for a life based on Islam will motivate others to see them negatively. Identity confusion might remain with children right up until

adolescence and might even become more complex in adulthood (Suleiman, 2017). In addition, the growing Islamophobia in Japan has exacerbated the issue (Ahmed & Matthes, 2016); increasingly, Japanese Muslim youth felt that choosing to live and behave as Muslims in the public sphere e.g. in school, might trigger other Japanese to treat them less positively.

From the Islamic point of view, given these prevailing conditions, the lives of the Japanese Muslim youth are impacted negatively. If nothing is done, there is a high risk that the Japanese Muslim youth will view Islam as a burden and a negative influence in their lives and will declare themselves as non-Muslims before or by the time they reach adulthood. An alternative *da'wah* initiative whereby they are removed from the majority non-Muslim Japanese culture to immerse in a multicultural Muslim majority environment, in which they observe and experience first-hand what it means to live as practising Muslims, is needed to help grow the confidence of the Japanese Muslim youth to adopt Islam as their way of life. The Cultural Exchange Programme is considered because previous researches suggest that Japanese youth respond well to such programmes i.e. those of Costas & Singco (2016), Kobayashi & Viswat (2015) and Webeck et. al. (2019).

The present study acts as an intervention to open up the Japanese Muslim youth's understanding and perception of Islam and Muslims, by exposing them to a different set of living conditions and circumstances, in which they experience life within a practising Muslim family in a multicultural society. This approach is unlike the usual approach of theoretical classroom learning, in which students sit and listen to the teacher during lessons.

The present study aims to determine if a cultural exchange experience may contribute towards strengthening the confidence of Muslim minority youth. Although the present study involved Japanese Muslim youth, if it is proven to be successful, it would be worth considering for other minority Muslim youth. In other words, the present study intends to find out if religiosity can be enhanced through the intercultural approach.

The present study, the Japan-Malaysia Youth Cultural Exchange Programme 2019, thus forms part of the broader scholarship on the Muslim identity formation of second generation Japanese Muslim youth. It exposes the second generation Muslim youth to first-hand intercultural experiences living with host Muslim families in a majority Muslim country, with the purpose of starting a long-term relationship between the youth and the host family, so that these youth gain insights on how practising Muslims live based on the values of Islam.

Equally important, the intercultural approach applied in this research is experiential in nature and this sets it apart from other *da'wah* initiatives carried out by Muslim NGOs in Japan and Malaysia. The intercultural approach is hoped to complement the theoretical formal instruction that is usually applied in educating youth about Islam, which usually takes place in a classroom or lecture hall. It is hoped that these intercultural experiences would challenge any doubts these youth had about Islam, thereby strengthening their identity as Muslims. At the very least, the experiences throughout this research is hoped to plant the seed of positivity towards Islam in the hearts of its participants. It is also hoped that, upon completion of this programme, these youth would continue to enrich themselves with accurate understanding of Islam, to benefit the Japanese communities they are a part of.

1.2 Research Questions

This research sought to answer the following questions:

1. what is the function of the Cultural Exchange Programme to internalise the Concept of *Al-ta'āruf*?;
2. how does the concept shape the experiences of the Japanese Muslim youth enrolled in the Cultural Exchange Programme?; and
3. what are the reasons for the impact of the Cultural ExchangeProgramme on the Japanese Muslim youth?

1.3 Objectives of The Study

This research aimed:

1. to describe the functions of the Cultural Exchange Programme;
2. to explain the experiences of Japanese Muslim youth enrolled in the Cultural Exchange Programme; and
3. to examine the impact of the Cultural Exchange Programme on the Japanese Muslim youth and therefore, the suitability of the *Al-ta'āruf* Concept for future *da'wah* programmes.

This research hoped to elaborate on how the Cultural Exchange Programme worksin instilling the beauty of Islam in the hearts and minds of the Japanese Muslim youth. The research also hoped to support the *da'wah* efforts in the Land of The Rising Sun, Japan, specifically through the Cultural Exchange Programme, whereby Japanese Muslim youth became part of the Malaysian Muslim families hosting them. Through this programme, host parents were carefully identified and matched with visiting students. By participating in this programme, visiting students were given the

opportunity to understand and experience cultural aspects of a Muslim majority country, gain insights and knowledge on various aspects, develop basic leadership skills, and establish local network.

1.4 The Significance of the Study

The subject of Muslim identity formation of second generation Japanese Muslim youth has not received significant attention from researchers. Most second generation Japanese Muslim children were born and raised in a mixed marriage between a born Muslim non-Japanese man married to an ethnic Japanese woman who converted to Islam upon marriage. In many cases, these parents were unable to provide a good grounding on Islam in the early years. This is because, when the young child was born, it is usually the Japanese mother who would look after him or her while the father was at work. Being new to Islam, the Japanese mother typically found it difficult to teach the basics of Islam to the child. A good Islamic education, a basic understanding of Islam is key to raising Japanese Muslim youth who are clear on their identity as Muslim and Japanese. Hence, the present study is an attempt to reach out to them.

The present study explores the outcomes of experiential, intercultural learning amongst the second generation Japanese Muslim youth. Human learning can be facilitated by a conducive environment, not necessarily accomplished in a classroom. Effective human learning can help humanity achieve social and cultural transformation, to establish a community of excellence, the best people, *khayra 'ummah* (Al-Qur'an. Al-'Imrān. 3:110). A community of excellence, the best people, *khayra 'ummah*, can only benefit society at large and to achieve this, we need to work on one youth at a time.

The intercultural *da'wah* approach is not new in the Muslim world. The Prophet SAW was the first to introduce it when he migrated from Makkah to Madinah (Anas & Adinugraha, 2017). Although the *Muhajirin* from Makkah and the *Ansār* from Madinah were Arabs then, they originated from different tribes. Through his leadership and wisdom, the Prophet SAW navigated these differences, to pull the different tribes together to form a solid Muslim community. Parents and educators who play active roles in raising the future generation must take heed from the Qur'anic injunction that motivates us to learn from others who are different from us, in line with what the Prophet had uniquely accomplished. This discussion will be elaborated further in the Conceptual Framework section.

1.5 Scope of The Study

In this Cultural Exchange Programme, the researcher carried out a qualitative study in which nine Japanese Muslim high school and university students aged 15-22 years old stayed with their respective Muslim host families in Klang Valley for a period of eight days. Throughout the eight days, the students were required to visit certain identified locations and fully participate in activities which had been especially designed to create experiential learning about Islam and what it means to be Muslim.

The host parents accompanied the students to all locations in this research. To facilitate communication, four fulltime interpreters were provided by the researcher. The Japanese Muslim students and host families were expected to interact closely on a dailybasis, to develop a close relationship over this period. Throughout all events, the researcher was present to observe how things worked out. At the end of the programme, the researcher collected direct responses i.e. verbal and online, from the youth to see if the results match the expected outcomes.

The duration of the Cultural Exchange Programme was set for eight days as this was the length of time considered acceptable by both the Japanese Muslim parents and the Malaysian host parents. The host parents had to pick the Japanese Muslim youth upfrom the airport the day they landed in Malaysia on day one, dedicate every single dayof this research to accompany the students wherever they went, as well as ensure they were taken care of at home, before sending them back to the airport on day eight, the day of their departure back to Japan. According to Chiba Islamic Cultural Centre (CICC), the official organiser, it was not possible to extend the duration of the programme as the Japanese students needed one week to be in Japan before the next school semester began.

This study dealt with students whose main language was Japanese. Japan is a highly homogeneous country and at the time of this study, Japanese students only start to learn English in high school. Most Japanese only speak Japanese and are not fluent in English. The programme relied on four Malaysian interpreters who were fluent in Japanese. The CICC representative who was present throughout the programme also assisted in translating and interpreting where needed.

The host parents were based in Kuala Lumpur, where most locations in this research were. This was to facilitate logistics, as the further away the host parents were, the more time and energy would have been required to ferry the students to and from the locations in this research. Each day was a packed day. The students needed to get home early enough so that they could get a good night's sleep and wake up early the next day.

The maximum number of Japanese youth considered was no more than 20 males and females. The number was kept small since all activities were group activities, joinedby host parents and family members. Each Japanese youth was accompanied by

at least one host parent and one other Malaysian family member. This meant, for a maximum 20 Japanese Muslim participants, the total number of people in the group would have been 60. A larger number of participants would have been difficult to handle for briefings, games, transportation and accommodation.

1.6 Limitations of The Study

The Cultural Exchange Programme had several limitations. The researcher had taken steps to ensure that these limitations were handled and dealt with effectively to justify this research.

The first limitation was related to generalisability due to the small sample size. However, based on discussions with the official organiser, CICC, it was mutually agreed to keep the number of participants small, since this was a pilot project. The aim was not to generalise the findings, but to learn from this research if the Cultural Exchange Programme was effective in raising the participants' confidence as Muslims. If the results were positive, it was hoped that future research can conduct similar studies to provide more evidence to support what would be presented in this study.

The second limitation had to do with language. The programme relied on four fulltime Malaysian interpreters who were fluent in Japanese and English. All communications were translated into Japanese or English as needed. Naturally, some information transfer was lost in translation due to specific nuances in language and culture. However, this issue was minimised by the presence of the CICC coordinator who was proficient in Japanese and English, and who was present throughout the programme. If one of the Malaysian interpreters missed the meaning in Japanese, the CICC coordinator corrected it immediately. There were also times when the CICC coordinator himself acted as the interpreter.

The third limitation was the possibility of the Japanese youth holding back in sharing their experiences, particularly what they found to be less appealing, simply because they were too polite to express it. However, the Japanese youth were only required to submit their responses after they had returned to Japan. Hence, they were unlikely to express opinions that were inconsistent with their experiences.

The fourth limitation was tied to the researcher's interpretations of the data. Every researcher has his or her own biases, and the researcher was no exception. Therefore, the researcher was extra careful in perceiving things, especially culturally, so as to minimise personal biases from seeping into the data analysis itself.

The fifth limitation was the researcher's lack of background in ethnography itself, as she was still new in this field. Much of her earlier background had been in the technical sciences. Nonetheless, the researcher had undertaken her level best to make this project a success throughout its planning, management, execution and findings.

1.7 Conceptual Framework of The Cultural Exchange Programme

This thesis adopts an intercultural *da'wah* approach rooted in the tradition of Islamic studies. The Concept of *Al-ta'āruf* is a divine injunction, a command instructed by Allah: "O mankind! We created you from a single (pair) of a male and a female, and made you into nations and tribes, that you may know each other (not that you may despise each other). Verily the most honoured of you in the sight of Allah is (he who is) the most righteous of you. And Allah has full knowledge and is well acquainted (with all things)" (Al-Qur'an: Al-Hujurat. 49:13). This is the concept that is applied in the Cultural Exchange Program. Implicit in the *Al-ta'āruf* Concept are the following seven elements, along with their corresponding primary *Naqli* sources.

1. *Tahāwur* (dialogue):

   a. Allah states in the Qur'an the importance of dialogue when the need arises: "Call unto the way of thy Lord with wisdom and goodly exhortation. And dispute with them in the most virtuous manner. Surely thy Lord is He Who knows best those who stray from His way, and He knows best the rightly guided." (Al-Qur'an. Al-Nahl. 16:125). This is a clear Qur'anic injunction validating dialogue between two or more parties, and applying a principled, high-minded approach, even if a disagreement breaks out.

   b. Dialogue between the Prophet SAW and the *Ansār* during the Second *Aqabah* Pledge, the pledge of support from 72 Muslims of Yathrib to the Prophet SAW in the 13th year of Prophethood. In this pledge, the *Ansār* of Madinah enquired about the related terms and conditions, to which the Prophet SAW responded: 1) To listen and obey in all sets of circumstances. 2) To spend in plenty as well as scarcity. 3) To enjoin good and forbid evil. 4) In Allah's service, you will fear the censure of none. 5) To defend me in case I seek your help, and exclude me from anything you exclude yourself, your spouses and children from. And if you observe those precepts, Paradise is in store for you. A man by the name of 'Abul Haitham interjected, saying, "O Prophet of Allah! Between us and the Jews, there are agreements which we would then sever. If Allah grants you power and victory, should we expect that you would not leave us, and join the ranks of your people (the *Quraish*)?" The Prophet SAW smiled and answered: "Nay, it would never be; your blood will be my blood. In life and death I will be with you and you with me. I will fight whom you fight and I will make peace with those with whom you make peace." Thus,

dialogue and negotiations between the new Muslims and the Prophet SAW sealed a clear understanding between the two parties (Al-Mubarakpuri, 1996).

c. Dialogue between Ja'far, the eloquent representative of the Muslim emigrants and Negus (Najashi), King of Abyssinia (Ethiopia). The Muslims had fled to Abyssinia to escape persecution in Makkah but the *Quraish,* who could not stand the thought of Muslims finding a safe home, sent 'Amr bin Al-'As and 'Abdullah bin Abi Rabi'a (before these two men embraced Islam) to persuade the King to return the Muslims to them. The two men argued that the Muslims had abandoned the religion of their ancestors. The King then summoned the Muslims to explain the teachings of Islam to him and his court. Ja'far bin Abi Talib stood up to speak the truth and addressed the King as such: "O King! We were plunged in the depth of ignorance and barbarism; we adored idols, we lived in unchastity, we ate the dead bodies, and we spoke abominations, we disregarded every feeling of humanity, and the duties of hospitality and neighbourhood were neglected; we knew no law but that of the strong, when Allah raised among us a man, of whose birth, truthfulness, honesty and purity we were aware; and he called to the Oneness of Allah, and taught us not to associate anything with Him. He forbade us the worship of idols; and he enjoined us to speak the truth, to be faithful to our trusts, to be merciful and to regard the rights of the neighbours and kith and kin; he forbade us to speak evil of women, or to eat the substance of orphans; he ordered us to fly from the vices, and to abstain from evil; to offer prayers, to render alms, and to observe fast. We have believed in him, we have accepted his teachings and

his injunctions to worship Allah, and not to associate anything with Him, and we have allowed what He has allowed, and prohibited what He has prohibited. For this reason, our people have risen against us, have persecuted us in order to make us forsake the worship of Allahand return to the worship of idols and other abominations. They havetortured and injured us, until finding no safety among them, we have come to your country, and hope you will protect us from oppression."King Negus, fascinated by Ja'far's words, asked Ja'far to recite a partof Allah's revelation. Ja'far then recited the early part of Surah Maryam, which tells the story of the births of prophets Yahya (John) and Isa (Jesus), and how Maryam was fed. So moved was the King that tears rolled down his cheeks and wet his beard. The King said, "It seems as if these words and those which were revealed to Jesus are the rays of the light which have radiated from the same source."Thus, the King then addressed the *Quraish* envoys, "I am afraid, I cannot give you back these refugees. They are free to live and worship in my realm as they please." (Al-Mubarakpuri, 1996 & Lings, 2007).

d. Kurucan & Erol (2012) affirmed that in Islam, the concept of *tahāwur* (dialogue) is intertwined with the concept of *ta-'arūf* (mutually knowing, mutually interacting). For Muslims, the Qur'an is the first and primary source of reference to guide us how to think and behave, including the idea of establishing communications to build positive, strong and mutually beneficial relationships through *tahāwur* and *ta-'arūf* . The root word of *tahāwur* is *hiwār*, meaning a situation in which two or more parties exchange speech and discuss to express ideas and get responses to

accomplish common goals. *Tahāwur* (Dialogue) is essential to achieve mutual understanding and respect amongst all parties and sidestep potential conflict due to differences in opinion (Kurucan & Erol, 2012).

2. *Ta-'arūf* (*mutually* knowing, mutually interacting):
    a. Allah says, "O mankind! We created you from a single (pair) of a male and a female, and made you into nations and tribes, that you may know each other (not that you may despise each other). Verily the most honoured of you in the sight of Allah is (he who is) the mostrighteous of you. And Allah has full knowledge and is well acquainted (with all things)." (Al-Qur'an. Al-Hujurat. 49:13)
    b. Narrated Abu Hurairah (may Allah be pleased with him): that the Messenger of Allah SAW said: "Allah has removed the pride of *Jahiliyyah* from you and boasting about lineage. (A person is either) a pious believer or a miserable sinner, and the people are the children of Adam, and Adam is from dirt." (Hadith. Jami' at-Tirmidhi. Chapters on Virtues. The Book of Virtues. sunnah.com). Thus, based on this hadith, no one is superior over another in race or ethnic background; we are not to live in segregated communities but to interact with and support one another.
    c. Mhd Sarif (2019) maintained that the term *Al-ta'āruf* in Al-Hujurat:49:13 is often quoted as meaning "to know each other" from the root word *ta-'arūf* (knowing). *Ta-'arūf* is one of the main components of '*ukhuwwah*, which can be interpreted as strategic bonding (Mhd Sarif, 2019). Further, "This concept of *ta-'arūf* leads to a deep and true meaning of brotherhood or '*ukhuwwah* in Islam. Brotherhood in this context means love, respect, sincerity, sympathy and mercy for those who share the

Islamic belief. . . The foundation of this brotherhood is not a mere relationship joined by blood or race, but formed with the rope of *`aqidah."* (Ahmad, 2012).

3. *Ta-'āyush* (to *coexist*):

   a. Allah wants us humans to coexist peacefully despite our differences:". . . If Allah had so willed, He would have made you a single people, but (His plan is) to test you in what He has given you: so strive as ina race in all virtues . . ." (Al-Qur'an. Al-Mā'idah. 5:48)

   b. The following verse contains the same message: "O mankind! Reverence your Guardian-Lord, Who created you from a single person, created, of like nature, his mate, and from them twain scattered (like seeds) countless men and women; - reverence Allah through Whom you demand your mutual (rights), and (reverence) the wombs (that bore you): for Allah ever watches over you." (Al- Qur'an. Al-Nisā'. 4:1)

   c. Al-Tuwaijiri (1998, cited in Ramli et. al., 2018) divides coexistence into three levels namely (i) politics and ideology; (ii) economics; and (iii) religion, culture and civilization. The first stage i.e. politics and ideology is the cooperation or coexistence between two countries to achieve global security. The second level involves the relationship between the government and the people through legal, economic and business ties. The third level carries the meaning of social communication between human beings of different religions, cultures and civilizations with the primary purpose of creating universal peace and stability so that human beings can live with a full sense of brotherhood and help each other on things that bring good to human beings as a whole. The second and third levels have

actually been practiced by the Prophet SAW and his companions shortly after the establishment of the first Islamic state in Madinah (AlTuwaijiri, 1998, cited in Ramli et. al., 2018).

4. *Tasāmuh (*tolerate each other's differences):

   a. Allah forbids us from fighting against those who respect the Islamic way of living: "Allah forbids you not with regards to those who fight you not for (your) Faith nor drive you out of your homes, from dealing kindly and justly with them: for Allah loves those who are just." (Al-Qur'an. Al-Mumtahinah. 60:8).

   b. The Prophet SAW is the role model for tolerance. Narrated Anas bin Malik: A bedouin urinated in the mosque and the people ran to (beat) him. Allah's Messenger SAW said, "Do not interrupt his urination (i.e. let him finish)." Then the Prophet SAW asked for a tumbler of water and poured the water over the place of urine. (*Sahih Al- Bukhari*. Good Manners and Form. *Kitab Al-Adab*. The Book of Literature. sunnah.com)

   c. The contemporary thinker Dr Muhammad 'Imarah **(**2014**)** asserted that with the advent of Islam, humanity reached a new, distinguished level of tolerance which had never been seen prior. The term *Tasāmuh* interpreted comprehensively encompasses flexibility, leniency and generosity in numerous areas and concerns, neither expecting nor hoping for compensation or payment ('Imarah, 2014). *Tasāmuh* also carries the meaning of "mutual tolerance and mutual acceptance of religious and cultural diversities" (Khambali et. al, 2017, cited by Abdul Ghani & Awang, 2020).

5. *Tabādul* (interchange/exchange of ideas):

a. During the Battle of the *Ahzāb* (Trench) in the fifth Hijri year, known as one of the most important battles in the early history of Islam, the Prophet SAW led the Muslims to adopt a strategy that had never been used before; trenches were dug as defensive lines to protect Madinah from the attacks of the polytheists. In this unprecedented strategy introduced by Salman Al-Farisi, a Companion of the Prophet of Persian origin, each group of ten Muslims was entrusted to dig forty yards. As a result of this ingenious strategy, the polytheists failed to overcome the Muslims (Al-Mubarakpuri, 1996).

b. Eminent Muslim scholars down the ages have shown how important it is to interchange ideas with others for the sake of a better world; they generously contributed towards the well-being of humanity by willingly sharing their discoveries with Muslims and non-Muslims. For example, the twelfth century physician Ibn-An-Nafīs challenged the theory by Galen regarding blood circulation. Ibn-An-Nafīs came up with the idea that blood circulated between chambers of the heart and the lungs, and his work was a forerunner to Harvey's scholarly findings, concerning blood circulation in the human body. Al-Razi (known as Razes in the West) who excelled in his talent and capacity of observation, wrote 184 books based on his practice as a doctor. A book by Al-Razi, "Treatise on Smallpox and Measles", was translated into different languages - Latin, English and other European languages, and “went through forty editions between the fifteenth and nineteenth century” (Turner, 1995, p.135, cited in Faruqi, 2006). In fact Al-Razi introduced ideas concerning human behaviour and mental illnesses, making him a pioneer in the psychology discipline. By doing so,

he helped expunge beliefs in demons and witchcraft tied to such diseases in the Christian populations (Faruqi, 2006).

6. *Ta-'akhī* (to associate as brother):

   a. Muslims are meant to support one another regardless of their background. Allah says, "The Believers are but a single Brotherhood: so make peace and reconciliation between your two (contending) brothers; and fear Allah, that you may receive mercy."(Al-Qur'an. Al-Hujurat. 49:10).

   b. Narrated by Abu Hurayrah: The Prophet SAW said: "The believer is the believer's mirror, and the believer is the believer's brother who guards him against loss and protects him when he is absent." (*Sunan Abi Dawud*. General Behaviour. *Kitab Al-Adab*. The Book of Literature. sunnah.com)

   c. Upon migration to Madinah, the Prophet SAW paired up the Muslims arriving from Makkah (*Muhajirin*) with the Muslims in Madinah (*Ansār*), thus introducing the *Ansār-Muhajirin* Relationship. As locals, the *Ansār* were asked and expected to assist the *Muhajirin* as best they could. As narrated by Anas: "When 'Abdur-Rahman bin 'Auf came to us, Allah's Apostle made a bond of fraternity between him and Sad bin Ar-Rabi' who was a rich man. Sad said, 'The *Ansār* know that I am the richest of all of them, so I will divide my property into two parts between me and you, and I have two wives; see which of the two you like so that I may divorce her and you can marry her after she becomes lawful to you by her passing the prescribed period (i.e. *'Idda*) of divorce. 'Abdur Rahman said, 'May Allah bless you and your family (i.e. wives) for you.' (But 'Abdur-Rahman went to the market) and did not return on that day except with some grains of dried yogurt and butter. He went on trading just a few days till he came to

Allah's Apostle bearing the traces of yellow scent over his clothes. Allah's Apostle asked him, 'What is this scent?' He replied, 'I have married a woman from the *Ansār*.' Allah's Apostle asked, 'How much *Mahr* have you given?' He said, 'A date-stone weight of gold or a golden date-stone.' The Prophet SAW said, 'Arrange a marriage banquet even with a sheep.'"(Sahih Bukhari, iium.edu.my)

d. Dr Hammudah Abdalati asserts that brotherhood in Islam is founded upon "an unshakeable belief in the Oneness and Universality of God". Allah created all living things including men and women, He is the Provider, the Lord, the Sustainer. Before Allah, everyone is equal, nobody is superior because of social status or race (Abdalati, 1975).

7. *Al-ta'ayush Al-silmīyy* (to coexist peacefully and in harmony; to live on respect and consideration):

a. Allah says, "Let there be no compulsion in religion: Truth stands out clear from Error: whoever rejects Evil and believes in Allah has grasped the most trustworthy handhold, that never breaks. And Allah knows and hears all things." (Al-Qur'an. Al-Baqarah. 2:256)

b. When the Prophet SAW migrated to Madinah, he was aware of the discord between different tribes. He made a pact of mutual obligation between the Muslims and the Jews; essentially forming and acknowledging them as one community of believers while simultaneously recognising the differences between the two religions. This meant that if a Jew had been mistreated, he must be assisted by both Muslims and Jews. Similarly, if a Muslim had been mistreated, both Muslims and Jews should help him. If war breaks out against the polytheists, the Muslims and Jews should join

forces as a single unit. If a misunderstanding occurs, it must be referred to the Prophet SAW (Al-Mubarakpuri, 1996).

c. According to Shaykh Abdullah bin Bayyah, respect, consideration and acceptance are needed to resolve conflicts due to diversity and plurality. Diversity is a source of richness and beauty. For example, Allah made human beings different in terms of language, race and ethnicity, and these differences should be seen and valued as manifestations of Allah's power and not be manipulated to adverse ends. Wisely managed diversity will result in higher productivity forall parties concerned (Shaykh Abdullah bin Bayyah, cited by Fadzil, 2018).

According to Siddiq Fadzil (2018), following World War II, issues related to "peaceful coexistence" or *Al-ta'ayush Al-silmīyy* became a global concern. Successfully managing communities with diverse backgrounds, needs and interests is critical if humanity were to achieve peace and harmony in the long run, instead of existing in a state of constant conflict. Siddiq Fadzil (2019) posited that the seven elements described above may be combined and outlined in the form of seven steps shown below to achieve a state of *rahmatan-lil-'ālamīn,* in which individuals and communities may achieve living together peacefully and harmoniously, among each other. This state of peace and harmony would also create an environment conducive to create internal peace and harmony within the hearts of individuals residing within these communities.

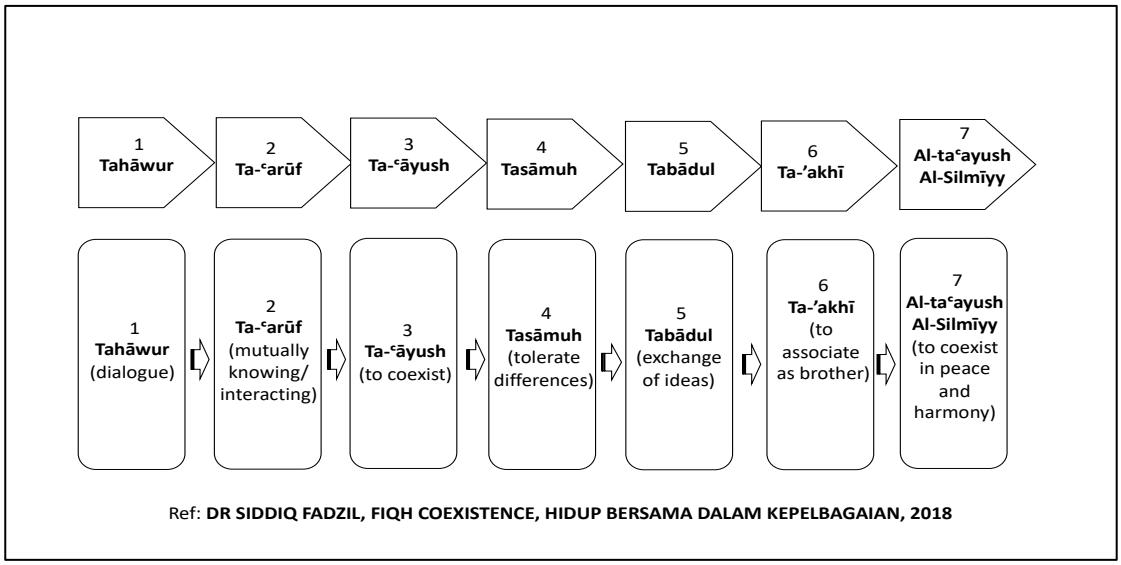

Figure 1.1: The Concept of *Al-Ta'āruf*

Within the context of the Cultural Exchange Programme, the stages applied are as follows:

1. *Tahāwur* (dialogue): The Cultural Exchange Programme would kick off with a dialogue between the Malaysian side (the researcher and her spouse as co-organisers) and the Japanese side (Chiba Islamic Cultural Centre as official organiser).
2. *Ta-'arūf* (mutually knowing, mutually interacting): Upon arrival, the Japanese students would be introduced to their host parents and other family members, marking their week-long journey in which they would continue to communicate and interact with their host parents and other family members.
3. *Ta-'āyush* (to coexist): Over the course of the week, the Japanese Muslimyouth would learn to coexist with each other and their host parents and families under the same roof.

4. *Tasāmuh (*tolerate each other's differences): The Japanese Muslim youth and host parents and other family members would have to tolerate each other's living habits.
5. *Tabādul (*exchange of ideas): Throughout the week, the Japanese Muslimyouth, despite language issues, would communicate their thoughts and ideas to each other, and to their host parents and family members, and vice-versa with the help of interpreters.
6. *Ta-'akhī* (to associate as brother): The Malaysian host parents and other family members would be treating the Japanese Muslim youth with kindness and care to ensure that the Japanese Muslim youth feel welcomeand appreciated, to sow the seeds of a lifelong relationship of brotherhood(*ukhuwwah*).
7. *Al-ta'ayush Al-silmīyy* (to live in peace and harmony, with mutual respect and consideration): By the end of the programme, it is hoped that the Japanese Muslim youth would feel accepted by their new host families and more comfortable of their Muslim identity. This positive outcome would need to be verified by their feedback. If this indeed happens, the new-found confidence is hoped to create peace in their hearts, motivate them to practice as Muslims, and enable them to contribute positively in the Japanese community where they reside.

The Cultural Exchange Programme is about building human-to-human relationships, in particular, planting the seeds of a successful long-term relationship between host parents and incoming Japanese youth. *Ta'arūf,* root word for *Al-ta'āruf ,* isabout taking the time and initiative to understand each other at a deeper level, where host parents and families and Japanese Muslim youth take the time to understand each

other, especially their needs and interests. This is the concept which the present study sought to emulate.

How the Prophet SAW dealt with men, women and children in his daily interactions, what he did and said to win over their hearts and minds, provided the foundation for this research. The words the Prophet SAW said and his behaviours are the very things that this research aimed to adopt to make the *Al-ta'arūf* Concept and therefore, the Cultural Exchange Programme, meaningful with lasting positive consequences. It is an irony that today, people lead such busy lives, we have a great number of online friends whom we barely know. These superficial friends we acquire instantly, without any *ta'arūf* process, can we really call them our friends? Even at places where we work or study, the most we do might be "Hi" and "Bye", in a continuous attempt to do more and achieve more.

But "Hi" and "Bye" was not the Prophet's style of interacting with human beings. The Prophet's best of manners, his winning personality stood out among family, friends and enemies. Apart from being honest and trustworthy, his humility and kindness are legendary. Despite his growing command, power and influence, he never distanced himself from people, regardless of their background.

The Prophet's demeanour never changed. He was the busiest person, none of us can challenge this fact. He took the time to visit the sick. The Prophet always made the other person feel important and respected. For example, he was said to never withdraw his palm from another man's palm, and would only turn after the other person had turned (Stanley-Lane Pool, 2000, cited in Sheikh, 2013). Particularly with the youth, the Prophet SAW was aware of their potential. He took the time to listen, and to respond wisely. He was aware of human nature and human limitations, but made sure he did not make anyone feel small for that matter, by showing interest in their concerns.

At the most basic level, *da'wah* is about clarifying what is true and what is false in the hearts and minds of people. In the Cultural Exchange Programme, it is about touching the Japanese youth's soul and awakening their conscience. The Prophet SAW is a true example how to achieve this. For instance, two men came to the Prophet SAW to resolve a dispute that occurred between them. The Prophet SAW told them both, "I am a human being like you and when you ask for my judgement on an issue, and perhaps one of you is more eloquent and expressive in presenting his case, I may judge in his favour because of this, although the right may be with his counterpart. If I do this, I am giving him a piece of the hellfire and he is free to take it or leave it." (agreed upon, cited in Beshir & Beshir, 2007).

The Prophet SAW also used reason and logic when dealing with youth. When a young man came to the Prophet SAW asking for permission to fornicate, the Prophet SAW asked him, "Would you like it for your mother?" The man said, "No." The Prophet SAW asked him, "Would you like it for your sister?" The man replied, "No." The Prophet SAW asked him, "Would you like it for your aunt?" He replied, "No." The Prophet SAW asked him, "Would you like it for your cousin?" The man said, "No." Then, the Prophet SAW told him, "Likewise, other people would also not like it for their female relatives." And he put his hand on the young man's chest and prayed that Allah grant him chastity (narrated by Ahmad, cited in Beshir & Beshir, 2007). Here, the Prophet SAW took the time to make the young man feel understood, a very important psychological approach that, in turn, made the man chose to listen to the Prophet SAW. This is what *ta-'arūf* is all about. It is taking the time to develop a deeper understanding and appreciation of the other person. The Prophet SAW understood it takes time, patience and perseverance to develop children and youth. This is the kind of attitude that the Malaysian host parents must adopt towards the Japanese Muslim

youth, treating them with acceptance, kindness and understanding, addressing their concerns and questions patiently. If we were to cause a change long term, we must take the time to develop one youth at a time.

The word *ta'arūf* embedded in the expression of *Al-ta'āruf* in Surah Al-Hujurat:49:13 implies mutual understanding, a main goal humanity should all strive for (Mualla Selçuk, 2017). The *Al-ta'arūf* Concept can and should be applied as an intercultural *da'wah* strategy for both Muslims and non-Muslims. The Qur'an is precise. One will not find anything frivolous inside its sacred texts. This means, if the Qur'an mentions something, the matter must be worth looking into. There are substantial gains for humanity if everyone were to take the time to know one another better, regardless of creed, culture or ethnic background. Start with the right intentions, observe, talk to the right people, and then reflect. Not only will we learn the best of the best in terms of raising the future generation, we will also learn from one another's shortcomings, mistakes and oversights in terms of values, attitudes and behaviours, and sidestep them. The Concept of *Al-ta'āruf* , translated into action, can promote greater understanding and respect between peoples of different backgrounds.

Today, we witness widespread disunity among different factions of Muslims. There is a need among Muslims to look deeper into the meaning of *ta'arūf,* the root word for *Al-ta'āruf* , and the Concept of *Al-ta'āruf* itself, both between Muslims of different ethnic groups, as well as between Muslims and non-Muslims in general. If we were to look deeper, *ta'arūf* implies making real effort to spend time together, appreciating someone's culture and customs, challenges, issues, hobbies, likes and dislikes, which builds opportunities for mutual respect and understanding. Among Muslims, this act of *ta'arūf* would bring a stronger sense of brotherhood, while between

Muslims and non-Muslims, it could create appreciation for one another, and therefore, harmony in humanity (Omar, 2003).

In terms of Muslim and non-Muslim relationships, efforts should be made beyond creating tolerance, which limits the expectations between the kind of harmony we could establish between peoples of different ethnic and religious backgrounds, in the longer run. Rather than merely "tolerating" our fellow human beings, we want to engage them at a deeper level, so that we can benefit from possible areas of cooperation, as well as create better understanding of Islam itself. In addition, efforts must be made to challenge the negative notion that Islam loves violence (Omar, 2003). Diversity in intellect, creativity and innovation is Allah's creation. The first generation of Muslims interacted very well with both Muslims and non-Muslims. As part of ongoing *da'wah* efforts, Muslims must be proactive to get acquainted with both Muslims and non-Muslims, creating positive relationships with everyone. Differences in thoughts and ideas can result in higher productivity (Ahmad et. al., 2012). Thus, the Concept of *Al-ta'āruf* proves the timeless relevance of the *Sīrah* today, by us examining *da'wah* approaches applied by the Prophet SAW, to instil greater confidence in our Muslim youth, as well as to create greater peace and understanding and therefore stability between peoples of different nations.Throughout the ages, Islam has played a unique role in promoting dialogue and harmony between civilisations. Muslim rulers in the past provided freedom, justice and rights to everyone regardless of culture, religion and civilisation (Elius et. al., 2019). When civilisations interact through *tahāwur* (dialogue), we seek to consult before forming opinions; we seek to find ways to cooperate (Elius et. al., 2019). Humanity will grow and flourish if we interact with each other in a dynamic way. *Tahāwur* (Dialogue) and reasoning are the best ways to uphold truth and resist falsehood. Allah says, "And dispute you not with the People of the Book, except

with means better (than mere disputation), unless it be with those of them who inflict wrong (and injury): but say, 'We believe in the Revelation which has come down to us and in that which came down to you; our Allah and your Allah is One; and it is up to Him we bow (in Islam).'" (Al-Qur'an. Al-'Ankabūt. 29:46). Another example for importance of *tahāwur* is: "But speak to him mildly; perchance he may take warning or fear (Allah)." (Al-Qur'an. Tā Hā. 20:44).

Naturally, when we want to get to know (*ta'arūf*) an individual or a group of people, we would have to undergo some kind of dialogue (*tahāwur*). It is impossible for *ta'arūf* to take place inside a vacuum. Thus, Allah says: "If Allah had so willed, He would have made you a single people, but (His plan is) to test you in what He has given you: so strive as in a race in all virtues. The goal of you all is to Allah. We have assigned a law and a path to each of you. If God had so willed, He would have made you one community, but He wanted to test you through that which He has given you, so race to do good." (Al-Qur'an. Al-Mā'idah. 5:48)

Tahāwur (Dialogue) has the potential to play a transformative and constructive role in society. Ashki (2006) defined the term *tahāwur* (dialogue) as:

> "a type of communication between people that respects the differences of 'the Other', which allows for true listening in a safe environment that offers possibilities for the transformation of self-awareness in each individual" (Ashki, 2006, p. 6)

Ashki quoted Muslim author Yahaya Emerick as saying:

> "genuine dialogue involves communication between different entities in which no side adheres to absolutist positions and is willing to consider the positions of others, modify their own if logic dictates, and offer an intelligent discourse on their own beliefs." (Ashki, 2006, p. 6)

Mutual understanding amongst peoples of different backgrounds is not automatic. Individuals and communities big and small can get familiar with one another by spending time and effort to know one another's backgrounds, customs, cultures and traditions. Humankind can only achieve the true meaning of brotherhood by going through the process of *ta'arūf* (Ahmad, 2012). If carried out with honesty and sincerity, *ta'arūf* can help restore goodness in human nature and set people free from injustices rooted in social structures. *Ta'arūf* can also assist individuals and communities to gain faith in God (Yogaiswara, 2015). In the context of achieving a balanced life for the individual and society, and to strengthen brotherhood and sisterhood among Muslims regardless of ethnicity, age, race or culture, the process of *ta'arūf* and *tahāwur* can help build and enhance a Muslim identity (Ibrahim et.al, 2015).

Diversity is a gift from God which makes it incumbent upon us to make every effort to know one another. Differences between individuals and groups can enrich humanity so long as we are open-minded and willing to learn from each other. We need to contextualise our differences and reflect on the values and meanings of these differences to gain real insights. With regards to education, children deserve to grasp a clear understanding of religion in order to gain a strong Muslim identity, so they learn how to live peacefully by the principles of their own faith and amongst others of different faiths (Selçuk, 2018). Applying the concepts of *tahāwur* and *ta'arūf* between and amongst Muslim communities from different ethnicities of multicultural backgrounds from around the world can help make this goal become a reality.

1.7.1 Five Domains of Human Connection

Through the lens of intercultural *da'wah*, we look for things that are common between relevant parties to enhance and adjust the methodologies and approaches to conduct *da'wah* to a diverse group of people (Sharif & Shamsudin, 2017).

It is true that Muslims living in different nations and tribes inherit unique traditions and legacies, and particular ways of thinking and behaving from their ancestors. It must be remembered however, that despite inheriting different ways of thinking and behaving from our ancestors, human beings share basic commonalities in that we are affected by the physical, intellectual, emotional, social and spiritual domains we are exposed to. In his book, "Education in Islam", Abdullah Nasih 'Ulwan (2004) highlighted the Principles of Connection in raising Muslim children, which covers five domains: 1) Belief, 2) Spiritual, 3) Intellectual, 4) Social, and 5) Physical. It follows that the *da'ie* must take into account all these five domains in intercultural *da'wah*, such that "effective communication pertinent to the heart, mind and emotion" as emphasizedby Sharif & Shamsudin (2017) may take place. In this study, the researcher has adopted four of the original five domains outlined by 'Ulwan, namely; Spiritual, Intellectual, Social and Physical. As this programme is intercultural in nature, the Social Domain has been renamed the Cultural Domain. The Belief Domain has been replaced with the Emotional Domain, to emphasize the importance of emotional bonding between the Japanese Muslim youth and their host parents and families, which was deliberately doneto plant the seed of a long term relationship. All these domains act as the conduits by which the CEP attempted to connect, engage and reach out to the Japanese Muslim youth who enrolled in this programme.

1.8 Empirical Study

Aside from mapping the relevant literature to conceptualise the intercultural *da'wah* approaches to Japanese Muslim youth, the researcher also conducted an empirical study drawn from the social constructivist worldview.

1.8.1 Social Constructivist Research Paradigm

This research adopted a social constructivist worldview, whereby raw data was collected in a qualitative manner, with the researcher playing the role as the research instrument. As noted by Creswell & Creswell (2018), constructivism strives for deeperunderstanding, acknowledges multiple participant meanings, takes into account both social and historical construction, as well as considers the possibility of theory generation.

According to the social constructivist worldview, people look for meanings in their experiences. These meanings are subjective and differ from person to person, implying rich diversity and multiple interpretations. In this way, the researcher will allow complexity of views and avoid narrowing meanings into a few broad categories. In this way, the researcher will gain more insights, and these insights can be incorporated into future planning when the programme is repeated in the coming years.

The researcher used ethnography as the method of choice to collect and evaluate data. Ethnography "examines one single culture-sharing group" (Creswell, 2018, p. 186). In ethnography, the researcher focuses on illustrating the daily experiences of participants by observing and interviewing them (Fraenkel & Wallen, 1990, cited in Creswell, 2018, p. 204) throughout the research period. In this study, the researcher was a non-participant observer; the participants were allowed to immerse themselves naturally in their environment while they were observed as non-intrusively as possible,

true to ethnographic research. The researcher in this study was aware that meanings are formed through social interactions between participants and others, as well as coloured by their personal histories.

The research design and methods are discussed in detail in Chapter 3, which is divided into three main sections:

The first section discusses observation and interview as a qualitative method. The purpose of adopting interview is "to obtain a 'holistic' picture of the subject of study with emphasis on portraying the everyday experiences of individuals by observing and interviewing them" (Wolcott, 1999; Creswell, 2009, p.196).

In the second section, the researcher describes how she recruited host parents within groups she knew well and trusted.

The third section summarises this research project, encapsulating the nine key components relevant to the ethnographic research design (Creswell, 2018, p. 203-210). These are: 1) setting, 2) actors, 3) events, 4) processes, 5) ethical considerations, 6) datacollection strategies, 7) data analysis, 8) verification and 9) reporting findings. The researcher discusses each section in turn, indicating how they help her answer the research questions, and subsequently conceptualise *da'wah* to Japanese Muslim youth.

1.9 Research Findings

The researcher analysed the empirical data gathered during her engagement with the participants of the Cultural Exchange Programme, which the researcher addresses in Chapter 4.

The first part presents the experiences of eminent Japanese Muslims interacting with practising Muslims which led to their reversion to Islam.

The second part presents the mission of the Cultural Exchange Programme and how it fits the mission goals of the Chiba Islamic Cultural Centre and their expectation of the Cultural Exchange Programme. The researcher also drew the data from her interviews with the organiser of the Cultural Exchange Programme, in this case, the Chiba Islamic Cultural Centre to understand how they interpret the mission and perceive these goals. Such an analytical approach is relevant to the study of *da'wah* to Japanese Muslim youth because it describes how the institutional mission shapes an intercultural *da'wah* initiative such as the Cultural Exchange Programme.

The third and fourth parts of the analysis maps the Concept of *Al-ta'āruf* against the activities carried out during the Cultural Exchange Programme. It presents the results of analysis relating to the Japanese Muslim youth experience of the Cultural Exchange Programme.

Chapter 5 concludes and sums up the central findings regarding *da'wah* to Japanese Muslim youth, indicating how they answer the research questions. In this chapter, the researcher attempts to show that connecting them with practising Muslim host parents/families in a multicultural Muslim majority country in a relationship that is based on *Al-ta'āruf* , exposing the Japanese Muslim youth to a safe, learning environment which is experiential in nature, can help to grow their confidence as Muslims. The final section discusses the implications and recommendations of this thesis for future research.

While this chapter provides an overview of the research project, summarising its rationale, purposes, focus, conceptual framework, empirical study and findings, the following chapter discusses the context for the study of *da'wah* to Japanese Muslim youth.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter offers a background of the study of *da'wah* to Japanese Muslim youth by focusing on literature that has supported the researcher's choice of thesis subjects and prompted the research questions. It is divided into five parts: Section 2.1 presents Islam and Muslims in Japan; Section 2.2 highlights challenges faced by Japanese Muslim Youth; Section 2.3 presents studies of *da'wah* to Muslim minority communities; Section 2.4 presents studies of *da'wah* to young Muslims; and Section 2.5 discusses previous studies of youth and cultural exchange programmes.

Section 2.1 illustrates how Islam is the chosen faith for very few ethnic Japanese, and attempts to explain why there seems to be a prevailing lack of interest towards Islamamong ethnic Japanese although Japanese scholars had studied Islam for many years, and despite the growing number of mosques.

Section 2.2 highlights the challenges that confront the Japanese Muslim youth in their daily lives, how these challenges create an extremely difficult environment for the Japanese Muslim youth, as well as shape the experiences of these youth.

Section 2.3 present studies on *da'wah* to Muslim minority communities in 5 countries: Fiji, Italy, China, Hong Kong and Australia. It also explores the question of whether there is an example during the Prophet's lifetime and leadership which Muslims can use as a precedent and reference.

Section 2.4 presents studies of *da'wah* to young Muslims and their identity struggles, what has been found to work and what doesn't, in terms of strengthening their Muslim identity.

Section 2.5 presents studies of youth and cultural exchange programmes and illustrates how an international cultural exchange has the capacity to broaden the mindset of youth as well as leave a lasting impression. In particular, Section 2.5.1 highlights previous studies on Japanese youth and cultural exchange programmes, how the intercultural experience and exposure has helped built the Japanese youth's confidence, as well as enabled the Japanese youth to establish meaningful connections with the people (host parents and families) they connected with. As will be seen from these studies, the intercultural experience has been proven to be an effective approach to shape the mindset of youth, in particular, Japanese youth, as it has the potential to leave a lasting impact, apart from broadening the mindset of participating youth. Yet, there is a dearth in research in terms of applying the cultural exchange programme approach involving Muslim host parents and families for the Japanese Muslim youth to immerse themselves in, to gain insights of how practising Muslims lead their lives in a multicultural society. This is the gap that the present research aims to address.

In sum, the five sections in this chapter illustrate the challenges shaping the experiences of Japanese Muslim youth and the *da'wah* efforts carried out in Japan. Taken together, they form the framework for this research project and assist the researcher in defining the theoretical lens and perspective for this research, shape the questions asked, inform how data was collected and analysed, as well as guide the conclusions and recommendations presented. The literatures in this chapter provide the backdrop and context for the current study, a cultural exchange programme applying the Concept of *Al-ta'āruf* , with the hope of strengthening the identity of second

generation Japanese Muslim youth. In short, the researcher presents past literature pertaining to the interactions and exposure of Japanese youth growing up in Japan, and suggests interventions that are required to develop their confidence as Muslims.

2.1 Islam and Muslims in Japan

In 1998, 80% of Muslims in Japan were non-Japanese, belonging to the lower-income group, originating from South Asian countries including Pakistan, India, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka. There were also Muslims from Central Asia, specifically from Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan, as well as from Iran and Egypt (Middle-East), Turkey, and Nigeria, Africa. The majority were Indonesian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi and Iranian. Majority of Indonesians who came to Japan were high school graduates in their twenties or thirties. Bangladeshis came to Japan to further their studies but many dropped out due to the high costs of living, ending up as illegal workers particularly in manufacturing. Pakistanis came to Japan to gain employment; they played a significant role in establishing mosques in Japan and many of them end up setting up businesses in Japan (Takeshita, S. 2008).

In 2016, Professor Hirofumi Tanada from the Faculty of Human Sciences, Waseda University, a well-known Japanese academic who has a special interest in Muslim communities and Islam, estimated the number of Muslims in Japan to be 170,000 out of which, 40,000 were ethnic Japanese (Organisation of Islamic Cooperation, 2019). The total Japanese population was estimated to be 126 million in 2018 (World Bank, 2018). Thus, ethnic Japanese Muslims living in Japan are a rare species indeed. The majority of these Muslims lived in three areas – Greater Tokyo Area, Chukyo Metropolitan Area, and Kinki Region (Tanada, 2017). Japan does not require immigrants or locals to declare their religious affiliation. Hence, it is virtually

impossible to cite accurate statistics (Vestre, 2011). Why has Islam not grown amongst ethnic Japanese over the years? Several reasons have been offered to explain this.

Amongst the Japanese, there exists a general indifference towards God and religion, coupled with a high pursuit of materialism. The Japanese in general do not feel the need to adopt a religious way of life, despite the fact that historically, the Qur'an has captured the imagination of Japanese scholars for many years. According to Marimoto (1980), the Qur'an has been translated into Japanese beginning with Okawa (1980); Izutsu (1957); Ban and Ikeda (1970); and Umar Mita (1972). Among these translators, Umar Mita was the first Muslim to translate the Arabic Qur'an into Japanese (Marimoto, 1980). According to El Damanhoury (2015), the next translation was done by Nakata (2014). The most recent known translation from Arabic into easy Japanese was done in 2019 by Sugimoto.

Sakurai (2008) noted that the majority of Muslims from other countries who resided in Japan preferred to keep to their own ethnic group and were not involved in *da'wah* to the local Japanese. According to Sakurai, the Tablighi Jama'at was an exception, carrying out *da'wah* initiatives targeted to other Muslims, both born and reverts, especially to those whom they saw as neglecting their religious obligations as Muslims, and those who showed early signs of leaving Islam. Sakurai observed that the Tablighi Jama'at succeeded to attract a number of non-Japanese Muslims who felt that the Japanese culture was unfamiliar to them. At the time the study was made, ethnic Japanese women married to non-Japanese Muslim men were observed not to be involved with mosque activities. The researcher surmised that this had something to do with the background of their born Muslim husbands who came from South Asian countries such as Pakistan and Bangladesh, and might perceive their dominant male authority threatened if their wives were to be involved with the mosque's regular

activities. If the Japanese wives came from a conservative background where patriarchal dominance is still observed, it reinforces the belief that only the husbands should actively participate in mosque activities while the wives should stay away (Sakurai, 2008). However, this implies that the wives as Muslim reverts would not benefit from the Islamic lessons and other *da'wah* initiatives held by the mosque.

A case study done on the Tokyo Mosque as a centre of *da'wah* and Islamic education for Muslims can shed some light on how the mosque still plays a significant role to be a reference point for Muslims, as well as spread the word of Islam today. The Tokyo Mosque welcomes students from schools and higher learning institutions, as well as members of the public, who are interested to gain a better understanding about Islam. Between 2002-2011, the Tokyo Mosque has published books expounding the message of Islam in the Japanese language. In this mosque, the *imam* delivers sermons in three different languages: English, Japanese and Turkish. Apart from the daily five regular prayers, the Tokyo Mosque also runs Qur'an classes for youth and children, handles translation of the Qur'an into Japanese, helps Muslim couples and families resolve their conflicts, provides assistance related to money and career opportunities, lends a hand to smaller mosques in other locations in Japan, and collects funds for disaster struck Muslim countries in other parts of the world. Besides working with certain organisations, the Tokyo Mosque also cooperates with persons on an individual basis, where possible. Cultural and educational conferences and seminars are presented to educate the Muslims in particular and the Japanese public in general, about matters pertaining to Islam. To reach out to the Japanese locals, the Tokyo Mosque organises annual bazaars (Siddiqi, 2016).

Other than the Tokyo Mosque, other mosques, for example the Otsuka Mosque, also in Tokyo, organises *da'wah* activities too. Like the Tokyo Mosque, the Otsuka Mosque runs Islamic lessons for Muslims every Saturday. These classes educate Muslims about Islam and enlighten them about how to do *da'wah* to Muslims and non-Muslims. In addition, Otsuka Mosque invites non-Muslims as guests to learn more about Islam (Japan Islamic Trust, 2020).

The case study of the Tokyo Mosque is an example of how the mosque in Japan over the years has continued to provide a multi-functional space for *da'wah* efforts, not merely for worship. As noted by Sakurai (2008), mosques in Japan are attended by Muslims of different ethnic groups, despite the fact that each mosque has a tendency to be influenced by a certain ethnic and sectarian group. Even with these ongoing noble efforts, the number of ethnic Japanese Muslims has remained small throughout the years.

The Japanese who embraced Islam said that it was easy to convert to Islam, but difficult to practise Islam, due to the overwhelming pressure from family and friends who failed to appreciate the new beliefs, values and practices adopted bythem. Hence, although generally speaking the Japanese are open-minded people, and Article 14 in the Japanese constitution declares that there will be no "discrimination in political, economic and social relations because of . . . creed," and Article 19 states "the freedom of thought and conscience shall not be violated," Japanese reverts experience tremendous pressure to conform to societal expectations to live like the traditional Japanese, and thus often found themselves in contradictory circumstances (Anis, 1998).

Failure to conform place them at risk of being discriminated against. Discrimination may take place in implicit ways. Besides, attitudes of the Japanese towards people from developing nations tend to be negative. The Japanese view their culture as "more advanced" in comparison to developing nations. Hence, if a Japanese marries someone from a developing nation, the non-Japanese is expected toconform to Japanese ways. This implies that Japanese revert fathers married to Muslims from South Asia prefer their children to lead lives as full-fledged Japanese, without adopting the Muslim way of life. The fact that born Muslim spouses from developing countries tend to have an inferiority complex contributes to the likelihoodthat the children will be raised more Japanese than Muslim, or simply as non-Muslims (Vestre, 2011).

The uncaring attitude towards God and religion and the endless quest for materialism implies that the Japanese are simply not aware of how Islam can bring meaning, happiness and fulfilment in life. As evident from the above literatures, much leaves to be desired when it comes to *da'wah* in Japan. The tendency for non-Japanese Muslims to keep to their own ethnic group means that they are not engaging with Japanese Muslims and non-Muslims. Becoming a Muslim is one thing; staying Muslim is another. No Muslim is an island. Everyone needs good practising Muslimsto support them.

Although mosques in Japan do carry out outreach programmes, the issue of Japanese women married to non-Japanese Muslim men and not involved with mosque activities is a matter of concern as these Japanese women are the ones at home who are or would be raising children. Although the Tokyo Mosque has diversified activities including Qur'an classes for women, youth and children, it must be remembered that this is the biggest mosque in Japan. Such varied activities are not representative of other smaller mosques scattered throughout Japan, as these smaller

mosques do not have the means nor the resources to run such diverse activities. The fact that each mosque in Japan tends to be influenced by the majority ethnic and sectarian group in its management implies that the Japanese Muslim might not feel welcome to be part of these mosques.

In spite of the clear declaration by the Japanese constitution that people living in Japan are not to be discriminated against politically, economically and socially just because of their different belief systems, the reality is very different, as attested by Japanese Muslim reverts. These reverts reported experiencing huge pressure to lead a life just like any other Japanese, even if it means contradicting the Muslim way of life. There exist "unwritten rules" amongst the Japanese e.g. drinking *saké* with elders as a show of respect which are not in accordance with Islamic values, a discouragement to behave in a way that is not perceived as Japanese.

Along these lines, it is not surprising that Islam has hardly grown in Japan over the years; the majority of Muslims in Japan are still non-Japanese and the number of ethnic Japanese Muslim has remained very small until now.

2.1.1 Ignorance about Islam

To begin with, there is widespread ignorance about Islam in Japan. What the Japanese know about Islam is mostly inaccurate or vague at best, gleaned from whatever media is accessible to them, both print and online. It is virtually impossiblefor the Japanese to make real comparisons between what is true and what is false with respect to Islam since most Japanese have never had any kind of direct contact with practising Muslims. Muslim preachers (*da'ī*) brought in by ethnic groups only tend to speak ethnic languages, not Japanese. Such programmes only appeal to members of these ethnic groups (Fathil & Fathil, 2011).

Not only that, the Muslim preachers (*da'ī*) do not have a firm grasp and understanding of Japanese local culture, traditions and customs. They received no prior training to prepare them for the unique Japanese landscape. Insufficient funds means that the Japanese Muslims need to seek financial support from majority Muslim countries to organise *da'wah* programmes, but the funds they received was often not enough to build mosques and carry out programmes. Religious syncretism – adopting any part of a belief system that they feel is beneficial and rejecting the rest is a phenomena that is unique to Japan. Historically, the Japanese have adopted parts of Shintoism and Buddhism that they like and discarded the rest. The concept of Islam, belief in one God, is perceived as too rigid, too hard to adhere to (Fathil & Fathil, 2011).

Given the prevailing lack of understanding about Islam throughout Japan amongst ethnic Japanese who have been fed with unclear information at best about Islam, effort must be done to create programmes that appeal to the hearts and minds of the Japanese. These programmes should relay accurate information about Islam to the Japanese. Consideration must be made that each culture is unique and so is Japan. Individuals or organisations interested in engaging ethnic Japanese Muslims and non-Muslims need to acquire at least a basic knowledge of Japanese traditions and customs. Training is important to equip these individuals and organisations with accurate knowledge of Japan's culture, including language, as communication is a key factor in the success of *da'wah*. No matter how good the content being communicated to the *mad'u* is, the objectives are likely not to be achieved if the *da'i* fails to communicate effectively in a language that is easily understood by the *mad'u*.The *da'i* must show that Islam is a beautiful and simple religion, not rigid as perceived by the Japanese.

2.1.2 Islamophobia in Japan

The discovery of Muslims being profiled in Japan through leaked internal documents in 2010 proved that Islamophobia was not a matter restricted to the West. This discovery raised alarm amongst Muslims in Japan as well as human rights advocates. These leaked internal documents contained personal information of 72,000 Muslims throughout Japan. The surveillance covered mosques, *halal* restaurants and Muslim groups. The discovery of these documents brought about a court case in which the Muslim plaintiffs contended that their religious freedom had been violated and they had been discriminated against. However, in 2016, Japan's Supreme Court concluded that "blanket surveillance of Muslims was a necessary measure to prevent international terrorism" (Takahashi, 2018). This situation brought uneasiness and fear among Muslim families, organisations and individuals. A second appeal against the Supreme Court's verdict was not successful (Ghazali, 2016). Still, the increasing number of Muslim tourists and Muslim residents scattered throughout Japan have somewhat helped to alleviate these concerns. Muslim residents, in particular, use mosques as a platform to voice their support against all kinds of crime and acts of terrorism (Yamagata, 2019). In fact according to Professor Hirofumi Tanada of Waseda University, at the end of 2018, there were a total of 105 mosques spread over 36 out of a total of 47 prefectures in Japan (Tanada, 2019). This figure implies that Islam is indeed spreading in Japan albeit slowly despite the threat of Islamophobia globally. Clearly, *da'wah* effort is ongoing to help local Japanese to understand the real nature of Islam, even though the effectiveness might be a matter of debate.

Post 9/11, Islamophobia has painted, and continues to paint a picture of Islam as a religion that is cruel and violent, unsuitable with modern life, conflicting with Euro-American values (Akbarzadeh, 2016 & Suleiman, 2017). Muslims are increasingly seen as the "Other", whose presence is a threat (Morgan & Poynting, 2016). This negative perspective has made Muslims feel marginalised. Rising anti-Islamic sentiments across the world has brought about far-reaching implications felt by Muslims the world over (Akbarzadeh, 2016). A meta-analysis of 345 published studies that looked into how global media influenced the Muslim and Islamic identity reported that a significant majority of the media have focused on themes on "terrorism", "migration" and "war", and neglected sources from Muslim countries and Muslim media, negatively framing Muslims (Ahmed & Matthes, 2016).

Non-Japanese Muslim men who were not well-versed about Islam and who married local Japanese women, by virtue of their lack of understanding of Islam, were unable to lead their wives and children to the true path of Islam. This is partly responsible to create a negative perception towards Islam among the Japanese people. The Indo-Pakistani Muslim husbands who are devoted Muslims, who do well in their own businesses, and who made the decision to send their Japanese wives and children to the Middle-East to have a more Islamic education are a minority (Takeshita, 2008 & Vestre, 2011). Researchers have examined issues of ethnicity, including cultural adaptation, how minority groups self-categorise, as well as how being a minority influence their levels of self-esteem (Hutnik, 1991). Minority groups can either assimilate, dissociate, acculturate, or choose none of these (Hutnik, 2003). Such studies imply that as a minority, the self-esteem of Japanese Muslim youth may be impacted in the long run, given the circumstances. However, whether they choose to

assimilate, dissociate or acculturate is left to be seen - a potential area to be looked into by researchers.

The meta-analysis cited above suggests that Muslim minority individuals, families and communities living in non-Muslim countries face intense scrutiny in public, giving rise to serious challenges to raising Muslim children and youth residing in these countries. Japan is no exception. The relatively recent discovery of leaked documents and the fact that the Muslim plaintiffs lost their case in court even though it was clear Muslims were discriminated against, proved that Islamophobia is a reality which the minority Muslim community in Japan must contend with daily. Moreover, non-Japanese Muslims married to Japanese women who failed to guide their wives and children on Islam left an unfavourable impact among the Japanese, which further exacerbated the issue. The option of sending Japanese wives and children to the Middle-East to gain a firm grounding of Islamic education is simply not available to the majority of Muslims in Japan because of the costs. Studying abroad is only an option that is available to those who can afford it. As can be seen by the above studies, the poor growth of Islam in Japan is a result of multidimensional factors at play, taking place within and beyond the shores of Japan.

The following section discusses the challenges and problems of representation faced by Japanese Muslim youth.

2.2 Challenges of Japanese Muslim Youth

The Japanese Muslim youth's main problem is centred around how to gain an Islamic education, and this problem is intertwined with social, communication, political and economic issues.

2.2.1 The Islamic Education Challenge

As mentioned earlier, ethnic Japanese Muslims are a rare breed. The growth of Islam among Japanese, in general, and the development of much-needed Islamic education among second generation Japanese Muslim youth, in particular, are challenges yet to be taken up by the majority of Muslim immigrants. Understanding the backgrounds of these immigrants would help inform this predicament. The majority of Muslim immigrants are unskilled, blue collar workers in the industrial sector, generally not well-educated or highly qualified, and lack proper understanding of Islam itself. Starting work as trainees with very long hours (8.30AM – midnight), minimal pay and hardly any basic rights, many of them started working illegally for a period of time, gaining legal status upon marrying a Japanese woman (Vestre, 2011).

The biggest Muslim community in Japan are represented by Indonesians. It took 18 years for the Indonesian Muslim community to build their first mosque in Meguro, Tokyo, after repeated discussions with ethnic Japanese neighbours and Japanese authorities before the dream became a reality (Halal Media Japan, 2017). Like other foreign born Muslims in Japan, one of the issues faced by the Indonesian community in establishing the mosque was communication with the Japanese neighbours and authorities i.e. lack of Japanese language proficiency. A persistent issue with non-Japanese Muslims is that most of them are not fluent in speaking, reading or writing in Japanese, thereby limiting their interactions with ethnic Japanese whose daily communications, at work and at home, is in Japanese (Yuki, 2018).

Another example of foreign-born Muslims living in Japan is the Turkish community. Turkish men in their 20s and 30s began to arrive in Japan looking for better jobs in the 1990s. Since then, these men began to marry ethnic Japanese women and settled down in Japan. With the birth of children, how they were going to raise these

offspring became a matter of concern for the Turkish-Japanese couples. Religious education is not an easy subject to deal with, but when a significant number of Muslim families who share the same ethnicity are present, it is easier to work together as a community, as the Turkish-Japanese families in Aichi Prefecture discovered. Turkish - Japanese families where the blue-collar Turkish fathers originated from Ordu Province, Turkey together organised classes with the mosque in Aichi Prefecture to facilitate their children's Islamic education. In this way, the children were exposed to Muslim Turkish culture for the short weekends, provided they did not have other commitments at the public Japanese schools they attended on weekdays (Takeshita, 2015).

The teachers who taught Islamic education for this weekend school came from the Turkish community itself. The language of instruction is Turkish, as the parents wanted the children to have at least a basic grasp of the Turkish language. Even then, they acknowledged that it is really difficult for the children to grow their Turkish language and therefore, their understanding of Islam once they started kindergarten and elementary school (Takeshita, 2015).

Children spent a lot of time at public school where the language of instruction is Japanese. If these Turkish-Japanese children tried to speak Turkish in front of their Japanese friends at school, they were teased, which discouraged them from further trying. Also, a great majority i.e. more than 70% nationwide of the mothers in the Turkish-Japanese marriages were ethnic Japanese; these mothers do not speak Turkish at all and only spoke to their children in Japanese at home. Thus, exposure to the Turkish language is very limited to whatever little communication they had with their fathers at home, if at all, and during their weekend sessions at the mosque, if they did not miss it or if the classes were not canceled (Takeshita, 2015).

Similarly, the Bangladeshi Muslims in Japan attempt to pass on their root ethnic and religious identities to their children by forming tight-knit communities where possible. These Bangladeshi Muslim parents believed that they are responsible for the Muslim identity construction of their children. They associate with and form alliances with Japanese locals for business opportunities to create what is called "multicultural symbiotic ties" (Sultana, 2019).

The above studies helped to shed light on why gaining an Islamic education is such a huge challenge in Japan. At a time when Islam appears to be growing, albeit slowly in Japan, Islamic education provided by mosques, also known as Islamic centres are very few and far between, if any. Apart from the usual Friday prayers, a mosque perhaps would only organise lectures once or twice a year, once a semester, or once a month, due to shortage of manpower and other resources. Hence, neither the frequency nor the duration of these lessons are sufficient to meet the needs of the Muslim community, especially children, youth and reverts. To be effective, a certain number of contact hours between teacher and student is needed. Anyone would need time to digest a new concept, as well as repetition and guidance from the teachers to properly appreciate and absorb what is being taught. Language remains a significant challenge too, as language acquisition is crucial to properly learn the Islamic religious lessons imparted in these sessions at the mosque. Each ethnic group faces its own language concerns e.g. in the Turkish community, it is not clear how much children could understand the Islamic lessons taught in Turkish language at the mosque when the language spoken at home by the mother is Japanese, which implies that children of Turkish-Japanese parentage have a limited command and understanding of the Turkish language. It is worth noting too that at the time of this research, the Chiba Islamic

Cultural Centre in particular, offers no Islamic education classes specially tailored for teenagers due to lack of resources.

2.2.2 The Challenge of Social Expectations

Japanese are highly civilised, with a very rich culture rooted in traditions. Japanese men and women, in general, are proud to be Japanese. They are highly homogeneous, every Japanese is expected to do the same thing like everyone else. Homogeneity contributes towards a sense of belonging. Immigrants in Japan are pressured and expected to assimilate into Japanese culture, no matter where they come from, giving rise to acculturation issues. Anyone who tries to be different or appears to be different for any reason, is looked down with disdain, and will have a hard time to fit in. Through daily exposure and media, particularly pop culture, children who attend public Japanese schools are exposed to the Japanese value system and worldviews and over time, will get assimilated (Yuki, 2017).

By age five, Japanese children begin to attend elementary school. The homogeneity of Japanese culture continues; they are taught that it is better to be just like everybody else – eat the same food, talk the same language, wear the same attire. Being Japanese means one must assimilate culturally, socially, systematically. Thus, Japanese Muslim children would find it difficult to be practising Muslims and identify themselves as Muslim every step of the way. Some children even ask their parents at which point in their lives could they become real Japanese (Takeshita, 2008). Some concerned Muslim parents have expressed the need to build Muslim schools to create consistency between the values taught at home, at school and within the community (Shiro, 2011).

From the researches above, it is deduced that for Muslim children, conflicts begin early in school, where all children are supposed to eat the same food prepared by the school. Muslim children as young as four years old begin to ask questions like why they can't eat pork, when they see that everyone else does. Even if the meat is chicken or beef, they still cannot eat it, if it is not *halal*. There were Muslim parents who served *halal* meat at home, but simply let their children eat whatever is served at school, because they did not want their children to be treated as outcasts. As they grow older, a Muslim child who tries to pray regularly will be teased by other students. Thus, Japanese Muslim students early on feel that they are foreigners in their own birth country. For the Japanese Muslim parent who wishes to enrol their children in an Islamic school for the sake of consistency between home and school, it would take time to make this dream a reality, even if it does happen.

2.2.3 Born a Japanese, Treated as a Foreigner

Most of the second generation Japanese Muslim youth were born into mixed marriages, where one parent is non-Japanese e.g. Turkish, Bangladeshi, Arab, Indian, Indonesian or Malaysian. As a result, although these second generation Japanese Muslim youth were born in Japan, they do not look like the common Japanese on the street. In other words, their physical features are remarkably different from those of ethnic Japanese. In Japan, homogeneity is about sameness, in terms of both enacting Japaneseness through actions that people perform as well as looking Japanese in appearance. Growing up and perceived as non-Japanese is a big thing in Japan. There is a prevailing sense of hierarchical superiority among Japanese over people from other nations who were once colonised by them during World War II. Hence, the Japanese

perceive themselves as a superior race, the Koreans and Chinese are below them, and South-East Asians and Pacific Islanders are at the lowest rung (Kamada, 2009).

In the 1980s, many unskilled workers entered Japan, but rather than opening up to the concept of diversity and multiethnicity, the idea of lower class "other" in comparison to the pure Japanese national, became stronger. The concern was that, if multiethnicity were to be celebrated in Japan, it would weaken their cultural assets, which relies heavily on sameness and homogeneity; to live and breathe as a Japanese would. Anyone not looking like a Japanese, or not behaving like a Japanese, is perceived as a lower class "other". The negative term used is *gaijin*, which literally carries the meaning "outside-person" (Curtis, 2011), a "foreigner", a discriminatory expression. In Japan, anyone deemed non-Japanese becomes a foreigner, an alien, a *gaijin*. Other meanings of *gaijin* include "strangers", "undecideables", and "outsiders", giving an impression that "You don't belong here." In Japan, it is well-known that one must do everything he can to not stand out, not to be different, to avoid being "the nail that sticks up" (a pervasive Japanese proverb), or be prepared to be hammered into conformity, or be treated as an "other" (Kamada, 2009).

The above studies suggest that in Japan, roots and looks do matter. No matter how well a person speaks and behaves like a Japanese should, understands and observes Japanese traditions and customs, yet carries a biological heritage that is not a hundred percent Japanese and as a consequence does not appear like a Japanese, that person is likely to be perceived as not a pure Japanese and won't be treated like one. Furthermore, the concept of hierarchical superiority which still operates in Japan is a social construct that implies that certain races or ethnicities are better than the rest. Within this social construct, Japan is perceived as preferable, rendering South Asians of lesser significance and value. Most second generation Japanese Muslim children and youth

are born into mixed marriages between South-East Asians (father is Indonesian or Pakistani or Bangladeshi which falls into the lowest rung) and Japanese women, and therefore will be looked down upon by the Japanese in general.

2.2.4 First Versus Second Generation Japanese Muslims

Although it is true that Japan's constitution officially respects peoples of different faiths and religions, and states that no discrimination shall be exercised towards those who profess different faiths and religions, the reality is that, anyone who looks different or lives differently, does not fit into the highly homogeneous culture of Japan and risks being treated and alienated as *gaijin*. The first generation Japanese Muslims, the parents of the second generation Japanese Muslim youth, who made a conscious choice of taking the *shahada* and became Muslims, were in a different situation. They reverted to Islam upon conscious deliberation. Most important, they were already adults, no longer teenagers, and therefore, were not under adolescent peer pressure to conform. Their children, second generation Japanese Muslims, are experiencing what their parents, the first generation Muslims, did not personally experience when they took the *shahada*. These children possess hybrid identities, "being half" in Japan (Kamada, 2009).

In the above study, comparisons were made between first generation Japanese Muslims and second generation Japanese Muslims, whereby the former were the parents of the latter. The first generation Japanese Muslims were pure Japanese. They look no different than other Japanese. It can be presumed that they faced less pressure in terms of social expectations in comparison to their children, the second generation Muslims, the sampling source for the youth who enrolled in the Cultural Exchange Programme. In fact, the second generation Japanese Muslim youth are *gaijin* on two

levels. Firstly, in terms of physical appearance, they do not look Japanese. Secondly, if they practice Islam, they would act in certain ways that are not considered Japanese, for instance, praying five times a day, fasting, and refraining from consuming non-*halal* food and drink unlike their Japanese family and friends who are non-Muslims.

2.3 Studies of *Da'wah* to Muslim Minority Communities

This section illustrates *da'wah* efforts carried out to Muslim minority communities in five countries: Fiji, Italy, China, Hong Kong and Australia. With respect to *da'wah* to Muslim minorities, a question that deserves to be asked is: Is there an example during the Prophet's lifetime and leadership which Muslims can use as a precedent and reference? In his book, *The Prophet Muhammad: A Role Model for Muslim Minorities*, Siddiqi (2006) argues that Muslims must take the Prophet's initial 13 years of persistence and hard work throughout the early Makkan period as a source of inspiration to establish strong and successful Muslim minority communities scattered around the world. The Muslims started off as a minority in Makkah, a pluralistic society. Like the Muslim minorities across the world today, the Muslims in Makkah were subjected to a non-Muslim political system and governance. The Prophet spent 13 years leading a minority Muslim community. Much can be learnt from this period, pertaining to their way of life, their thought patterns, for contemporary Muslim minority communities. Within the pluralistic society in Makkah, the Quraysh was the majority, but they were not the only influential group of people residing in Makkah. Apart from the Quraysh, there were other tribes, and all these tribes were invariably at odds against one another; they had their mutual differences and were jealous and envious of one another. The Quraysh were essentially and originally of Abrahamic faith but plenty of innovations had seeped into their belief system, with polytheism a

major part of it. Theyprayed to many idols. Some of the Quraysh had also turned into atheism. Thus, by the time the Prophet arrived on the scene, Makkah had become a pluralistic society with multiple faiths (Siddiqi, 2006).

Hence, taking from the early Makkan period in which Muslims were a minority for more than a decade, it is possible for minority Muslim communities to stand out as a strong and successful community provided they remain united. In a pluralistic society, different groups would be asserting their authority, pushing to make their voices heard in order to turn their priorities a reality. Where possible, the minority Muslim community has the option of identifying common goals with different groups to strengthen their economic, social and political presence to pave the way for a successfulpresence. If the minority Muslim community could show to others that they are trustworthy, caring and an objective lot, just as the Muslims in the Makkan period were,the rest of the pluralistic society within which they live are likely to listen to their viewsand respect them despite their differences.

2.3.1 Muslim Minority in Fiji

One example where Islamic revivalism is gradually taking place within a Muslim minority country due to the continuing efforts of *da'wah* is Fiji. Fiji is a predominantlynon-Muslim country, with cannibalism embedded as part of its colourful history. In Fiji,Muslims began to appear as sugarcane field workers between 1879 and 1916. Within this interval, about seven thousand Indian Muslims, mainly from North India, secured employment and some chose to reside permanently in Fiji. Because of harsh employment conditions, in the absence of mosques and religious scholars and leaders,these Muslims practised Islam privately, in different degrees and forms. In 1898,Mullah Mirza Khan became the first notable religious teacher who arrived in Fiji

to provide religious instructions to the Muslim community. Following the establishment of various Muslim associations, Mullah Mirza Khan became less influential. Over time, through the practices of these Indian Muslims, Islam became more prominent and established as a religion, but in a syncretic form, with parts enmeshed with Hinduism, as the Muslims interacted mutually with the Hindus as these two groups patronised, affiliated with, and supported one another. The Fiji Muslim League, formed in 1926, assumed a public representation for Muslims, increasing exposure to the wider, international Muslim world for the Fijians. Muslim scholars began to arrive in Fiji and Fijian Muslim men also began to enrol in Islamic scholarship in India and Pakistan. Within the past four decades, however, the religious tours by Tabligh Jama'at has been actively putting in effort to remove elements of syncretism among the Fijian Muslim minority, drawing them closer to the actual teachings and practices of Islam (Ali, 2018). Reading the above research may inject hope for minority Muslim communities elsewhere. From the study, it is noted that *da'wah* initiatives and outcomes are never static and may evolve over time. The environment plays a powerful role in shaping religious outcomes amongst Muslims. Tough circumstances may make it extremely hard for minority Muslims to practice Islam; therefore those Muslims who are well-versed in Islamic education must step forward to take the lead and carry out initiatives to preserve the Islamic faith in the hearts of their Muslim brethren. In the absence of accurate Islamic knowledge and strong leadership, minority Muslims can easily drift into non-Islamic beliefs and practices e.g. syncretism - taking only what they like or what they find convenient, and discarding what they do not like. This gives enough reason for those who have the correct knowledge about Islam to teach what they know and not to remain silent. Furthermore, minority Muslim communities can also collaborate at the international

level with majority Muslim countries to ensure that Islamic scholarship becomes a firm presence in their lives, just as the minority Muslims in Fiji are doing.

2.3.2 Muslim Minority in Italy

In Italy, a well-known nation in the heart of Europe, a study found the weekly *khutba* (Friday sermon) as a platform for the preacher (*da'ī*) to do *da'wah* to the Muslim minority. It took an extended two years for the Muslim community to collectively agree to perform Friday prayer during lunch break. For Muslims in majority Muslim countries, this might be a small matter, but for the Muslims residing in Italy, it is a significant achievement, considering the many denominations and schools of thought the Muslims represent. Many of these Muslims belong to the working cluster or are university students who need to be back at work or classes on time. For these prayer sessions, the sermon only lasts between fifteen to twenty minutes. In this study, a *khatib* (person delivering the sermon) did express his concern about the relatively brief span of time within which he must exhort and guide the Muslims on matters concerning Islam. How would he educate them when the only time he sees them throughout the entire week is fifteen to twenty minutes? (Sbai, 2019).

For mosques which has bigger congregations, people pray in shifts as a single shift cannot cater to the big number. In some mosques, the space for women would be closed during Friday prayers to enable the men to use these spaces. In some other mosques, the congregation would spill onto public spaces. Hence, the preacher doing *da'wah* within the Muslim minority in Italy faces constraints in terms of time and space to reach out to their target audience. In this study, all seventeen Muslim religious leaders in several cities were born outside of Italy and some of them had acquired

Italian citizenship. In recent years, leaders of the Muslim community have been careful in choosing a suitable *khatib* to do the *khutbah* or sermon in their local mosques to ensure the content of the *khutbah* represents Islamic values.

An *imam*, a participant of this study said that he considered himself an *imam* inside as well as beyond the walls of the mosque, noting that he is a reference point for the Muslim community, whereby they would approach him to resolve personal matters including misbehaviour or loss of faith among youth and marital issues. Persistent challenges include language, culture and ethnic differences between members of the congregation. One *imam* said that he runs religious classes during the week, and his students include children (Sbai, 2019). Thus, in this study, the mosque and in particular, the weekly *khutba* is proven to be instrumental in *da'wah* efforts to engage the minority Muslim community in Italy, despite the time and space constraints.

As the above study suggests, minority Muslims must work within the framework of laws, regulations, stipulations and procedures in the country they call home. It is possible for different subgroups within the minority Muslim community to be united if unity is given a priority. At the very least, the Muslims in Italy representing numerous denominations and schools of thought are able to perform Friday prayer together. It is also noted that providing Islamic education is a challenge in Italy as well because of time and space constraints. However, given the ease with which Internet is easily available throughout the world today, lack of time and space should no longer be an issue. Online classes are now the trend, effectively removing geographical, space and time limitations. Certainly, online classes are not as ideal as face-to-face instruction which allows full interaction between teacher and student, but perhaps online classes can be integrated with face-to-face sessions for optimum results. These classes ideally should include women and youth so that they do not

miss out. It is a pity to note that women were not able to attend the weekly Friday prayers in Italy due to the cramped space as Friday prayers might have opened an opportunity for the Muslim women to interact with one another, build rapport and trust and network with each other, thereby strengthening the presence of Muslims in Italy.

2.3.3 Muslim Minority in China

The minority Muslim community in Guangzhou, China, also depends heavily on the mosque to fulfil their Islamic education needs. In a study involving four mosques in Guangzhou, Islamic studies were found to be carried out by the management of the mosques as well as members of the congregation. Classes are held in a separate building outside of the mosques. Teachers, known as *Ahong*, arranged by the management of the mosques, conduct *Jingtang Jiaoyu*, Islamic education classes for children, youth and seniors. Guangzhou is known as the cradle of Chinese Islam, since this was the place where Islam first arrived in China, before it spread to other parts of the country. Herein stands the oldest mosque in China, as well as the grave of Sa'ad bin Abi Waqas, a companion of the Prophet SAW. The study noted the pressure upon Muslims to assimilate into the non-Muslim majority, and to choose between being Chinese or Muslim. Such pressure is seen and felt by a number of Muslims who would use their Chinese names in public, and only use their Muslim names in the presence of Muslim peers. Apart from being used for Friday prayers, the mosques also serve as community centres for important family events including welcoming the birth of a new baby, weddings, and funeral arrangements. According to this study, what the Muslim community desires is not aligned with what the government wants, as the government

wants the community to assimilate into the majority non-Muslim locals. This can only happen if the Muslims are to give up their Muslim identity (Basri & Ta'arif, 2018).

Lessons in the mosques focused on the Qur'an and other Islamic resources; the *Ahongs* would translate the Arabic text into Chinese or Uighur language. The books and articles are distributed in a limited fashion, since it might be seen as posing a threat towards national cohesion and security. In this regard, the *Ahong* carries a heavy dual responsibility, a tough and tricky balancing act. He must abide by the wishes of the government, as well as play the role of the focal person for the Muslim community. China has more than 50,000 *Ahongs* servicing more than 35,000 mosques all over China (Basri & Ta'arif, 2018). There is no telling how long these Islamic education sessions will be allowed to continue however, as evidence shows that certain mosques have been razed to the ground to make way for commercial centres, in line with China's "political stability" and "economic development" aspirations. Certain mosques which used to be frequented by devoted Muslims are now empty, with the elderly the only ones seen in them to pray. The *imams* of some mosques are state-appointed, not chosen by the Muslim community (BBC, 2019). In the Northern Province, Muslims gather their resources to run the summer dorm, meant for Muslim youth coming from religiously weaker areas such as the Hui community. There are eleven *madrasahs* (religious school) and a New Islamic High Education system, but all these are state-controlled and subjected to a syllabus imposed by China. Apart from Qur'an and subjects like English, Computer Science and Physical Education, students are required to learn Marxism (Basri & Ta'arif, 2018).

From the above studies, it is deduced that Muslim individuals and organisations in China are experiencing direct pressure from the government to forsake Islam as theirreligion, unlike in Japan, where the constitution makes it clear that, theoretically at

least, no one is to be discriminated against or treated any lesser because of their personal belief system which might not be the same as that of the majority. In addition, the reportthat disclosed that only elderly men were seen in the mosques are disturbing, as childrenand youth should be taught to make the mosque an important part of their lives early on. Even in locations where Muslims are allowed to run their own *madrasahs*, the syllabus is not free of state propaganda as Marxism is a compulsory topic to be taught and learnt. Thus, unless circumstances fail to change, unjust political and economic aspirations of a non-Muslim country may systematically weaken or gradually erase the religious identity of minority Muslims residing within its borders.

2.3.4 Muslim Minority in Hong Kong

The mosque also plays an instrumental role in *da'wah* to minority Muslims in Hong Kong island. Islam was the first major world religion to reach Hong Kong, but presumably the most marginalised today. The biggest Muslim group is Indonesians (140,000), Pakistanis (30,000), and Chinese (30,000). However, most Indonesians, while relatively big in number, are employed as maids and reside in Hong Kong on a temporary basis. Some are not even free to perform prayers, subject to permission from their bosses. Nevertheless, since many of these maids wear headscarves, it has become a common sight among local Hong Kong residents and has helped to tone down concerns about Islam and warmed up acceptance to Muslim attire. These maids, however, are of low socio-economic status, marginalised and therefore not influential in shaping the landscape of Islamic education (Yip-Ho, 2018).

In order to survive, many Chinese Muslims belonging to the Hui ethnic group began to migrate to Hong Kong before the Treaty of Nanjing, signed in 1842. Over time, three major factors have been cited for many Muslim youth to lose their faith in Islam in this island: exposure to Western ideas and lifestyle, parental failure to enrol their children in the *madrasah*, and parents' decision to enrol their children in Christian schools. The *madrasah*, therefore, plays a significant role in *da'wah* efforts in Hong Kong island, especially among children and youth. All children in Hong Kong are required to attend the conventional primary and secondary schools. In the evenings, these children would attend the religious lessons in the *madrasahs*, run at the mosques, where they learn the Qur'an and basic principles of Islam. Students head directly to the *madrasah* straight after their primary or secondary school to spend between one to two hours, usually between 4pm to 6pm. There are also private Islamic education classes in rented spaces known as *houseques* conducted by and within Pakistani neighbourhoods, as the mosques could not cater to the growing number of Muslim children and youth. Despite voluntary attendance in the *madrasahs*, most students, mostly of South Asian origin including Chinese and Filipino, acknowledged that learning about Islam is an obligation they must fulfil. Classes are co-educational but boys and girls are segregated. Without a formal curriculum, the Pakistani communities have established these *houseques* to pass on the basics of Islamic traditions and teachings to the younger generation (Yip-Ho, 2018).

It can be seen that in a minority Muslim community, numbers do not denote strength and influence. The Indonesians, while representing the biggest Muslim group in Hong Kong, do not wield any clout in terms of shaping the outlook of Islamic education for Muslim children and youth in that country because their lives are very much dependent on their employers. These maids' presence in Hong Kong is temporary,

their lives revolve around serving their bosses and little else. However, of more significance are Muslims who have made Hong Kong their home and who have their children's future to think of. Parents who care about their children's faith in Islam enrol them in *madrasahs*. It is heartening to note that the *madrasah* students understood thatgetting a good grasp about Islam is a serious matter. It is also reassuring to see that thereare people who took it upon themselves to set up private *madrasahs* to cater for the overflow of students from the *madrasahs* at neighbouring mosques. This is what minority Muslims need to do to help ensure that their descendants choose Islam as theirway of life - pooling their resources together and network for the benefit of the *ummah*.

2.3.5 Muslim Minority in Australia

In a study that looked into *da'wah* efforts carried out by Indonesian Muslims in three major cities in Australia: Melbourne, Sydney and Canberra, researchers wanted to know what these *da'wah* efforts were, as well as the kind of relationships these Indonesian Muslims had with the majority non-Muslim communities. The study found out that there are different groups of Indonesian Muslims, and each group contributed differently to the growth and development of the Muslim community at large. To begin with, in Sydney, Saturday schools have been established for Islamic education, Qur'an recitation, congregational prayers and sermons, and establishing *halal* food corners. Second, the CIDE or Centre for Islamic *Da'wah* and Education New South Wales manages the Al-Hijrah Mosque in the Tempe area. Apart from holding regular prayers including Eid-ul-Adha and Eid-ul-Fitri prayers, this mosque also conducts religious classes late in the evening. Third, in Lakemba, the IQRO Study Community organised by Indonesian Muslims holds regular Islamic study circles and Saturday

school for children. By far, this community has the largest and most extensive *da'wah* network among Indonesian Muslims. The fourth group is *Kaffah* Islamic Studies, organised by Nahdatul-Ulama, which is not recognised by certain Islamic scholars, because they practise the kind of Islam which accept elements of Indonesian culture e.g. *tahlilan* (Sarbini et. al., 2020).

The study also found that Indonesian Muslims tend to mix only with fellow Indonesians even at the workplace, where they have the opportunity to mix with other ethnicities. Thus, although the possibilities for a dialogue for *da'wah* purposes do exist, it rarely takes place, if at all, since the Indonesian Muslims prefer to keep to their own kind. One participant commented that this might be due to the lack of confidence among the Indonesian Muslims, perhaps because they fear the consequences of being influenced by what they interpret as "bad company". The researchers concluded that, although the Muslim Indonesians carry out *da'wah* amongst their ethnic community, their relationships with the majority non-Muslims are superficial at best, and are kept to a minimum level, especially at work out of necessity (Sarbini et. al., 2020).

It is interesting to note that practising Muslims in Australia are not taking the opportunity to develop more meaningful relationships with their non-Muslim counterparts just because they are concerned that these non-Muslims might influence them into doing something un-Islamic. Numerous ways exist to grow positive and successful relationships with non-Muslims without compromising one's faith in Islam. Engaging non-Muslim colleagues do not need to take place in bars or parties. For example, a minority Muslim could invite non-Muslim neighbours and colleagues over for dinner at breaking fast time in Ramadan, send them gifts during Eid (which will invoke their curiosity and create an opening to introduce them to Islamic celebrations and practices), or be a good neighbour by offering to car pool if a non-Muslim

neighbour's child attends the same school as one's child. Growing positive relationshipswith non-Muslims is very much a part of *da'wah* and it does not have to be in the form of direct preaching (telling people face-to-face about Islam). Actions speak louder than words. Every act of kindness by a Muslim if done sincerely and consistently will, God willing, touch the heart and mind of non-Muslim colleagues, neighbours and friends.

Finally, in a study which looked into how inclusive majority communities are of minorities in five countries in Europe: Belgium, England, Netherlands, Germany and Sweden, it was found that Muslims had the lowest level of national identification amongst minorities, although it differed from country to country. Furthermore, among Europeans, being Christian was found to be a factor of whether a person is considered a true member of a particular European nation, even as religion has become less significant amongst Europeans. While the dynamics of this finding is unclear, it raised concerns about anti-Muslim sentiments as well as marginalisation of Muslim minorities, and can affect the identity formation of Muslim youth in Europe (Fleischmann & Phalet, 2017).

Apparently, this study seems to suggest that although religion has gradually fallen out of favour amongst Europeans in general, deep in their hearts they still feel a sense of loyalty and belonging to the Christian faith, and the general feeling is that a Muslim (or anyone professing a belief other than Christianity) is not a true European. Such a finding implies the discomfort of Europeans to acknowledge Muslims in their midst as part of their community in Europe. The fact that Muslims in the five mentioned European countries recorded a relatively low level of national identification furt her compounds the issue. This study implies that much is to be explored in terms of *da'wah*efforts by Muslim minorities in these countries. It means that every member of

a minority Muslim community must take the initiative to make a difference within the community they live, so that non-Muslims can see the real value and beauty of Islam, and be convinced that Islam can only bring good to everyone. Such consistent efforts are likely to also strengthen the wavering faith of weak Muslims.

2.4 Studies of *Da'wah* to Young Muslims

Issues surrounding Muslim minority youth have been studied and reported scientifically with regards to their identity struggles. Suleiman (2017) highlighted an earlier study conducted by Aaser (2016) at San Francisco State University where Muslim children aged 5-9 years old told the researcher about deep-seated insecurities leading them to develop dual personalities; "American" or "Muslim". Aaser (2016) reported that one in three of these young children did not want to inform others that they were Muslim; one in six at times pretended they were not Muslim (Aaser, 2016).

Suleiman (2017) noted that the identity confusion reported by Aaser remained with these children right till adolescence, and became more complicated as they reached young adulthood. In a qualitative study, Suleiman (2017) documented identity struggles involving thirty American Muslim youth aged 16-21 years old. According to Suleiman, both male and female youths in his study consistently reported feeling exhausted from having to prove their Americanness. In an attempt to be accepted by non-Muslim friends, certain youth in Suleiman's study declared to their non-Muslim friends that they have left Islam. These youth felt that to become successful in life, they must fight against what they viewed as "the shackles of Islam", renouncing their religious identity. It is interesting to note that at the time of the interviews, some of the participants in this study actually were attending Islamic schools. However, those participants who were volunteers in Islamic charity organisations felt empowered by their Muslim identity.

Thus, contemporary Muslim role models for philanthropy and ongoing efforts to directly involve these youth with community work through Muslim establishments can contribute towards a strong Muslim identity (Suleiman, 2017).

Minority Muslim youth need a clear idea of what being Muslim is about, as misconceptions about Islam may result in an identity crisis, making them vulnerable to be victims of radicalization. Lynch (2013) noted that British Muslim youth in Britain, for example, face great challenges from within and outside the family. Within the family, they have intergenerational conflict; their parents who were born in a different generation have difficulty to communicate with them. Common clashes between these youth and their parents include ideas related to education and choice of marriage partner. Outside the family on the streets, they are viewed daily with suspicion by non-Muslims, a manifestation of widespread Islamophobia. This kind of environment might push them towards alienation and an identity crisis (Lynch, 2013).

Intergenerational conflict is a phenomenon that had been studied in other communities and is not restricted to minority Muslim communities. In America, second generation Chinese Americans and Taiwanese Americans have been found to experience family related stress due to clashes with their elders, specifically parents, which led to depression and anxiety among these youth and their parents (Liu et. al., 2019). In immigrant African families living in Britain where the youth have been exposed to more modern environments, intergenerational gaps were heightened by the fact that the parents were migrants and came from more traditional backgrounds (Cook & Waite, 2015). Intergenerational differences related to cultural identities that led to conflict between parents and youth have also been found between first generation Indian immigrants and their second generation children in the United States (Jacob, 2017). In the Netherlands, people aged between 15-45 of Turkish and Moroccan origins were

found to have greater conflict with parents because of the migrant status of the parents. The relationship between these Turkish and Moroccan peoples with their parents were also found to be weaker when the children accepted more liberal values manifested through their behaviours (Kalmijn, 2018).

In an effort to gain insights about the mindset of young adult Muslim Australians, Mydin et. al. (2013) studied the content embedded in *Ten Things I Hate About Me*, a novel which highlights the struggles of a typical Muslim Australian female youth of Lebanese descent growing up and living in a non-Muslim majority country. Mydin et. al. noted that, apart from the biological and psychological changes which every adolescent must go through, minority youth also experience conflicts related to their social and political cultures, even as they try to assimilate and integrate themselves into the mainstream community. Making sense of religious norms and practices is confusing and overwhelming as these young adults try to develop their unique cultural awareness and identity. The emotional roller coaster created is a mixture of anxiety, confusion, pride, or fear of the identity that they believe they inherit (Mydin et. al. (2013).

Interestingly, in Hong Kong, Britain and America, researchers have found evidence of minority Muslim youth whose experience in consciously practising Islam actually helped them to establish both their religious as well as national identities. Specifically in Hong Kong, Islam has been found to be a stabilizing factor among religious Muslim minority youth with a cross-cultural background. Their religiosity and commitment towards Islam helped them to develop a sense of belonging and connectedness to Hong Kong. These Muslim youth took it upon themselves to become competent both in written Chinese and spoken Cantonese, to prove their seriousness to build the Hong Kong identity. To their understanding, being Muslim is a positive

identity that encouraged them to be pragmatic as human beings who must contribute positively in the community where they resided (Yuen & Leung, 2019).

Similarly, in Britain, Muslim minority youth who were visibly identified as observant Muslims did not experience conflict with their British identity, although they were treated differently by society. Their Muslim identity strengthened their resolve to be positive and proactive British citizens (Shazhadi et. al., 2017).

Likewise in America, to instil a sense of national belonging, Muslim minority youth involved themselves in government-affiliated community programmes together with other minority communities i.e. Protestants, Catholics and Jews, as an effort to overcome prejudice and discrimination from society (Corbett, 2016). None of these Muslim minority youth groups in Hong Kong, Britain and America shied away from their Muslim identity.

A repeated theme highlighted by the above researches is the identity crisis experienced by minority Muslim children and youth, who feel they must decide between accepting the identity of the country they reside in, or accepting Islam as a way of life. Yet, choosing Islam as a way of life does not require abandoning one's loyalty to one's country. It is possible to achieve strong dual identities, both religious and national, as shown by minority youth in Hong Kong, Britain and America. These are the youth who have a clear understanding of what it means to be a Muslim; it is a positive identity, and it requires putting in much effort to realise one's potential, contributing as much as possible for the benefit of the community. In truth, there is nothing that stops a minority Muslim youth from achieving such dual identities, religious and national, if only parents and other Muslim leaders in their midst are able and willing to guide them. However, it must be said that some parents in the Muslim minority families are not able to communicate well with their children. Parents must

equip themselves with communication tools and skills so that they can relate to their children especially teenagers. It has also been proven that getting Muslim children and youth to get involved in voluntary community work could help boost their religious identity. Thus, this is a practical approach for Muslim parents to emulate, whether they are in a Muslim minority or majority country.

2.4.1 Muslim Youth: Japan's Future to Islam

Why did this research target youth? Adolescence is a period of great change as well as providing a chance for youth to become inspired to be the best they can be (Samian, 2008). For participating Japanese youth, this programme provided the chance and the privilege to travel to, and experience first-hand a foreign country, for the youth to be responsible for themselves, away from their biological parents and guardians, although they were supervised and guided by host parents. Boys and girls typically undergo a period of identity search during adolescence, opening a window of opportunity to parents and concerned adults to introduce ideas and experiences that can mould them into successful men and women in the long run. Identity building intensifies during adolescence (Samian, 2008). As Al-Talib et. al. (2013) posited:

> During adolescence . . . teenagers begin examining themselves, society, the universe, and metaphysics, *al-ghayb*, the unseen. This is the time to discuss the true concepts of *tawhīd* (Oneness of God), *istikhlaf* (vicegerency of humankind), '*imran* (civilization building), the world view, the objectives of life, and the relationship with oneself, with others, the environment, and the Creator. (Al-Talib et. al., 2013)

Muslim minority youth have been found to avoid sharing their learnings about Islam to their non-Muslim teachers and friends (Berglund, 2013 & Berglund, 2017). Sahin (2013) researched the formation of religious identities in youth, making comparisons between Muslim majority and minority contexts. Sahin emphasized the

urgent need for Muslim educators to focus on the issue of bringing up Muslim youth with a solid Muslim identity. However, such a lofty objective can only be achieved by studying and grasping clearly the processes as well as patterns that currently colour their perceptions of Islam. According to Sahin:

> The current discussions within Islamic education should not be limited to the issues of dress, physical education, *halal* meat provisions, and so on. These are important issues, but the preoccupation with them is diverting the attention of Muslim educators from addressing the central task of Islamic education. (Sahin, 2013)

In Asia, children and youth are generally expected to adapt to norms within the group, rather than developing their own uniqueness. This creates conflict whereby the youth became aware of the importance of groups and relationships. The youth's well-being is also related to harmonious relationships with the groups they identify with. Through communication with others, the self and identity develop. According to the symbolic interaction theory proposed by Mead (1940, cited in Sugimura et. al., 2015), a person's identity is a result of the numerous interactions he has with others in the groups he is a part of. Identity formation is heavily affected by cultural values where the youth is exposed to regularly. The prevalent cultural values which shape the identity formation for Japanese youth is different from the Western perspective (Sugimura & Mizokami, 2012). In Western culture, there is relatively more room for individualism, whereas in Japan, the youth must carefully consider what others think of them, as having harmonious relationships is one of the most important goals in life. Hence, groups and relationships are relatively of higher importance in Japan, compared to the West (Sugimura et. al., 2015).

We learn from the above literatures how significant and distinct the period of adolescence is in comparison to other stages of the human life. Organisers and host parents involved in an intercultural exchange programme in which youth are the participants must take heed from the above points and provide enough time and space to address matters which are close to the youth's heart and mind, and to focus on aspects that can strengthen their identity development. For the Japan-Malaysia Youth Cultural Exchange Programme 2019, it means that the organisers and host parents must be prepared to accommodate the time and space to address fundamental questions including purpose of life, world of the unseen (God, angels), society and the universe at large from an Islamic point of view. Ignoring these matters would mean losing a golden opportunity to answer some deep, relevant questions tied to God, religion and Islam as exemplified by Prophet Ibrahim who was a young man when he challenged his people about idol worship. Prophet Ibrahim was not the only one. At the age of ten, Ali bin Abi Talib became the first male to embrace Islam. At such a young age, Ali already had a clear idea about his relationship with the Creator. Aisha RA, the wife of the Prophet SAW, was a leader at her young age, narrating many *hadiths* after the death of the Prophet SAW. Likewise, in the long run, the Cultural Exchange Programme aims to develop leadership skills in Muslim youth, by exposing them to sessions which are hoped to nurture their inherent leadership capabilities, including compassion and kindness (example: by preparing local cuisine and serving to the poor during the CEP), and confidence in public speaking (example: by presenting Japan and Japanese culture to the local Malaysian community during the CEP).

2.4.2 The Value of Experiential Learning

The main approach of the Cultural Exchange Programme is experiential learning, learning through experience, and learning by reflection upon doing. An experiential learner derives meaning from direct observation and experience, as opposed to rote learning (sit-and-listen). The underlying challenge in this programme is how to encourage the youth to learn and practice religiosity? In his book, *New Directions in Islamic Education: Pedagogy and Identity Formation*, Abdullah Sahin (2013) pointed out the idea of "methodical skepticism" experienced by the Prophet Ibrahim AS. One day, Prophet Ibrahim AS saw rotting animal bodies. It made him curious about resurrection in the Hereafter. He raised this question to Allah:

> “Behold" Ibrahim said: "My Lord! Show me how You give life to the dead." He said: "Do you not then believe?" He said: "Indeed! But to satisfy my own understanding." He said: "Take four birds; tame them to turn to you; put a portion of them on every hill and call to them: they will come to you (flying) with speed. Then know that Allah is Exalted in Power, Wise." (Al-Qur’an. Al-Baqarah. 2: 260)

Thus, by witnessing how live birds die, then placed at four different spots, then came alive before him, Ibrahim AS satisfied his own curiosity. Similarly, for the Japanese youth in this Cultural Exchange Programme, getting their hands on food preparation and distributing it to the poor, seeing for themselves how a *halal* factory operates and slaughtering chicken with their own hands, playing interactive outdoor games together and with Malaysian youth, experiencing the hospitality and kindness of their host parents and families, were very different from sitting down in a classroom and listening to someone lecturing them. The Cultural Exchange Programme was deliberately designed to be highly experiential in nature. The researcher will discuss the

experiences of the participants of the Cultural Exchange Programme in greater detail in Chapter 5.

2.5 Previous Studies on Youth and Cultural Exchange Programmes

It is noted that short-term homestays have been proven to leave a lasting impact on youth, especially in terms of language and culture learning (Kinginger et. al., 2016). Therefore, planning and implementing a short-term cultural exchange programme is a viable initiative to reach out to the Japanese Muslim youth, taking into account the cultural sensitivities of both the youth and host families. Mealtime together with the host family, especially, provides a golden opportunity for both host and visiting youth to exchange ideas on aesthetics of food and associated ideologies (Kinginger et. al., 2014). For example, students were found to be able to recognise and comprehend words that were region-specific in a four-week programme in Spain (Reynolds-Case, 2013). However, there might be a minimum level and amount of interactions with native speakers that need to take place before the visiting youth could gain cultural sensitivity (Martinsen, 2011). Through the host family, visiting youth come into contact with the community to benefit from established local networks (Castanēda & Zirger, 2011).

Living with the host family is an experiential, enriching process in which students learn about a new culture, picking up language and communication skills which they could not have done in their native countries. Homestay programmes provide an alternative to formal instruction; joining a homestay programme allows students to immerse themselves in another culture (Knight & Schmidt-Rinehart, 2002). Youths are impressionable. Living in an environment they are not familiar with, particularly in a different country, will likely help develop a better appreciation of people they see as "others" (Stephenson, 1999).

A youth can learn about other cultures from reading books or magazines or watching media, but it is virtually impossible to truly appreciate and gain insights of another culture without an intercultural immersion. Being there, seeing what is being done, listening to what is being said, feeling what it is like being treated within a family in that culture is totally different from just reading about such experiences or watching on television or other media forms. There is so much potential to be gained from an intercultural experience, as the above studies suggest; but to be successful and to leave a lasting impression, a cultural exchange programme must be properly planned in great detail. The host family must put in effort to have at least a basic understanding of the sensitivities in the participating youth's culture. Likewise, the participating youth must be briefed adequately so as not to give a negative impression on the host family. In this way, expectations are more likely to be met and the cultural exchange programme will be more likely to succeed.

2.5.1 Previous Studies on Japanese Youth and Cultural Exchange Programmes

If we were to look at the bigger picture of an international student exchange, we would see that it promotes mutual peace and understanding throughout the world (Deardoff, 2016). With careful planning and preparations, the cultural shock among incoming students would be minimised, and the effectiveness maximised (Seki, 2016). An immersive cultural experience would be life-transforming to students, not just a matter of changing locations for a period of time (Crawford, 2017).

In a cultural exchange programme that documented the experiences of Japanese students from Jissen Women's University in Japan coming to Visayas University, Philippines, it was found that, although the participants' intentions in the beginning were

purely academic, the results showed that they had developed self-confidence and connected with the Filipino students they interacted with. The Japanese students taking part in the study stated that they wanted to improve their English communication skills, yet what they gained was more than that. In this study, the researcher used the participants' written essays and responses to interviews to gain insights into the participants' intercultural experiences. This study suggests that intercultural experiences has the potential to develop participants' confidence and exposure and personal connection with the people they interacted with (Costas & Singco, 2016).

In a study that explored the experiences of Japanese students in a cultural exchange programme in rural America, it was found that the Japanese students noted a lack of friendliness from the American hosts; they were not treated as warmly as they expected. According to the researchers, this study underlined the importance of positive human interactions in a cultural exchange programme, even if such expectations were not stated up front by the participants. The researchers pointed out that in a cultural exchange programme, human interactions must be taken into account and can make or break the programme (Hommadova & Mita, 2016). In another cultural exchange programme that involved Japanese students staying with American host families, researchers noted how important it was for both incoming students and the host families to understand the concept of hospitality from the respective cultures. For example, Americans expect their guests to be more self-reliant, whereas Japanese have superior-inferior relationships. Lack of understanding on how each party (guests and hosts) should behave can cause confusion from either side, and may be interpreted as lack of hospitality (Kobayashi & Viswat, 2015).

In a cultural exchange programme between Tohoku University and University of Science and Technology in Beijing, first year students from the Department of Engineering are mixed and matched, then worked together to present their research. According to the researchers, although the Japanese and Chinese students had to put in many hours of proactive work and many hours of practising English to communicate with one another, despite communication gaps, working together with others of a different nationality and culture yet like-minded and motivated created a keen sense of accomplishment in the participants (Webeck et. al., 2019).

Intercultural interactions have been proven to bring about change over time, as long as the interactions are positive, constructive, with the intention of sharing noble values. Positive attitudes of a caring, kind and attentive Muslim are likely to generate interest in another Muslim, as well as non-Muslim as proven historically: Islam was introduced to the Malay Archipelago by Arab traders who acted as missionaries. These Arab traders travelled through two main routes. One was by sea, from Jeddah to Eden, before passing through Gujerat and landing on the shores of *Tanah Melayu*. The second group travelled by land, passing through Syria, Iraq, across Persia through Afghanistan, moving towards China, before stepping into the Malay Archipelago (Yahaya, 2001, cited by Ahmad et. al., 2012). From here we know that it takes a lot of deliberate effort to spread the message of Islam.

Transformation does not take place overnight. Change happens very gradually. Intercultural interactions between Muslims include: 1) creating harmonious relationships; 2) establishing brotherhood; 3) not insulting other Muslims; 4) not harbouring bad thoughts, looking for others' mistakes, back-biting; 5) making real efforts to understand one another; and 6) showing love and affection towards each other. Ethical intercultural interactions with non-Muslims include: 1) mutual

cooperation where possible; 2) firmness on matters of principle; 3) establishing a peaceful relationship with non-Muslims; 4) being considerate, treating non-Muslims with kindness; 5) not making friends with non-Muslims who are hostile towards Islam and Muslims; and 6) treating non-Muslims with justice (Pranoto et. al., 2016).

The outcomes of an international cultural exchange programme depend on the design and purpose of the programme. In Europe, the Erasmus programme is a well-known cultural exchange programme that has been running for more than three decades. In the Erasmus programme, introduced in 1987, European students get to study and live in different European countries. Erasmus students have been found to gain an enhanced identity as Europeans as well as their respective national identities upon completion of the programme. However, how much their European and national identities are enhanced depend on the kind of the interactions they had throughout the cultural exchange programme (Stoeckel, 2016).

A study abroad programme is transformative, an opportunity to broaden one's horizons, with many potentially positive outcomes. The Asian Youth Forum, for example, gathers thirty to eighty youth from ten to fifteen countries including Korea, Japan, Vietnam, Cambodia, the Philippines, Thailand and Indonesia and throughout Asia, in an intensive programme that requires them to exchange ideas within and outside the classroom. In this way, the youth gain a greater understanding of global issues and leadership (Cates, 2017). However, for a cultural exchange programme to be successful, both the sending and receiving parties in both countries must be adequately prepared. In the process of such preparations, culturally sensitive themes like gender roles and power relations, if not tactfully handled, could cause the programme to be less effective, as found in an exchange programme between Germany and Ghana (Abdulai, 2019).

It can be seen from the above studies that a cultural exchange programme, if initiated with good intentions, serves a long-term purpose similar to the *Al-ta'āruf* Concept. Indeed, establishing peaceful coexistence between cultures, known as *Al-ta'ayush Al-Silmīyy*, is the seventh, final stage of the Concept of *Al-ta'āruf* . The processof achieving peace and understanding requires sincere and serious efforts by a strong team to tailor the activities of the present study, so that it meets the needs of the incoming students, a process which begins with Stage 1 (*Tahāwur,* "Dialogue") and ends with Stage 7 (*Al-ta'ayush Al-Silmīyy*) . Such lofty aims are only achievable if the students become deeply involved in a foreign culture and connect personally with their respective hosts, immersing themselves into the lives of host families. Although the Concept of *Al-ta'āruf* was not mentioned explicitly in previous studies relating to cultural exchange programmes, the element of peaceful coexistence among different cultures may be found in most cultural exchange programmes carried out in the South East Asia, the United States of America, and the European countries. In addition, it would seem that there is still a limited number of research into the cultural exchange programmes involving Japanese Muslim youth. Therefore, this thesis seeks to contribute to determine if there is merit in reaching out to the Japanese Muslim youth through a cultural exchange programme in order to strengthen their faith in Islam.

2.6 Conclusion

The literature review in this chapter provides a brief historical, socio-economic, religio-institutional and political backgrounds for Muslims in Japan. It has helped the researcher gain valuable insights into how to design the Japan-Malaysia Youth Cultural Exchange Programme 2019 in such a way as to create meaningful experiences for the Japanese Muslim youth. To make the present study work, it is important to understand

and appreciate Japanese culture before trying to approach Japanese youth, and to be aware that religion in Japanese culture is a very personal matter. Talking about religion does not come naturally to Japanese youth whether they are Muslim or not. Therefore, the Malaysian hosts must do everything they can to earn the Japanese Muslim youth's trust, so that the youth do not feel awkward to open up about personal matters including religion.

Knowing the predominant attitude of indifference towards religion among ethnic Japanese, it is important that the present study be devised to create a consciousness and realisation in the minds of the Japanese Muslim youth as to how religion can have a powerful influence, a source of guidance and purpose in a person's life.

The Japanese Muslim youth, by virtue of their mixed parentage, were used to being treated as people who do not belong to Japanese society because they do not look Japanese. More than anything, they wanted to be treated with respect and dignity as human beings, nothing less. The Japanese Muslim youth longed to be accepted and acknowledged for who they are, especially in their period of life as adolescents. The present study must be fashioned in such a way as to make the Japanese Muslim youth feel accepted for who they are. It does not matter how they look or where their parents originated from, they must feel welcome in Malaysia and, ideally, desire to return to Malaysia in future. The Malaysian hosts must not make any unbecoming remarks about their physical features so as not to affect the *Al-ta'āruf* process in a negative way. The hosts must also take time not to rush to develop a warm, positive relationship with the Japanese Muslim youth they would be hosting.

This chapter spells out why this study is significant in light of the serious challenges faced by the Japanese Muslim parents in nurturing the Muslim identity in their children. It also presents the intercultural approach as an alternative, experiential method to engage with the Japanese Muslim youth, to complement usual methods of learning Islam e.g. classroom and lecture halls. Further, the intercultural approach in this study applies the *Al-ta'āruf* Concept, which forms the backbone of this research.

Geographically, Malaysia is a Muslim majority country that is located nearest to Japan. Hence, we owe it to the Muslims in Japan to lend a hand to preserve the identity of Muslim youth there. We cannot ignore the issues faced by the Muslim minority in Japan. Despite the growing number of Muslims in Japan, these are predominantly foreigners, not ethnic Japanese. The number of ethnic Japanese Muslims is tiny; Muslim parents are finding it truly challenging to raise their children as Muslims and to ensure these children choose to be Muslim for the rest of their adult life. The intercultural approach provides an alternative approach of reaching out to the Japanese Muslim youth, to grow their interest and confidence in Islam.

As part of humanity, no matter in which city we call home, the advent of the Internet as well as how businesses and communication take place are making the world more global. People of different religions and ethnicities are naturally curious of each other. Exposure to different cultures can broaden the worldviews of both host parents and students. If visiting non-Muslim students are connected with practising Muslims, it will help them understand how real Muslims live. The present study was actually a short-term homestay programme where Japanese foreign students were placed with local Muslim families as hosts. The present study was significant because it created an entirely new experience for the Japanese Muslim youth. For the first time, they had face-to-face interactions with practising Muslims in a Muslim majority country.

The next chapter discusses the research design and methods of data collection for this thesis.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this thesis is to conceptualise the *da'wah* approach to Japanese Muslim youth. It intends to answer three research inquiries: 1) to what extent does the Cultural Exchange Programme internalise the Concept of *Al-ta'āruf* ?; 2) how does the concept shape the experiences of the Japanese Muslim youth enrolled in the Cultural Exchange Programme?; and 3) what are the reasons for the impact of the Cultural Exchange Programme on the Japanese Muslim youth?

Whereas the previous chapter maps the relevant literature from Islamic approaches to *da'wah* to Muslims in the Muslim minority countries and *da'wah* to Muslim youth in those countries, this chapter focuses on the research design and methods which provide the data with which the researcher examines all the research questions. This chapter is divided into three parts: Section 3.1 discusses observation and interview as a method of ethnographic qualitative inquiry; Section 3.2 discusses what the researcher did to look for host parents; Section 3.3 summarises this research project, and encapsulates the nine key components relevant to the ethnographic research design (Creswell, 2018, p. 203-210). These are: 1) setting, 2) actors, 3) events, 4) processes, 5) ethical considerations, 6) data collection strategies, 7) data analysis, 8) verification and 9) reporting findings. The researcher will discuss each section in turn.

3.1 Observation and Interview as a Method of Ethnographic Inquiry

In this study, an ethnographic design was applied, with ethnographic data gathered from sites of events throughout the duration of the present study. The researcher examined experiences of the participants at a micro-social level. Researchers like Kinginger et. al. (2016), Kinginger et. al. (2014), Castanēda & Zirger (2011), Reynolds-Case (2013), and Knight & Schmidt-Rinehart (2002) in particular, employed an ethnographic research design to study experiences in cultural exchange programmes. However, their ethnography is different in terms of geographical and sociocultural contexts. For example, Kinginger et. al. (2016) studied experiences of high school students in the context of language learning; Castanēda & Zirger (2011) studied how students optimised abundant networks via their host families to achieve culture and language developments; Reynolds-Case (2013) studied students' cultural and pragmatic competency; while Knight & Schmidt-Rinehart (2002) studied the experiences of the host families throughout a cultural exchange programme. Ethnography is also the preferred design by some Muslim scholars who conducted research on Muslim society, for instance AbdKarim (2018) who adopted participant observation and interviews when conducting ethnographic research at a Muslim TV channel in London; and Yahya (2016) who conducted open-ended in-depth interviews to report on media relations of Malay Muslim editors in media organisations in Malaysia.

Nonetheless, among these ethnographic researchers, the present study mainly referred to Kinginger et. al. (2016) and Castanēda & Zirger (2011). The study by Kinginger et. al. (2018) which focused on language learning found that warm and cordial relations between students and host families can still develop despite major language challenges, and this finding guided the present research in terms of norms and practices to be mindful of throughout the present study. This is because, the majority

of the incoming Japanese Muslim youth in the present study were proficient only in Japanese; while the host parents and families could not speak Japanese. Castanēda & Zirger (2011) on the other hand observed and reported the meaningful, "rich and exceptional" experiences of students staying with host families in a short-term cultural exchange programme. As well, Castanēda & Zirger (2011) examined what facilitates or impairs participants' participation during the cultural exchange programme, which helped inform the present study too.

A closer look at the study done by Costas and Singco (2016) which documented the experiences of Japanese students participating in an English enhancement course at the University of Visayas in Cebu, Phillipines, will illustrate the significance of the qualitative approach. In this study, the researchers applied a qualitative approach, gathering the Japanese students' initial expectations of Cebuano culture prior to their departure and recording the student's thoughts and actions throughout the programme itself. This is deliberately done to help the researchers identify any changes in the students' thoughts and actions before and during the programme. The researchers asked the Japanese students to record their thoughts in the form of written essays. The researchers also kept records of interviews they conducted with the students. The written essays and recorded interviews were then analysed to identify themes related to the students' goals and expectations. The researchers concluded that, although the Japanese students initially participated in the cultural exchange programme for purely academic reasons i.e. to improve their English communication skills, the Japanese students reported that most of their meaningful experiences were related to attainment of self-confidence. Had Costas & Singco (2016) adopted a quantitative approach, the researchers would not have obtained detailed accounts of the students' responses. Also, the qualitative nature of this study allowed the researchers to see for themselves the

variants in the responses of the students. All these richness and depth would have been lost if the research was conducted in a quantitative manner.

The present research was meant as a pilot project with the hope that it could be repeated in future as a regular event, perhaps annually. As a start, the pilot programme saw Japanese Muslim youth coming to Malaysia on a return Japan-Malaysia ticket, paid either by themselves or by their parents/guardian. Ground costs of experiencing Malaysian Muslim life, which included accommodation, food, ground transport and visits to interesting places were covered by the Malaysian hosts.

It was hoped that each Japanese student would be able to bond with their respective host families, and that this visit would be akin to planting the seeds for a long-term relationship between student and host families, beyond the visit itself. The aim was for these youth to see for themselves how good, practising Muslim families lead their lives normally.

Since most Japanese speak only Japanese, communication was expected to be an issue throughout the present study. The researcher had identified four suitable persons who were available throughout the present study as full-time interpreters. The present study, the Japan-Malaysia Youth Cultural Exchange Programme 2019 Itinerary is shown in Table 1. The itinerary was based on consultation with Chiba Islamic Cultural Centre (CICC), designed as such so that the youth could gain insights about Islam and how Muslims live, not by sitting in a lecture hall for hours on end, but by spending time with practising Muslims and getting to know them at a personal level. Promotion of theprogramme and selection of students were carried out in Japan by the Chiba Islamic Cultural Centre (CICC), the Muslim Association of Shizuoka and the Osaka Islamic Centre. The programme was promoted for a month. A maximum of not

more than 20 students were considered as it was a pilot project. The bigger it was, the harder it wouldhave been to handle any arising issues especially emergencies.

3.1.1 Observation

There are several reasons why the researcher opted to apply ethnography as the method of choice for this study. First of all, ethnography allows the researcher, as a non-participant observer, to watch and scrutinise the participants and conduct interviews to gather and analyse data. In non-participant observation, the researcher quietly "observes the subjects from a distance without interacting with them" (Silverman, 2016, p. 104). Secondly, all of the youth are Japanese Muslims; they are a "single culture-sharing group", which makes them suitable for an ethnographic research (Creswell, 2018, p. 186). Thirdly, the researcher would be physically present, together with the participants, throughout all events of the Cultural Exchange Programme, the research period, allowing her to witness first-hand the daily experiences of participants. Through observation, the researcher could gain understanding of the context of the participants' behaviours and discover things which the participants might not like to mention during interviews. This is the norm of an ethnographic study as highlighted by Fraenkel & Wallen (1990, cited in Creswell, 2018, p. 204). As a non-participant observer, the researcher needs to find out what is going on. To achieve this, she must be as discrete and unobtrusive as possible, so that the participants feel comfortable to be themselves and do not feel compelled to act otherwise. Participants in an ethnographic study bring their own personal histories and as a result, will form their own meanings as they mingle with one another.

3.1.2 In-Depth Interviews

The interviews used in this research project are open-ended. Open-ended questions give ample room for participants to express themselves in rich, descriptive words. This qualitative approach allowed the researcher to examine and identify themes and patterns in the responses of the participants, which would have been missed if the quantitative approach was applied (Creswell, 2018, p. 188). As human experiences are subjective and differs from person to person, the qualitative approach allowed the researcher to gather rich, detailed data, and therefore gain more in-depth insights pertaining to the experience of participants, what the participants felt and did (Pelzang & Hutchinson, 2018). Data gathered and reported is in the form of words, not in numbers (Adhabi & Anozie, 2017). The present study focuses on participants' perceptions and experiences, and the meanings these perceptions and experiences bring to their lives. The present study, therefore, casts the spotlight on the process and outcomes. For this purpose, the researcher pays attention to detail rather than make generalisations, in an attempt to create realities that mirror those of the participants. If a quantitative approach was used, the researcher would have been limited to numeric data and close-ended questions. Close-ended questions would not have enabled the researcher to collect rich and descriptive information with regards to what the participants felt and did. The researcher hopes that this study would provide a legitimate basis for future related studies. The key instrument in this research was the researcher.

3.2 Identifying Suitable Host Parents

In this research, host parents and families played a critical role in shaping the experience of the participants. Several past studies on cultural exchange programmes have highlighted the need to identify suitable host parents and families failing which,

the programme would not have succeeded. For example, host parents and families must be mindful of cultural sensitivities (Kobayashi & Viswat, 2015, Kinginger et. al., 2016 & Kinginger et. al., 2014). Host parents and families must be aware that a minimum level and amount of interactions are needed before cultural sensitivity could take place (Martinsen, 2011). Also, if the host parents and family members do not extend their presence during the programme, it would be difficult, even impossible for the participants to come into contact with the community and other established local networks (Castanēda & Zirger, 2011), thereby making it non-immersive as originally intended (Knight & Schmidt-Rinehart, 2002). In fact, such circumstances would have rendered the present research ineffective and possibly failing its objectives.

The researcher sought to look for suitable host parents by posting a personal enquiry in a closed *Whatsapp* group, whose membership comprised of people the researcher had known well for many years. When the researcher needed to look for more host parents, she posted enquiries in her Qur'an study groups. The researcher interviewed the interested parties over the telephone to ascertain their personal and professional background. Potential host parents who passed the initial interview were asked to send photos of the relevant rooms and bathrooms of their homes where they planned to host the Japanese Muslim youth. These information and photos were shared with CICC, the official organiser. In this way, the researcher approached and interviewed host parents individually to ensure their integrity and suitability.

3.3 Encapsulating the Study

This section encapsulates the nine key components relevant to the ethnographic research design (Creswell, 2018, p. 203-210).

3.3.1 Setting

The main locations of the research were in the city of Kuala Lumpur and its vicinity, as shown in Table 1. As the day-to-day itinerary in the Cultural Exchange Programme was rather intense and involved locations mostly in Kuala Lumpur, the researcher recruited host parents who lived in Kuala Lumpur itself. If a host parent lived outside of Kuala Lumpur, it would have taken a long time for the host parent to ensure that the participant he or she was hosting reached the intended locations, causing delays to the entire group. The timeline for this research is shown in Table 3.2.

3.3.2 Actors

There were several actors in this research: official organiser, co-organisers, participants, host parents, partner organisations, Malaysian youth volunteers, and Malaysian interpreters.

a. Organiser: The official organiser for this study was the Chiba Islamic Cultural Centre (CICC).
b. Co-organisers: The researcher and her spouse acted as co-organisers under their small private company, MyriadVentures Enterprise.
c. Japanese Muslim participants: The population in this research were Japanese Muslim youth whose ages were between 15-23 years old, residing in different locations in Japan, which meant they were either students in high school or university. These youth lived in Japan with their families, having access to social media, as the promotion of the Cultural Exchange Programme was carried out over Facebook, Instagram and other available social media channels by the official organiser of the programme, the Chiba Islamic Cultural

Centre (CICC), based in Chiba, Japan. The sampling comprised of 8 males and 1 female Japanese Muslim youth, who were able to afford the Japan- Malaysia return flight and travel/medical insurance. The youth were required to apply through an online application form whereby they must state their personal particulars and the reasons why they wished to participate in the programme, which helped the researcher and the official organiser determine their suitability for the programme.

d. Host parents: All were Muslims. All were Malaysians, the majority belongedto the Malay ethnic group, except for one parent who was Singaporean, and one couplewho belonged to the Pakistani-Indian ethnic group. Host parents had the means to cover all ground costs of the students they would be hosting – accommodation, transport and tickets to interesting places as laid out in the itinerary.

e. Partner organisations: Several establishments lent their support to the study: Islamic Science University Malaysia (USIM), Dr Zainol's Halal Chicken factory, Radiant Retreats Janda Baik, Saujana Janda Baik, *Kejiranan Rukun Tetangga* (KRT) Parklane Heights Bandar Tasik Puteri Rawang, Malaysia-Japan International Institute of Technology (MJIIT), National Mosque, Islamic Arts Museum, Surau Dagang Avenue Ampang, and Islamic International University Malaysia.

f. Malaysian youth volunteers: These were mainly the children of the host family. During the outing to Janda Baik, several postgraduate students from National University of Malaysia (UKM) participated in the events carried out.

g. Malaysian interpreters: There were four fulltime interpreters, two males and two females, all volunteers.

3.3.3 Events

The full itinerary throughout the Cultural Exchange Programme is as detailed below.

Table 3.1: Itinerary of Cultural Exchange Programme

Day/Date	Time	Purpose	Location	Activity
Saturday Day 1 17/8/2019	Before Noon		KLIA /KLIA2	• Arrival at host family house. • Rest and Easy
	5:00 pm	Programme Overview	Ampang	• Welcoming Dinner • Programme Briefing
Sunday Day 2 18/8/2019	10.00 am	Cultural Experience & Local Networking Develop Leadership Skills	Rawang, Selangor (1.5 hours from KL)	• Cook local dishes & lunch • Serve the poor folks
Monday Day 3 19/8/2019	10.00 am – 12.00 pm	Understanding of Islamic Knowledge	Dr Zainol's Halal Chicken Factory, Kajang	• Briefing on halal industry and tour of organic factory plus lunch https://azzainmart.com/ayam-dr-zainol
	1.00 pm – 5.30 pm	Leadership and Academic Institution	USIM (Islamic Science University Malaysia, Nilai) (1 hour from KL)	• Islamic Centre, Japan Cultural Centre, Faculty of Leadership & Management, USIM • Friendly zakat board game with USIM https://www.usim.edu.my

Table 3.1: continued

Day/Date	Time	Purpose	Location	Activity
Tuesday Day 4 20/8/2019	9.00 am – 1.00 pm	Develop Basic Leadership Skills	Janda Baik, Pahang (1 hour from KL)	• Local village: Event to be cofacilitated by Radiant • Retreat (obstacles, fishing, crazy golf, archery, puzzle games) http://radiant-retreats.com/
	2.00 pm - 5.00 pm	Cultural Experience & Local Networking		• Fig Farm (Benefigs) and • Saujana Janda Baik riverside homestay https://www.facebook.com/benefigs.official/ http://www.saujanajandabaik.com/
Wednesday Day 5 21/8/2019	10.00 am - 12.00 pm	Cultural/ Islamic Knowledge	Kuala Lumpur	• Islamic Arts Museum https://www.iamm.org.my/
	1.00 pm - 5.00 pm	Academic Institution & Networking & Local Culture with Japanese lecturers	Malaysia-Japan International Institute of Technology (MJIIT), KL	• Lunch and Pray Masjid UTM (next to MJIIT) • Highlight on Japanese learning institution, collaboration with Malaysia. https://mjiit.utm.my/
Thursday Day 6 22/8/2019	9.00 am - 1.00 pm	Cultural/ Islamic Knowledge	Kuala Lumpur	• Islamic Arts Museum https://www.iamm.org.my/
			National Mosque	• Visitation and tentative meeting with Tun Mahathir (subject to PM's availability) http://www.perdana.org.my
	5.00 pm - 7.00 pm	Multicultural Experience	Surau Dagang Avenue, Ampang, KL	• Breaking fast & dinner with locals at surau https://www.facebook.com/suraudagangavenue/
	7.00 pm - 8.15 pm	Present Japan &Networking	Surau Dagang Avenue, Ampang, KL	

Table 3.1: continued

Day/Date	Time	Purpose	Location	Activity
	8.15 pm - 9.30 pm	Develop Basic Leadership Skills		• Japanese youth share their culture with the local community
Friday Day 7 23/8/2019	11.00 am – 2.00 pm	Academic Knowledge	Islamic International University, Malaysia	• Overview of IIUM and enrolment requirement • Friday Prayer http://www.iium.edu.my/institute/istac
	2.30 pm – 5.00 pm	Multicultural Experience	Kuala Lumpur	• Free and Easy
	5.00 pm - 7:30 pm	Programme concludes Post Evaluation	Selected Host Parent's House	• Farewell dinner & post-mortem
Saturday Day 8 24/8/2019	Various timings		KLIA/ KLIA2	• Return to Japan

3.3.4 Processes

The step-by-step processes carried out from the time the idea was conceived, followed by discussions between the Malaysian co-organisers and the official organiserin Japan, to obtaining support from two other Muslim associations in Japan, to securingsupport and commitment from host parents, to preparing digital documents, to briefing for host parents, to carrying out the actual Cultural Exchange Programme to the writingof this thesis is shown below.

Table 3.2: Cultural Exchange Programme Research Timeline

No.	Month	Remarks
1.	March 2019	•Introduced idea of Japan-Malaysia Youth Cultural Exchange Programme to the Chiba Islamic Cultural Centre (CICC), who agreed to become the official sponsor.
2.	April/May 2019	•Sought and obtained support from Shizuoka Muslim Association and Osaka Muslim representative.
3.	May 2019	•*Whatsapp* group formed for Malaysian host parents, and representatives from Chiba, Osaka and Shizuoka. Discussed main objectives. •Presented draft itinerary. Began contacting and securing support from "gatekeepers" of places of interest. Host parents confirmed participation. •CICC created a poster, began to promote programme to interested youths.
4.	June 2019	•Prepared digital documents: Host Parent Application Form, Student Application Form, Student Declaration, Joining Instructions for Students. Documents translated into Japanese where necessary. •Applied for MAA Takaful in Malaysia for all applicants for the purpose of Islamic medical/accident/travel insurance.
5.	July 2019	•Briefing for host parents. •Creation of LINE group for Japanese and Malaysian youth volunteers for ease of communication, entirely in Japanese.
6.	August 2019	•Japanese youth arrived, welcomed by host parents at Kuala Lumpur International Airport. Cultural Exchange Programme conducted. Host parents bade farewell at same airport on final day.
7.	September 2019	•Feedback collected from Japanese youth, Malaysian volunteers & host parents.
8.	December 2019	•Thesis writing in progress.

3.3.5 Ethical Considerations

The list of research participants and their corresponding host parents are as shownbelow. Each participant gave the organisers their informed consent by signing a consent form. Informed Consent is an ethical practice required for research that uses human subjects, to show that their participation is voluntary and that they are aware of

their participation in the research. The researcher also must undertake the responsibility of ensuring that all personal data shared by participants remain confidential.

Table 3.3: List of Research Participants & Host Parents

No.	Pesudonym	Gender	Age	Location	Level of English	School	Grade	Host Parents' Pesudonym	Address
1	Yuta	Male	20	Osaka	Low	Kyoto Sangyo University	High School 2	Mr Ahmad & Mrs Rosila	Ampang
2	Daiki	Male	17	Saitama	Low	Eimei High School	High School 2	Mr Faruq & Mrs Sabariah	Ampang
3	Kaito	Male	16	Fukuoka	Excellent	Ohori Senior High School	High School 2	Mr Azim & Mrs Wani	Gombak
4	Riku	Male	17	Chiba	Low	Tokai University Urayasu Senior High School	High School 2	Mr Azim & Mrs Wani	Gombak
5	Kawai	Male	19	Gifu Ken	Low	Japan Pan Sougo Business Senmon School	High School 1	Mr Zakwan & Mrs Ani	Shah Alam
6	Haruto	Male	19	Chiba	Low	Chiba Prefecture Urayasu High School	High School 3	Mr Zakwan & Mrs Ani	Shah Alam
7	Tatsuki	Male	18	Aichi	Intermediate	Nanzan Kokusai Senior & Junior High School	High School 3	Mr Faruq & Mrs Sabariah	Ampang
8	Marisi	Female	15	Kanagawa	Low	Tochigi Gakuen	High School 1	Mr Musa & Mrs Amin	Shah Alam
9	Tokuda	Male	17	Kyoto	Low	Hokuryo High School	High School 2	Mr Musa & Mrs Amin	Shah Alam

In anticipation of potential issues pertaining to medico-legal matters, the researcher created a digital document called the Student Declaration Form. This form was filled by the visiting Japanese youth before they flew to Malaysia. In the Student Declaration Form, the students or their parents/guardians (for minors) proactively absolved host parents from responsibility to cover medical costs in the event that something untoward happens e.g. accidents or serious illness. Specifically, the Student Declaration Form asks every applicant to respond to the following statements:

a. "I agree that the Chiba Islamic Cultural Centre (CICC) and the Malaysian host families will be exempted from responsibility or accountability in case of sickness and accidents and loss in the entire programme including the trip between Japan and Malaysia." (Yes/No).
b. "I hereby absolve liability of the host families or organisers for sickness, accidents or unforeseen circumstances. I acknowledge that no claims will be made by me or on my behalf in relation to this programme." (Yes/No).
c. "In case of an emergency, I hereby authorise the host families/organisersto take what they deem as necessary action including seeking urgent medical help, and I agree that I will be responsible for the medical bills and related costs." (Yes/No).
d. "I will not make any claims against the host families/organisers for any damages caused and expenses incurred for medical bills." (Yes/No).
e. "I confirm that I have overseas insurance and instructions for who to contact in case of emergency." (Yes/No). (State name of the insurance, and contact information below).
f. Signed on this day/date:
g. (Signature - to be signed by parent/guardian in case of minor)

h. Urgent contact number (parent or responsible adult other than participant)

The researcher created an online feedback form for host parents and participating Japanese youth. The feedback form asks for:

a. Email address
b. What the person liked about the programme
c. Suggestions for improvement
d. If the person would like to participate in future programmes (Yes/No)

A banner to welcome the Japanese students on arrival was designed and printed. The e-version of this banner is enclosed in Appendix 1. The Day-to-Day Report of the Cultural Exchange Programme is shown in Appendix 2. The summary of digital documents used in this research is listed in Appendix 3.

3.3.6 Online Application & Feedback Forms

The potential host families were approached individually. Each host parent was required to fill up the online Host Parent Application Form, and provide personal details as well as details of their family members. Based on the information given, the researcher properly matched them with incoming Japanese youth in terms of age and interests, where possible. Specifically, the Host Parent Application Form asked for the host parent's:

a. Email address
b. Full name
c. IC / Passport Number
d. Full home address

e. Job designation

f. Telephone number

g. Have you ever been a host parent before? (Yes/No)

h. How many children do you have? Please state their gender(s) and age(s)

i. Tell us why you wish to participate in this programme

j. What are your expectations of this programme?

k. Please state any pertinent information you would like the organiser to know

l. Informed Consent: Would you allow your responses to be used to research ways to improve the Cultural Exchange Programme in future?(Yes/No)

In this research, the researcher studied the shared patterns of behaviours, language and actions of the observed intact group that comprised of nine Japanese Muslim youth; eight males and one female. Participants' goals and expectations were gathered prior to their arrival in Malaysia using the Student Application Form.

Specifically, the Student Application Form asked for the youth's:

a. Email address

b. Full name

c. Passport ID

d. Nationality

e. Date of birth

f. Gender (male/female)

g. Name of high school/university

h. Grade in high school/university

i. Present address

j. Telephone number

k. Level of English proficiency (low/intermediate/excellent)

l. Special needs (food allergies/vegetarian/none)

m. Personal belief: (Muslim/Christian/Buddhist/Shintoist/Atheist/Other)

n. Tell us why you wish to participate in this programme

o. What are your expectations for this programme?

p. Informed Consent: Would you allow your responses to be used to research ways to improve the Cultural Exchange Programme in future? (Yes/No).

All the above details were collected to allow the researcher to gather accurate background information about both the Malaysian host parents and Japanese Muslim participants to ensure only suitable participants were selected. The participant information also helped the researcher to identify goals and expectations of all participants and to see if these would change after the programme.

The Chiba Islamic Cultural Centre (CICC), the official organiser for the Cultural Exchange Programme, completed the processing and screening for the Japanese youth using the Student Application Form which the researcher created and which the CICC translated into Japanese. These digital records were used to match each Japanese youth with suitable host parents.

Upon completion of the programme, after they have returned to Japan, all participants were required to submit written responses to interview questions via the online Student Feedback Form. This step was taken to assist the researcher to identify shared themes as well any changes in thoughts and perspectives among the Japanese Muslim youth. Specifically, the Student Feedback Form asked for the youth's:

a. Email address

b. Full name

c. What he or she liked about the programme

d. Suggestions for improvements

e. If he or she would participate in future programmes

f. The top 3 things he or she learnt during the programme

g. One thing he or she would do differently upon returning to Japan

The feedback format for the Student Feedback is done in such a way as to allow detailed, in-depth responses which were then used as data to gauge the outcomes of the programme.

3.3.7 Data Analysis Procedures

This research is inductive in that the researcher used the data gathered from in-depth, open-ended interviews as well as non-participant observations to form the themes using the Concept of *Al-ta'āruf* as an intercultural *da'wah* approach from past research mapped in the Conceptual Framework. The researcher was physically present together with all participants throughout the Cultural Exchange Programme to observe their responses to the events. The researcher also collected the participants' verbal feedback about the Programme during the Farewell Dinner. Each participant was given between 3 to 5 minutes to share with the organisers, co-organisers and host parents and families, what they think and feel about the programme. With the exception of one Japanese Muslim youth, all of them presented their verbal feedback in Japanese. The four interpreters on standby then took turns to translate the gist of their feedback to the

audience. The open-ended questions enabled the researcher to collate all the verbal and online feedback, check them for consistency, and analysed them for recurring themes.

3.3.8 Verification

To ensure the validity of the data analysis, the researcher adopted the following strategies from Creswell (2018, p. 199):

1. The researcher managed the researcher's bias by reflecting on her own personal and professional background, being extra careful in interpreting what she observed, particularly from the cultural angle, to minimise personal biases from influencing data analysis. Further, her self-reflection was aimed at bringing an honest and open narrative to this programme.
2. The researcher cross-checked and examined data from verbal sources (presented during the farewell dinner) against data from online interviews (submitted by participants after they have returned to Japan) to ensure consistency and justification for the themes.
3. The researcher used rich, thick descriptions for the findings to help create a sense of shared experiences for the reader, so that the reader feels transported to the setting and connect with the actors and the day-to-day events of the programme as much as possible.
4. The researcher presented negative information about Japanese youth who participated in a cultural exchange programme in America, whereby the youth did not report a positive experience, attributed to a lack of understanding by both the youth and American host families concerning hospitality concepts in Japan and America. Americans expect their guests to be more self-reliant,

whereas Japanese have superior-inferior relationships. Hence, a short-term cultural exchange programme does not necessarily create positive experiences.

5. The researcher spent a prolonged period with the Japanese Muslim youth throughout the Cultural Exchange Programme. In fact, she was present during all events to observe them. The only times she was not with them was in the evenings when they had to return to their host families' homes.
6. The researcher used peer debriefing to enhance the accuracy of accounts and results of analysis. The representative from Chiba Islamic Cultural Centre, the official organiser, was present together with the researcher and her spouse to keep checking on their observations and perceptions about the Japanese youth, to help ensure the programme progressed as planned.

3.3.9 Reporting the Findings

As this study is naturalistic in nature, the results are displayed in descriptive, narrative form. Thus, the experiences of the Japanese Muslim youth are presented in rich accounts, not as a scientific report. A rich narrative in which the researcher shares the participant's voices as well as her observations, is the ideal platform to present a comprehensive and clear picture of what the youth experienced, what transpired throughout the programme, as well as the meanings the youth attributed to these experiences. A rich narrative would be best to help the reader connect with the participants' experiences. The analysis and findings of this ethnographic research are presented in Chapter 4 of this thesis.

3.4 Conclusion

In this research, the intercultural *da'wah* approach applied the *Al-ta'āruf* Concept to create an innovative alternative to reach out to second generation Japanese Muslim minority youth. The second generation Japanese Muslim youth grow up in a highly challenging environment which does not encourage them to practice Islam as adults; researchers need to look into more effective ways of engaging with them. If proven successful, the intercultural *da'wah* approach based on the *Al-ta'āruf* Concept may be applied to other minority Muslim communities residing in different parts of the world, connecting Muslim families and communities in different nations, with the clear objective of growing a worldwide community of Muslim youth who are confident with their Muslim identity.

CHAPTER 4

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSIONS

This chapter focuses on how the Concept of *Al-ta'āruf* is internalised in the Cultural Exchange Programme, how the concept shaped the experiences of the Japanese Muslim youth enrolled in the Cultural Exchange Programme and presents reasons for the impact of the Cultural Exchange Programme on the Japanese Muslim youth. Section 4.1 presents the experiences of eminent Japanese Muslims interacting with practising Muslims; Section 4.2 presents the mission of the Cultural Exchange Programme; Section 4.3 maps the Concept of *Al-ta'āruf* against the activities carried out during the Cultural Exchange Programme, by presenting the seven stages of *Al-ta'āruf* (*Tahāwur, Ta-'arūf* , *Ta-'āyush, Tasāmuh, Tabādul, Ta-'akhī*, and *Al-ta'ayush Al-Silmīyy*); and Section 4.4 maps the five domains of human connection (Physical, Intellectual, Emotional, Cultural, and Spiritual) tied to *Al-ta'āruf* within the Cultural Exchange Programme.

4.1 Experiences of Eminent Japanese Muslims Interacting With Practising Muslims

Let us begin by looking at how personal experience interacting with practising Muslims in a majority Muslim country has influenced the understanding of Islam and *da'wah* commitment of Hajj Kyoichiro Sugimoto, the present Chairman of the Chiba Islamic Cultural Centre. When he was 19 years old, Hajj Sugimoto accepted a personal invitation from a good friend of his to visit the latter's village in Bangladesh. Hajj Sugimoto stayed there for about a week. The villagers were so hospitable that by the

end of his short stay, the kindness and generosity of the entire Muslim neighbourhood had left an indelible impression on his heart:

> They were poor but so warm and welcoming. Everyone invited me to their homes and served me the best food they had, despite having so little (Personal Communication, 3 December, 2017)

Friday came. Hajj Sugimoto's friend disappeared for a few hours without any explanation. When Hajj Sugimoto enquired where he was, his friend said that he went for Friday prayers. Hajj Sugimoto asked if he could follow him the following Friday, to which his friend consented. During Friday prayers, Hajj Sugimoto followed the movements without understanding a word or action, but the warm brotherhood and the welcoming atmosphere he felt in the masjid interacting with other Muslims left a powerful, positive impression on him. He also became curious about the Qur'an:

> Later, I began to read a copy of the Qur'an. I read about Jannah (Paradise) and Jahannam (Hell) and I began to think: "What if these are true?" (Personal Communication, 3 December, 2017)

Thus, began Hajj Sugimoto's introduction to Islam. Consequently, the researcher discovered that Hajj Sugimoto was not the only notable Japanese Muslim who embraced Islam following the memorable experience of interactions with Muslim families. The story of how two other Japanese men - Sulaiman Akira Hamanaka and Umar Mita - reverted to Islam were comparable to that of Sugimoto's. Sulaiman Akira Hamanaka, an eminent ethnic Japanese Muslim revert became a Muslim at the age of 19. Like Sugimoto, Hamanaka's journey to Islam did not begin by attending a lecture about Islam. Hamanaka travelled to Indonesia as he was a big fan of Indonesian and Malaysian badminton players. In Indonesia, he stayed with an Indonesian Muslim family for a short time to learn more about their culture. Hamanaka observed that the

entire family would pray behind their father and dinner was a special time when the family would discuss all sorts of matters. The strong family bond captured Hamanaka's curiosity. The strong community spirit among Indonesian Muslims did not escape his attention either. Hamanaka also visited Singapore and observed similar practices in the Muslim family as well as the Muslim community which hosted him there (Japanese Muslims, 2013). Hamanaka later returned to Japan, remained a dedicated Muslim and built a mosque in Niihama prefecture.

Likewise, the late Umar Mita also embraced Islam after positive interactions with Muslims. According to Marimoto (1980), Umar Mita, an ethnic Japanese revert and the first Muslim to translate the Arabic Qur'an into Japanese, travelled to China at a young age. Umar Mita interacted with the Chinese Muslims in China and it was this change in environment and intense intercultural experience that left such a strong impression on him, leading him to become a committed Muslim later. However, unlike Hamanaka and Sugimoto, Umar Mita lived among the Chinese Muslims for a long period of time. For the record, Hamanaka and Umar Mita were not strangers. As a child, Hamanaka often visited Umar Mita who was then in his eighties in Tokyo. Back then, Mita San used to encourage Hamanaka to strive in the path of Allah, even though Hamanaka was still very young and yet to be a Muslim (Japanese Muslims, 2013). Thus, the documented reports of dynamic, eminent and committed Japanese Muslims, namely Umar Mita, Sulaiman Akira Hamanaka and Hajj Sugimoto showed that personal experience through intercultural interactions with practising Muslims has the potential to leave positive, lasting impressions on the *mad'u*.

4.2 The Mission of The Cultural Exchange Programme

According to the NPO homepage, the purpose of the Chiba Islamic Cultural Centre as a corporation "is to contribute to the realization of international peace and security by carrying out projects to promote cultural exchange and friendship between Japan and Islamic countries, mainly for residents in Chiba Prefecture and its surrounding areas" (NPO homepage, 2020). Indeed, this is in line with the purpose of the Cultural Exchange Programme. When the researcher asked what his expectations were for the Cultural Exchange Programme before it started, Hajj Sugimoto's response was short but concise:

> (That the) youth will be self-motivated in learning [. . .]
> (Personal Communication, 3 December, 2017)

Co-organiser of the Cultural Exchange Programme from Malaysia, Haji Ahmad Fakhri Hamzah said:

> A major issue for the Japanese Muslims is a serious lack of resources for Islamic education, especially for the youth. We need a paradigm shift from the typical youth conferences in which participants sit and listen to the teacher with little or no interaction [. . .] (Personal Communication, 30 August, 2019)

To the researcher, the fact that Umar Mita, Hamanaka and Hajj Sugimoto all reverted to Islam and became committed to *da'wah* in Islam after 1) a change in environment and 2) direct exposure to practising Muslim families suggested that the intercultural interaction approach has a good chance to work. After all, Allah declares, "O mankind! We created you from a single (pair) of a male and a female, and made you into nations and tribes, that you may know each other. . ." (Al-Qur'an. Al-Hujurāt. 49:13). To the researcher, this verse proved that the intercultural approach was a worthwhile endeavour to pursue if only a roadmap, a structure to the *Al-ta'āruf*

Conceptcould be drawn up. Islam after all is a way of life and permeates every aspect of a Muslim's life. Such was the mission of The Cultural Exchange Programme: To touch the hearts and minds of the Japanese Muslim youth. The Japanese Muslim youth wouldobserve and experience what it means to be a practising Muslim in multicultural Malaysia. It would be an experiential programme through and through. After more discussions, an agreement was reached to run the Japan-Malaysia Youth Cultural Exchange Programme in August 2019, with CICC as the official organiser representingJapan, and the researcher and her spouse of MyriadVentures Enterprise as co-organisersrepresenting Malaysia.

4.3 The Application of The Concept of *Al-ta'āruf* to The Cultural Exchange Programme

This section presents the analysis of the results relating to the experience of the Japanese Muslim youth enrolled in the Cultural Exchange Programme. To achieve this, the section is divided into subsections: section 4.3.1) *Tahāwur* (dialogue); section 4.3.2) *Ta-'arūf* (mutually knowing, mutually interacting); section 4.3.3) *Ta-'āyush* (to coexist); section 4.3.4) *Tasāmuh* (tolerate each other's differences; section 4.3.5) *Tabādul* (exchange of ideas); section 4.3.6) *Ta-'akhī* (to associate as brother); and section 4.3.7) *Al-Ta-'āyush Al-Silmīyy* (to coexist in peace and harmony).

4.3.1 *Tahāwur* (Dialogue)

The initial stage of the *Al-ta'āruf* process in the present study started in December2017 when the researcher and her spouse met Hajj Sugimoto of the Chiba Islamic Cultural Centre at the Shizuoka Mosque in Japan. To counter Islamophobia (Takahashi,2018 & Ghazali, 2016), mosques in Japan were and still are used to voice

out support against terrorism (Yamagata, 2019) and the Shizuoka Mosque was no different. Traveling together with a group of Malaysian educators, the researcher and her spouse were keen to explore the Japanese way of raising children. Halfway through, the trip brought them to the mosque to do their noon prayers. In Malaysia, the word "mosque" conjures an image of a huge building where Muslims worship, but the Shizuoka Mosque, the researcher observed, was a small apartment, approximately measuring 700 square feet only. There was only one little toilet; everyone had to queue to take their *wudhu'* (ablution) when prayer time came. It was a tight squeeze for everyone present. After prayers, the researcher observed a tall man who stood up and introduced himself as Hajj Kyoichiro Sugimoto, Chairman of the Chiba Islamic Cultural Centre or CICC for short. He wanted to brief the guests about the Muslim community in Japan. What he shared shocked the audience. He said, "Nine out of ten Japanese Muslim youth opt not to practice the Muslim faith as adults [. . .]" (Sugimoto, 2017). Although there is no statistic at present to support the "nine out of ten" claim made by Hajj Sugimoto, Mutiara (2017) stated that indeed many Japanese youth do not practice Islam due to a lack of proper education in Islamic subjects, strong peer influence and huge societal pressure to conform.

Following the initial meeting at Shizuoka Mosque, the researcher and her spouse visited the Chiba Islamic Cultural Centre twice and on both occasions, they presented parenting talks to the Muslim community there. During these sessions, the researcher had the opportunity to meet other Japanese Muslim parents, who shared the enormous challenges they faced in raising their children as Muslims in Japan. What transpired next was a series of discussions between the researcher, her spouse and Hajj Sugimoto. Early in the discussions, Hajj Sugimoto expressed his openness for another approach to educate the Japanese Muslim youth. According to him, he had brought his own teenage

son to conferences abroad but the latter did not seem to learn anything. As a consequence, Hajj Sugimoto himself was not keen to try running a typical youth conference for the Japanese Muslim youth. The lessons from such conferences, based on his past experiences, had failed to stick, as far as his son was concerned.

As parents who had children living in minority Muslim communities in different parts of the world, the researcher and her spouse understood the concern. Like the Japanese Muslim parents, the researcher, too wanted her children and grandchildren to consciously choose to lead the Muslim way of life. As a student in America years ago, she had witnessed and heard of Godless lives gone awry. Drugs, substance abuse, sexual orgies, unwed pregnancies, alcoholism are just some of the issues some youth fall prey into without a solid grounding in religious values.

As highlighted by Kurucan & Erol (2012), *tahāwur,* having a dialogue, is a criticalcomponent in realising mutual cooperation and understanding as well as respect among all groups intent to achieve certain goals and objectives. Interactions through *tahāwur* (dialogue) lead to consultation before forming opinions; we seek to find ways to cooperate (Elius et. al., 2019). In other words, *tahāwur* opens the door to *ta-'arūf* . *Tahāwur* here refers to a friendly conversation to build rapport and trust, which makes all sides feel encouraged and supported, and to proactively avoid potential misunderstandings. Dialogue and negotiations must take place before sealing a clear understanding between two parties (Al-Mubarakpuri, 1996); this was what happened next. So positive was the experience of the researcher and her spouse in dealing with Hajj Sugimoto of the Chiba Islamic Cultural Centre that upon their return to Malaysia, the researcher and her spouse continued to communicate with him. The researcher vividly recalls the moment the idea for the Cultural Exchange Programme came up. It was midmorning in Kuala Lumpur. The researcher and her spouse listened carefully to

the faraway voice of Hajj Sugimoto from Chiba, Japan, as he explained the issues faced by the Muslim families in Japan, in particular, the challenge of providing an Islamic education for their children and youth. At first, the idea of conducting a youth conference in Malaysia came up, to which Sugimoto replied:

> I don't know if having a youth conference is a good idea . . . I brought my son to conferences in the past . . . even to New York. All he could recall were the food and games [. . .] (Personal Communication, 4 March, 2019)

To the researcher, the reference to "food and games" by Hajj Sugimoto implied that what Hajj Sugimoto's son appreciated most was the experiential, intercultural dimension, which suggested that what was worth considering was to design an intercultural programme in which Islamic education is infused in the cultural experiences - food, games and other cultural aspects included. The thought of delicious food and games combined gave the researcher the idea of organising a cultural exchange programme, in which the Japanese Muslim youth come to Malaysia for a period of time to stay with Muslim families. Essentially, it means taking these youth out from Japan, and immersing them in a different environment, to let them experience first-hand what living as a Muslim means here in Malaysia.

The idea of a cultural exchange programme was then raised by Hajj Sugimoto to the committee members of the Chiba Islamic Cultural Centre and upon due deliberation, they agreed to take it up. An important issue was finance. Who would pay for the return flight, accommodation, food and beverages, and incidentals e.g. entrance tickets to places of interest? It was decided that the families of the Japanese Muslim youth would cover the flight and other costs incurred in Japan, while the host parents would be covering all costs incurred in Malaysia. In effect, no external sponsor was needed to cover costs. As shown, the Japan-Malaysia Youth Cultural Exchange Programme

2019 began with purposeful discussions between the researcher, her spouse, and the Japanese side (CICC or Chiba Islamic Cultural Centre as official organiser) in March 2019. Were it not for the many detailed discussions between the researcher and the CICC, this programme would not have been designed as it had been.

4.3.2 *Ta-'arūf* (Mutually Knowing, Mutually Interacting)

To attain social cohesiveness, Mhd Sarif (2019) emphasised the importance of establishing *ta-'arūf* right from the start, since *ta-'arūf* is a key feature of *ukhuwwah,* a genuine concern and love for one Muslim to another, interpreted as strategic bonding between Muslims. As posited by Ahmad (2012), this kind of strategic bonding has nothing to do with lineage or ethnicity but is purely based on *`aqidah*. From this angle, since the Japanese youth and host parents had never met each other, it was important tostart with the right footing and make a first positive impression, which the host parents did.

Based on the researcher's observation, by the time she arrived at the airport on the morning the first Japanese Muslim youth were due to land at Kuala Lumpur International Airport (KLIA), the host parents were already there ahead of schedule, an indication of their eagerness. A host parent was heard commenting that she was "nervous and excited at the same time." One by one the much-awaited Japanese youth appeared at the entrance. One of the Japanese youths was delayed at the immigration for about an hour, but nobody complained, everyone waited patiently. As the last Japanese youth appeared, everyone cheered and clapped, and the researcher saw the host parents stepping forward to welcome him. By this time, the interpreters from *salamnihon* were busy on hand to help out with the communication between host

parents and youth. Therewere smiles all round. Someone raised the welcoming banner, photos were taken and then the host parents brought the youth home.

During the Welcoming Dinner later in the evening, the researcher observed that at first the Japanese youth seemed to keep to themselves and were rather reserved. The host had set up a *char koay-teow* (Malaysian local dish of Chinese origin) stall with a chef who prepared the dish fresh. From their gestures and facial expressions, the Japanese youth seemed amused with the fire billowing under the pan and broke into what sounded like excited chatter. In no time, the researcher saw them queueing for the delicious dish, and sitting down and bantering with each other. By then, they looked quite relaxed and nobody kept to himself. The researcher saw that some of them went for seconds. Other dishes were also served to whet everyone's appetite. What the researcher saw confirmed the study done by Seki (2016), that with meticulous planning and execution, incoming youth would have minimum culture shock, thereby maximising the benefits and effectiveness of the cultural exchange programme.

Malaysia is a multiethnic, multireligious and multiracial country. The host parents and families in the Japan-Malaysia Youth Cultural Exchange Programme 2019 originated from different ethnic backgrounds including Pakistani, mixed Chinese-Malay and Indian parentage. However, since these host parents were born and bred in Malaysia, they were uniquely Malaysian, to the delight of the Japanese youth. From the feedback given by the participants, it appeared that the host parents and families provided a sufficiently immersive intercultural experience for these youth. A sufficiently immersive intercultural experience, even short-term, can transform lives, and is not just about changing locations (Crawford, 2017). An example of an immersive, intercultural experience that took place in the present study is how the Malaysian

Muslim hosts treat participants with good food by serving different ethnic cuisines, a positive experience mentioned by participant Riku:

> I would like to be as friendly like Malaysians [. . .]
> (Online Interview, 30 August, 2019).

Riku's host parents who came from Pakistani-Indian parentage feted the Japanese youth with Pakistani-Indian cuisines. Likewise, the host parents with Malay background served Malay foods. At meal times, the Malaysian hosts made sure the Japanese youth were feted well, they were not left alone by themselves, as evidenced from the photos that the host parents showed to the researcher.

As a minority in their home country, the Japanese youth's self-esteem has been affected (Hutnik, 1991), and eventually they might either assimilate or acculturate with the majority (Hutnik, 2003) but in Malaysia it was a fresh experience meant to raise the way they perceive themselves. The Cultural Exchange Programme was meant to increase their self-esteem as Muslims. They begin to see that life is much more than choosing between being Muslim and Japanese; one could be both, so long as Islam is observed. Direct, face-to-face interactions with their hosts exposed the Japanese youth to the hosts' culture. From the numerous photos and comments shared by the host parents in the Japan-Malaysia Youth Cultural Exchange Programme *whatsapp* group, the researcher observed that the Japanese youth were accompanied by their host parents and family members, chauffeured at all times by their host family everywhere they went. All week, they communicated and interacted with their host parents and other family members and witnessed the lifestyle of the hosts; what it meant to live as Muslims. The Japanese youth saw that members of their host families were both Muslim and Malaysian. Just like the observant Muslim minority youth in Britain who discovered that having a strong Muslim identity strengthened their

commitment to be positive British citizens (Shazhadi et. al., 2017), participant Marisi found that the Cultural Exchange Experience had brought her closer to her Islamic roots:

> Liked experience of Islamic culture [. . .] (Online Interview, 30 August,2019)

Several of the host parents also introduced some basic Malay words to the Japanese youth, to the delight of the youth. Participant Marisi said:

> [I] like Malay culture, country is unique, taught Malay language (Online Interview, 30 August 2019)

Likewise, at the final evening gathering which was attended by all Japanese youth and host families, participant Kawai declared in front of everyone:

> *Umur saya 17 tahun* (I am 17 years old) [. . .] (Farewell Dinner, 23 August, 2019)

Even though participant Kawai spoke only some words of Malay, the fact that he did utter these words appear to support findings by Kinginger et. al. (2016) that short- term homestays can leave a lasting impact in terms of language and culture learning, and that students can recognise and understand at least certain words within a short period of time (Reynolds-Case, 2013).

At the end of the programme, the personal touch, kindness and care shown by the host parents had left a lasting impression upon the young minds. Furthermore, the Japanese youth appreciated that their host families had children of the same age group. As participant Daiki put it:

> [Learnt] how to interact with Muslims of the same age [. . .] (Online Interview, 30 August, 2019)

Similar feedback was given by Tokuda, another male participant:

> There were many people of the same age and it was fun [. . .]
> (Online Interview, 30 August, 2019)

The youth enjoyed such interactions and asked for more. Seeking interaction with peers is an indication of growing confidence, a positive consequence of an intercultural experience and exposure (Costas & Singco, 2016), which was also mentioned by participant Kawai:

> I wanted more opportunities for interaction [. . .]
> (Online Interview, 30 August, 2019)

Despite a packed schedule, the Japanese youth found it engaging, as participant Tatsuki wrote:

> It was a lot of fun [. . .] (Online Interview, 30 August, 2019)

Halal food that was easily available, having Muslim friends of the same age, with whom they could talk to and get along with, were some of the everyday things Malaysian Muslim youth take for granted in Malaysia, but were new experiences to the Japanese Muslim youth. For many of them, they were the only Muslim in school. Culture, of course, is not just about foods, it is also about how the host family membersrelate to one another, how they dress, what time they wake up, how they talk to one another, how they respond to specific situations - these are all examples of Malaysian Muslim culture which were new to the Japanese Muslim youth. What the Japanese youth remembered most was the hospitality, the caring and kind treatments they received from their host parents and families.

4.3.3 *Ta-'āyush* (To Coexist)

Al-Tuwaijiri (1998, cited in Ramli et. al., 2018) propagates the Concept of *Ta-'āyush* specifically within the context of social communications between peoples of different religions, cultures and civilisations as fundamental to creating universal peace, something that was already practised by the Prophet SAW centuries ago. If *ta-'āyush* is the stance that Muslims are supposed to adopt when dealing with non-Muslims, certainly Muslims of different ethnic cultures and civilisations deserve to be treated with equal respect and consideration, if not better.

Based on the researcher's observation, during the present study, there was a tendency for the youth to keep to their own kind: Malaysians with Malaysians and Japanese with Japanese, especially in the mornings. The researcher observed that the host parents did what was necessary to break the ice to promote *ta-'āyush* among these two groups. For example, on day two of the Cultural Exchange Programme, upon arrival in Rawang, during the first quarter hour, the Malaysian youth kept to their own group and similarly, the Japanese youth kept to their own group. The researcher observed two host fathers taking action, splitting the youth into smaller groups with each group deliberately consisting of both Malaysians and Japanese, to create the opportunity for them to work together and communicate with one another better. Such an action is important as groups and relationships are particularly significant for the Japanese (Sugimura et. al., 2015). Thereafter, the Japanese and Malaysian youth spent an entire morning together to cook special Malaysian dishes. The four interpreters moved from group to group regularly to see if anyone needed interpreting. Each smaller group had a specific task e.g. slicing onions and vegetables. The researcher also observed that the host parents made sure that the tasks were rotated between these smaller groups so that everyone had the chance to do different tasks and not kept at one single task the

entire morning e.g. deep-frying chicken. The researcher saw that all the youth, Malaysian and Japanese, looked at ease slicing the ingredients, washing them clean, frying the chickenin a huge wok, preparing the curry and salad, and after all the cooking was done, puttingthe prepared foods into containers for the *asnaf*.

The researcher also observed that when the time came to deliver the food to the *asnaf,* who lived in several different locations in the area, all of the youth, Japanese and Malaysian, got off their host parents' vehicles and eagerly handed the gifts over themselves. From the researcher's observations, the youth liked this activity thoroughly; it was mentioned as one of the things that they enjoyed during the programme, as noted by participant Marisi:

> feelings of caring for people . . . experienced cooking for poor people and handing the food over [. . .] (Online Interview, 30 August, 2019)

Marisi was not the only one who commented on the experience of preparing and delivering food to the poor. The same sentiment was expressed by participant Haruto:

> cook and give [to] poor people (Online Interview, 30 August, 2019)

Such feedback proved the importance of instilling positive human interactions in a cultural exchange programme, even if the participants did not state such an expectation up front when they signed up for the programme (Hommadova & Mita, 2016).

Because these Japanese Muslim youth were born and bred in Japan, they did not have the issue of language communication back home in Japan, unlike non-Japanese Muslims (Yuki, 2018), yet it must be said that most of the Japanese Muslim youth did not have Muslim friends there. It would be unfortunate if they feel they had to choose between being "Muslim" or "Japanese", having an identity crisis, pretending they are

not Muslim (Aaser, 2016), going through an emotional roller coaster (Mydin et. al, 2013) as they need to learn that it is possible to have dual identities i.e. Muslim and Japanese (Shazhadi et. al., 2017). Having parents who came from a different generation would naturally raise intergenerational issues, too (Lynch, 2013, Jacob, 2017 & Kalmijn, 2018). Thus, making friends with the Malaysian youth was a positive and encouraging experience for them.

The quality of human interactions can make or break an intercultural exchange programme (Hommadova & Mita, 2016). Throughout the Cultural Exchange Programme, as these youth made more Muslim friends, they gained insights on how to live as Muslims in future. The Japanese youth learnt that no matter who you are and where you live, respect and consideration are crucial elements for peace and harmony in yourself and within the community.

For the Japanese youth, opportunities existed for *Al-ta'āruf* related to three levelsof relationships; namely:

1. Japanese youth-Japanese youth
2. Japanese youth-host parent
3. Japanese youth-Malaysian youth (teenagers/young adults who were children of the host parents)

Diversity, the Japanese Muslim youth began to see, is a beautiful thing and could be a source of strength and unity for a community. Therefore, the Japanese Muslim youth realised that they being different from the majority in Japan has the potential of bringing much good to Japan, their birth country. Throughout the entire week, the Japanese Muslim youth learned to coexist with each other and their host parents and families, as well as observed how multiracial and multireligious Malaysians coexist

with one another; a crucial component of success in diversity. As participant Tatsuki remarked:

> Love and Respect is a very important key word in this country . . . and this is the secret to the successful realization of a multi-ethnic nation [. . .] (Online Interview, 30 August, 2019)

The Japanese Muslim youth saw peoples of multiracial and multireligious backgrounds working together for a common cause e.g. at the National Heart Institute, which sparked the comment from participant Riku:

> (Malaysian) diversity, living together . . . impressed with Malaysia (Online Interview, 30 August, 2019)

What enabled multicultural, multireligious Malaysia to thrive in a diverse society was, as participant Kawai put it:

> cooperation, cooperation (Online Interview, 30 August, 2019)

At the most basic level, although the Japanese youth were Muslims, they were born and raised in a different cultural environment, and naturally were used to different ways of doing things. Still, they sensed the warmth of the Malaysian hosts. The Japanese youth felt appreciated and respected, and they reciprocated by being fully cooperative throughout the programme. The Japanese youth learnt that to make things work, people have to transcend beyond their differences.

4.3.4 *Tasāmuh* (Tolerate Each Other's Differences)

The ability to accept and respect others who hail from different backgrounds, being lenient, kind and generous even to those perceived as different from us, is a key feature of *tasāmuh* (Khambali et. al., 2017, cited by Abdul Ghani & Awang, 2020).

Furthermore, the level of tolerance that is propagated in Islam is higher than anything that came before it ('Imarah, 2014). Such is the beauty of *tasāmuh* in Islam, which is a value that the Cultural Exchange Programme tried to emulate, considering that the participants and host parents/families came from different nations and cultures, although they were all Muslims.

By the end of the second day, the researcher observed that language was a notable difference and still a challenge, as the majority of the Japanese youth were fluent in Japanese only. Although the communication gap was expected, initially it was thought that having four fulltime interpreters would be sufficient. But it became quickly obvious that this was not the case. The researcher even heard a Malaysian youth saying, "The communication barrier was too tall." The Japanese Muslim youth still stayed away from the Malaysian Muslim youth, communicating among themselves while the Malaysian Muslim youth kept to themselves, too. Because of the language barrier, the researcher observed that two distinct groups had formed: Japanese Muslim youth and Malaysian Muslim youth. At times, the researcher saw a few of the Malaysian youth lingering awkwardly around the Japanese youth and vice-versa.

Hence, at the start of the guided visit to the Islamic Arts Museum on the third day, the Japanese Muslim youth and the Malaysian youth were asked by the researcher, her spouse and Hajj Sugimoto to stand in two separate lines, and each of them was assigned a partner. All of the youth were paired up - each Japanese Muslim youth with a Malaysian Muslim youth - and they were instructed to communicate with each other. Throughout the guided tour, the Malaysian youth began to introduce to the Japanese youth easy words in English, in hushed tones. The observer saw that this arrangement helped, from the way the Malaysian and Japanese youth gestured towards one another.

Instantly, they started communicating with one another, which indicated that they were warming up to each other.

Thus, the Japanese Muslim youth and host parents and other family members tolerated each other's daily habits. Despite not being proficient in English, the Japanese Muslim youth found their experiences with their host families positive. Participant Kawai said he learnt:

> Difference in culture [. . .] (Online Interview, 30 August, 2019)

Participant Daiki made a comment along similar lines:

> (I) learn Malaysian habits. Malaysians made effort to talk to me. I didn't know much about English, but can relax [. . .] (Online Interview, 30 August, 2019)

As can be seen, despite communication gaps, even though the Japanese youth and their Malaysian host families came from different nationalities, both were like-minded and motivated and such an attitude created a sense of accomplishment in the participants (Webeck et. al., 2019).

Participant Kaito noted that despite the differences between him and fellow Japanese Muslim youth, as well as between him and the host family, he learnt:

> importance of teamwork [. . .] (Online Interview, 30 August, 2019)

Throughout the present study, nothing untoward happened. The Japanese Muslim youth carried themselves well with respect and dignity, they made an equally positive impression on the Malaysian families. Both the Japanese youth and the Malaysian hosts worked towards creating a harmonious relationship, a requirement for a successful intercultural experience (Pranoto et. al., 2016). Both the Japanese youth and the

Malaysian hosts accepted that differences were unavoidable, since all parties came from different cultural backgrounds, but these differences did not become a show-stopper for them to build a good relationship with one another.

It must be remembered that it is common for Japanese Muslim children at an earlyage to start enquiring from their parents at what age or life stage they can become real Japanese (Takeshita, 2008), which implies they wish to abandon Islam in future. In some cases, this issue has led to clashes with elders especially parents (Liu et. al., 2019). Because of this concern, some parents made the decision to send their children to Islamic schools in the Middle-East (Vestre, 2011), but not everyone can afford to do this, or wish to live separately from their children for long periods of time. The Cultural Exchange Programme, therefore, provides another platform for these parents to introduce the beauty of Islam to their children.

4.3.5 *Tabādul* (Exchange of Ideas)

Just as in the Battle of *Ahzāb* (Trench) in the fifth Hijri year, when the Prophet SAW decided to adopt a new strategy introduced by Salman Al-Farisi by digging trenches to defend Madinah and the Muslims (Al-Mubarakpuri, 1996), the mindset and habit of being open to exchanging ideas for the sake of *da'wah* and a better humanity is encouraged in the Cultural Exchange Programme. Such a mindset is illustrated by the willingness of responsible Muslim adults to listen to questions, no matter what they are, and respond to them in an appropriate way.

It was observed by the researcher that the Japanese youth raised a lot of questions during the visit to the *halal* chicken factory. The participants appeared excited from the way they communicated with each other, as it was not just about enlightening the Japanese youth about the *halal* concept from the theoretical perspective. All the

youth and host parents were offered the chance to enter a restricted area - the slaughtering area - to slaughter the chickens. They eagerly stepped into the space and were taught to recite a prayer to invoke Allah's blessings as they put the very sharp knife to the chicken's neck.

Earlier, the researcher observed the founder and Managing Director of *Ayam Dr Zainol* organic chicken factory, Dr Zainol Ahmad Haja himself greeting the participants, volunteers and host families of the Cultural Exchange Programme. Dr Zainol took the time to explain the basis for *halal* slaughtering, backed by Qur'an and Sunnah evidence. He stressed that *halal* meat is best not just for Muslims, but for everyone. At this juncture, the second generation Japanese Muslim students began to ask questions about the *halal* concept and its relation to Islam and the Muslim way of life. Before the guests left, Dr Zainol feted everyone to a hearty lunch of rice, fried chicken and mushroom chicken soup.

Islamic education is sorely missing in Japan. The Japanese Muslim youth hardly had any opportunities to discuss and exchange ideas related to Islam, which is critical to gaining a better understanding of Islam, the absence of which easily leads to identity confusion in adolescence (Aaser, 2019). Being "half" (one parent a non-Japanese) does not help (Kamada, 2009). All of the participants had one parent who was South-Asian. The Japanese in general view South-Asian foreigners as having a lower status. Besides, having migrant parents who were trying to raise them according to traditional methods would imply that these parents are less likely to listen to their concerns (Cook & Waite, 2015), thereby creating intergenerational issues which potentially may include parent- child miscommunication. During the Cultural Exchange Programme, for the first time they saw what the concept of Islam being a complete way of life meant on a daily basis. Participant Haruto noted that he saw:

> the importance of zakat, *halal* and creatures [. . .] (Online Interview, 30 August, 2019)

A similar sentiment was expressed by participant Yuta:

> [I learnt] *halal* production methods (Online Interview, 30 August, 2019)

The outcomes of an international cultural exchange programme are tied to the design and purpose of the programme (Stoeckel, 2016). The purpose of the present study is to instill self-confidence and love for Islam among all participating youth. It was apparent that the Japanese youth were not used to discussing Islamic matters and ideas openly. They realised from the Cultural Exchange Programme that it was important to grasp a clear understanding of Islam before one could be a true Muslim, as voiced by participant Kawai:

> I thought it was good because there were various ideas of Islam [. . .] (Online Interview, 30 August, 2019)

The Japanese Muslim youth were impressed with the seriousness of Malaysian Muslims to fulfil Islamic criteria, as expressed by participant Tokuda:

> Malaysians are [sic] intricate (procedures) such as *halal* certification [. . .] (Online Interview, 30 August, 2019)

As Cates (2017) suggested, experiencing a cultural exchange programme would help participants grasp a better understanding of global issues. The feedback above proved that the Japanese youth have gained a better understanding and appreciation of global issues; in this case, the *halal* concept, which is significant for Muslims around the world. It was good that the *halal* concept, a culturally sensitive matter, was elaborated well and explained by an expert, failing which, the programme could have

been less effective. As Abdulai (2019) pointed out, cultural sensitivity is a priority for a cultural exchange programme to be successful.

The Japanese youth also learned that being Muslim does not mean being less loyal to your birth country. In fact, Islam requires us to be the best version of ourselves, so that we can serve the community in which we live. Interest in the cultures of others could mean benefiting from the positives of that culture, and this is an advantage of *tabādul* in place, as commented by participant Tatsuki:

> Malaysians are very interested in Japan. Everyone here likes Japan - anime, drama, character [. . .] (Online Interview, 30 August, 2019)

Thus, liking certain cultural aspects of a country does not make a person any less Muslim. Every day, the Japanese Muslim youth, despite language issues, communicated their thoughts and ideas to each other, and to their host parents and family members, and vice-versa with the help of interpreters. Some of them also used online resources e.g. Google Translate to ease communication to exchange ideas with one another.

4.3.6 *Ta-'akhī* (To Associate as Brother)

Allah says, "The Believers are but a single Brotherhood . . ." (Al-Qur'an. Al-Hujurat. 49:10); Muslims must be prepared to do what it takes to support one another, be there for each other. Just as the Prophet paired up Muslims from Makkah with Muslims from Madinah upon migrating to Madinah, the Japanese Muslim youth were assigned to host parents/families upon arrival in Malaysia. This is the creation of a bond that is aimed to last not only in this world, but in the Hereafter, God willing. As Dr Hammudah Abdalati (1975) pointed out, brotherhood in Islam is based upon a solid

belief in the Oneness of God. No race is superior than the other. No Malaysian is better than a Japanese, and vice-versa.

The host family/parents were entrusted with treating the Japanese youth like their own, to treat them with kindness that can be felt in the heart. Learning about Islam was and still is a major issue in Japan (Shiro, 2011), which has resulted in a conflicted identity amongst Japanese Muslim youth, not unlike minority Muslims elsewhere e.g. in America (Suleiman, 2017) to the extent that internally, these minority Muslim children and youth assume different personalities (Muslim or non-Muslim) depending on who they are with (Mydin et. al., 2013). Yet it was observed that the word "kindness" was mentioned more than a few times by the Japanese Muslim youth in their verbal feedback during the Farewell Dinner. The same word was also mentioned by the Japanese youth in the online interviews.

During the Farewell Dinner, the researcher observed Marisi, the only female Japanese Muslim overcome with emotion; tears rolled down her cheeks as she expressed gratitude for the Cultural Exchange Programme. The researcher assumed she felt sad everything was coming to an end. It is hoped that feeling accepted and loved by the host parents and family members would make her and all the other participants less prone to inferiority complex which is common among their South Asian parents (Vestre, 2011). The following day, the researcher saw more tears shed at the departure gate at the airport, even a few of the Japanese Muslim male youth were teary-eyed when they said their final goodbyes to their host parents and other family members. When a Malaysian host father hugged participant Tatsuki and asked when he wanted to come back to Malaysia, Tatsuki said:

> Tomorrow [. . .] (Online Interview, 30 August, 2019)

Likewise upon his return to Japan, participant Tokuda reported:

> I did not miss Japan when I was in Malaysia (Online Interview, 30 August, 2019)

At the KLIA departure hall, the researcher heard a host parent Sabariah saying, "The second generation Japanese Muslim youth found strength in each other [. . .]" It is common for the second generation Japanese Muslim youth, the researcher was told, to be the only Muslim student in their respective schools, but meeting other Japanese Muslim youth in the Cultural Exchange Programme, having deep conversations and exchanging notes with other Japanese Muslim youth made them feel they were no longer alone.

The love and care, the brotherhood *('ukhuwwah),* that a Muslim feels for another is a deep, beautiful, unique emotion (Ahmad, 2012) that can only be understood by a person who has experienced it. The Malaysian host parents and other family members treated the Japanese Muslim youth with much kindness, respect and care. As a result, the Japanese Muslim youth felt at home, appreciated and treasured. Such a step is crucial to plant the seeds of a lifelong relationship of brotherhood ('*ukhuwwah*). The kindness and care the Malaysian host parents and other family members extended to the Japanese Muslim youth was something they had never seen and felt before. Hence, according to participant Haruto:

> Everyone was very kind [. . .]" (Online Interview, 30 August, 2019)

Participant Tatsuki felt so comfortable with his host parents such that:

> On the last day I was talking to my host parent until 3:00 am in the morning [. . .] (Online Interview, 30 August, 2019)

In the present study, the researcher observed that a briefing was presented for each event. A speaker would enlighten the participants why a certain Islamic practice was done, the benefits and the wisdom behind the practice, followed by a Questions & Answers session, in which the Japanese youth were encouraged to ask anything they had in mind. As a result, the Japanese youth began to see Islam in a new light as commented by participant Daiki:

> I was able to learn more about Islamic culture [. . .]
> (Online Interview, 30 August, 2019)

Participant Marisi, who, prior to the trip never told anyone about her religious affiliation as Muslim, discovered a new perspective. At the end of the programme she commented:

> I hope in Japan the number of Muslims will increase in future [. . .]
> (Online Interview, 30 August, 2019)

All the feedback above, in particular multiple mentions of the warmth and kindness extended by the Malaysian hosts, suggest that the Cultural Exchange Programme had left a lasting positive impression on the young minds of the Japanese Muslim. At the end of the Farewell Dinner, when asked if they wished to participate in future Cultural Exchange Programmes, the researcher observed that all nine Japanese Muslim youth responded in the affirmative i.e. "Yes", which was verified by another affirmative "Yes" by all of them for the same question asked in the online interviews. Based on these responses, it is deduced that the Cultural Exchange Programme experience had been uplifting for the participants; it had indeed touched the hearts and minds of all nine Japanese Muslim youth.

4.3.7 *Al-ta'ayush Al-Silmīyy* (To Coexist in Peace and Harmony)

To coexist in peace and harmony, to achieve a state of *Al-ta'ayush Al-Silmīyy,* respect, consideration and acceptance must be in place. Recognising that Allah in His Wisdom created mankind in diverse ethnicities, races, languages and cultures means we must leverage these differences for the benefit of humanity. Diversity well-understood and well-handled will produce greater productivity for everyone involved (Shaykh Abdullah bin Bayyah, cited by Fadzil, 2018). Rather than viewing differences as an annoyance or irritation, we must welcome them as a source of potential strength, as differences are manifestations of Allah's power.

For the Japanese Muslim youth in the present study, joining an intercultural homestay programme have enabled them to immerse in another culture, consistent with the findings of Knight & Schmidt-Rinehart (2002). Besides, the unfamiliar experience of staying in a foreign country, in this case, Malaysia, has developed in them an appreciation of people they see as "others" (in the context of the present study, "others" refer to Malaysian Muslims) as suggested by Stephenson (1999). Living together peacefully with others begins with having peace and harmony within oneself. By the end of the Japan-Malaysia Youth Cultural Exchange Programme 2019, based on the feedback given, the researcher surmised that the Japanese Muslim youth felt peace within themselves as Muslims. The researcher also believed that they have gained a keen sense of accomplishment through the varied activities conducted, which had helped deepen their personal connections and relationships with their host parents and families as well as with one another. Learning salient details of Islamic History made them motivated to want to know even more about the Islamic legacy they have inherited from their parents. Asked to list the important things he learnt during the Cultural Exchange Programme, participant Tokuda wrote:

> the greatness of old Muslims [. . .] (Online Interview, 30 August, 2019)

To the same question, participant Tatsuki responded with:

> be proud of being Muslim (Online Interview, 30 August, 2019)

It would be safe to assume that the Japan-Malaysia Youth Cultural Exchange Programme 2019 had broadened the participants' worldview, both as Muslims and as Japanese nationals. Most important, by the time they left, they felt more comfortable with their Muslim identity. As participant Kaito explained:

> I want to share what I got this time with my friends (Online Interview, 30 August, 2019)

Participant Tokuda discovered that in Malaysia:

> I did a lot of things that I could not experience in Japan (Online Interview, 30 August, 2019)

It is hoped that their new-found confidence as Muslims would continue to develop peace in their hearts, motivate them to practice as Muslims, and enable them to contribute positively in the Japanese community where they reside, just as the minority Muslim youth in Hong Kong (Yuen & Leung, 2019) and America (Corbett, 2016) did. Over the course of the Cultural Exchange Programme, as a result of their personal connections and positive interactions with their host parents and families, the Japanese Muslim youth felt at home in Malaysia and developed self-confidence as Muslims. After the programme, they realised it is alright to be different from the non-Muslim majority in Japan.

Furthermore, the Cultural Exchange Programme opened the eyes of the Japanese Muslim youth to the suitability of Islam in modern life as Islam celebrates intercultural differences. In Malaysia, they saw for the first time the benefits of diversity, Muslims and non-Muslims living and working side by side in harmony. As participant Haruto declared:

> I want to study cultural differences with other countries (Online Interview, 30 August, 2019)

Asked what they would do differently now that they had returned to Japan, each of the nine Japanese Muslim youth responded in ways that showed their intentions to follow through on activities related to Islam, either in the form of personal worship or getting involved in the Muslim community. In terms of personal worship, participant Haruto said he would:

> Cherish worship [. . .] (Online Interview, 30 August, 2019)

Participant Tokuda echoed the same sentiment by stating:

> I (will) worship (*solat*) everyday (Online Interview, 30 August, 2019)

Other remarks indicated that they wanted to step out of their reservations as Muslims and reach out to the Muslim community in Japan, a sign of growing self-confidence as a Muslim youth. For example, participant Marisi wrote:

> I want to start by making more Muslim friends by participating more in the Muslim community in Japan (Online Interview, 30 August, 2019)

Participant Daiki expressed a similar sentiment:

> I want to participate more in the Muslim community in Japan [. . .] (Online Interview, 30 August, 2019)

Likewise, participant Yuta intended to:

> participate in exchanges with nearby Muslims (Online Interview, 30 August, 2019)

Participant Riku went a step further by expressing his desire to play a leading role sometime in the future:

> I want to take the lead in helping people [. . .] (Online Interview, 30 August, 2019)

Participant Tatsuki, who loved to talk, learnt that being Muslim is a source of pride and strength, and Islam is a treasure to be cherished and shared with others, Muslims and non-Muslims. Therefore, he had decided to:

> live a little more dignified back home in Japan . . . (will) learn history and culture of Islam more and spread to others [. . .] (Online Interview, 30 August, 2019)

All the above responses taken together implied that the Cultural Exchange Programme had strengthened the identities of the Japanese youth as Muslims. All nine of the second generation Japanese Muslim youth who participated in this research were total strangers to one another before coming to Malaysia. However, based on the researcher's observations of their facial expressions, gestures and body language, they quickly made friends with one another, although the researcher could not understand what they were saying, since they communicated with one another entirely in Japanese. It was interesting to note that they became much more at ease with one another during and after the visit to Janda Baik. The ratio of Japanese youth to Malaysian youth then was nearly 1:1. The researcher observed that the activities were well-organised, highly engaging, and the lead facilitator debriefed all the youth at the end of each

activity to put meaning into it. With such lively interactions, the Japanese Muslim youth's perception of living Islam as too rigid and too hard to adhere to (Fathil & Fathil 2011) was being subtly challenged.

Further, these outcomes bode well for the formation of long-term brotherhood between all three relationship levels: Japanese youth-Japanese youth, Japanese youth-host parent, and Japanese youth-Malaysian youth (mainly teenagers/young adults who were children of the host parents). The positive outcomes in this research supported the results of earlier studies done on cultural sensitivities (Martinsen, 2011 & Reynolds-Case, 2013) which suggested that direct interactions with locals contribute towards valuable consequences including establishment of local networks to the benefit of the participants ((Mhd Sarif, 2019, Castanēda & Zirger, 2011).

4.4 The Five Domains of Human Connection

This section illustrates how the Concept of *Al-ta'āruf* is internalised in the Cultural Exchange Programme in terms of the five domains of human connection tied to *Al-ta'āruf*: Physical, Intellectual, Emotional, Cultural, and Spiritual.

4.4.1 Physical Domain

The physical activities incorporated in the Japan-Malaysia Youth Cultural Exchange Programme 2019 were meant to raise awareness among the Japanese Muslim youth that being a good practising Muslim, building a relationship with Allah, is possible no matter where you are and what you are doing, as stated by Allah: "Men who celebrate the praises of Allah, standing, sitting, and lying down on their sides, and contemplate (the wonders of) creation in the heavens and the earth . . ." (Al-Qur'an. Al-'Imrān. 3:191).

The best example to prove that learning can take place while learners are in the middle of physical activity was provided by the Prophet SAW who used to impart lessons to his companions where appropriate when they were in the middle of physical activity. For instance, once the Prophet SAW was walking with his companions and saw a dead sheep. He asked them, "Who amongst you would buy this sheep for a dirham?" They replied, "None of us." The Prophet said, "Likewise is the value of this worldly life. It is worth as little as this dead sheep." (narrated by Muslim, cited by Beshir & Beshir, 2007). This proved that learning can take place anywhere and anytime, even during moments of physical activity. What the *Al-ta'āruf* Concept tried to achieve in the present study was to touch the Japanese Muslim youth's soul and awaken their conscience through various methods including physical activity.

Based on the researcher's observation, activities that required the Japanese youth to physically stretch themselves were set up in the early stages of the Cultural Exchange Programme to create a more conducive environment for them to get to know one another, as well as learn about the Muslim and Malaysian culture. Such activities were purposely set up to facilitate learning. As Deardoff (2016) highlighted, international student exchange such as the present study promotes mutual peace and understanding throughout the world. But such noble aims can only be achieved if the participants were given the opportunity to immerse themselves in the everyday culture of the host (Seki, 2016).

The researcher observed how the team-building games at Janda Baik included obstacles, archery, fishing and crazy golf which prompted all youth, Malaysian and Japanese to collaborate, communicate and interact as teams, as well as built rapport and trust with one another. Through the present study, the Japanese Muslim youth immersed themselves in physical activities as a means of intercultural learning. Intercultural

learning means acquiring knowledge and understanding about another person's or community's culture. In this case, the Japanese Muslim youth experienced first-hand some physical activities that are common among the Malaysian Muslim community. Learning about another culture is more meaningful if a person were to immerse himself or herself in activities that are part and parcel of that culture. Consequently, the robust outing at Radiant Retreat, Saujana Janda Baik, where they had outdoor games was commented upon, for example by participant Marisi:

> [liked] knowing Malaysian culture through nature [. . .]
> (Online Interview, 30 August, 2019)

Marginalisation of Muslim minority youth is a matter of concern (Fleischmann & Phalet, 2017). Government affiliated community programmes may require some kind of physical activity in order to heighten a sense of national belonging (Corbett, 2016); if the youth are comfortable with physical activity, back home in Japan they would be more likely to enrol in such activities and indirectly reduce marginalisation of Muslims and anti-Muslim sentiments.

The most typical way of learning anything is by sitting in a classroom and listening to the teacher, which was totally different from the experience introduced in the Cultural Exchange Programme. From the researcher's observations, none of the Japanese youth hesitated to involve themselves in the physical activities infused in the present study. In fact, they liked such activities as participant Riku remarked, because:

> everyone can participate [. . .] (Online Interview, 30 August, 2019)

In a cultural exchange programme, the cultural shock must be minimised to maximise effectiveness (Seki, 2016) and physical activity is one way to achieve this goal. Additionally, experiencing these activities may bring about greater appreciation

of another culture (Stephenson, 1999). Through physical activity, the youth come into contact with local networks (Castanēda & Zirger, 2011), making the present study a more immersive cultural experience (Crawford, 2017), influencing the quality of human interactions (Hommadova & Mita, 2016). Removing elements of syncretism (Ali, 2018) widespread in Japan is a gradual process. With no help from authorities, Muslim minorities have to work that much harder to educate their youth, as shown by the Hong Kong Muslim community (Yip-Ho, 2018). But the Prophet SAW himself has shown that it is possible for Muslim minorities to thrive in a pluralistic society (Siddiqi, 2006). The physical activities incorporated in the present study might be common for Malaysians, but might not be so for the Japanese Muslim youth. Absence of Islamic education for youth in Japan (Takeshita, 2008 & Vestre, 2011) implies responsible Muslims need to look into alternative avenues, including physical activities that appeal to the youth in order to engage them.

4.4.2 Intellectual Domain

The Intellectual Domain is all about thinking, reflecting upon, and internalising new knowledge. It was important for the Japanese youth to understand the higher purpose of all the things that they were doing in the Cultural Exchange Programme. Qur'an classes conducted in Japan such as the Tokyo Mosque (Siddiqi, 2016) and Otsuka Mosque (Japan Islamic Trust, 2020) are not accessible to many Japanese Muslim youth. It is possible that these youth do not realise the significance of the intellectual aspect of Islam. Besides, unbalanced reporting which neglected sources from Muslim countries and media (Ahmad & Matthes, 2016) might further influence these youth to perceive Islam in a negative light. Although the Muslim minority in Japan are not subject to persecution unlike Muslims in China (Basri & Ta'arif, 2018), the

inconsistency of home and school in terms of Islamic education (Shiro, 2011) implies that efforts must be made to ensure that these youth gain a good grasp of Islam intellectually.

The researcher observed that at the end of each day, a brief reflection (*tadabbur*) session was carried out, where the coordinators would talk about the day's activities and relating them to the purpose of life in Islam. Without these daily intellectual sessions, the activities would have been little more than events that were fun and tiring, without deeper and real meanings.

The researcher observed that the Japanese youth listened intently to the explanations given during the brief *tadabbur* sessions, an indication that they were processing the new knowledge in their minds. A Muslim is not a blind follower. Islam is against blind following of traditions and customs, no matter where these traditions came from. Allah says: "When it is said to them: 'Follow what Allah has revealed' they say: 'Nay! We shall follow the ways of our fathers.' What! Even though their fathers were void of wisdom and guidance?" (Al-Qur'an. Al-Baqarah. 2:170). Allah also says: "And pursue not that of which you have no knowledge; for every act of hearing, or of seeing or of (feeling in) the heart will be enquired into on the Day of Reckoning". (Al-Qur'an. Al-'Isra'. 17:36). Further, Allah says: "Those who give partners (to Allah) will say: 'If Allah had wished, we should not have given partners to Him, nor would our fathers; nor should we have had any taboos.'" (Al-Qur'an. Al-An'ām. 6:148).

Based on the researcher's observation, none of the participants seemed distracted or fidgety during the *tadabbur* sessions. As ideas were shared during the *tadabbur* sessions, the youth would be reflecting on how similar or different these ideas were compared to what they had assumed, heard or understood back home in Japan, prior to the Cultural Exchange Programme. At an intellectual level, the Japanese youth would

see that Islam is a religion that emphasises knowledge e.g. ". . . O my Lord! Advance me in knowledge." (Al-Qur'an. Tā Hā. 20:114), and knowledge requires thinking and rationality which leads to correct understanding. Some intellectual questions that the Japanese youth might have been thinking at this stage could have been: "What are some Japanese traditions that I have been following and why?", "Where do these traditions came from?", "Are they harmful or helpful to me?"

As Halstead (2004) pointed out, in Islam, "knowledge must be approached reverently and in humility, for there cannot be any 'true' knowledge that is in conflict with religion and divine revelation, only ignorance". Thus, the intellectual domain embedded into the *Al-ta'āruf* Concept in the Cultural Exchange Programme in the form of these *tadabbur* sessions created opportunities for the Japanese Muslim youth to question their own understanding and assumptions about the matters raised, particularly those related to Islam. If there were inaccuracies, these sessions gave them the chance to correct them, thereby creating clarity in their understanding of some basic principles of Islam, hence strengthening their faith in Islam. On the contrary, inaccurate knowledge would have led to confusion and a weakening of faith. The *tadabbur* sessions made them realise the values of life in Islam, for example, participant Daiki said that he learnt about:

> preciousness of life (Online Interview, 30 August, 2019)

The intellectual domain cannot be neglected in Islamic education as understanding higher order matters are naturally part of growing up in adolescence. Issues related to God, the universe, purpose of life linger in the minds of youth (Al-Talib et. al., 2013). It would not be wise for Islamic educators to limit discussions only to subjects like dress and food, and ignore more serious topics that are more

fundamental (Sahin, 2013). If such topics were avoided, over time the youth might develop more liberal views manifested in behaviours (Kalmijn, 2018) which is likely to weaken their relationship with their parents.

Throughout these *tadabbur* sessions, the Japanese youth were encouraged to ask questions. As Pranoto et. al. (2016) asserts, making real efforts to understand one another and creating harmonious relationships is a worthy aim of intercultural relations. Depending on the interactions that transpired, an intercultural exchange programme like the present study either enhances or weakens the participant's identity. It would seem that the interactions that took place during the present study enhanced the participants' identity as noted by participant Yuta, who reported that he had the opportunity to:

> listen & talk to them (host parents, presenters)
> (Online Interview, 30 August, 2019)

In this way, the Cultural Exchange Programme helped create intellectual insights for the Japanese Muslim youth and assisted them to gain better understanding about specific matters in Islam that they were not clear about prior to the Cultural Exchange Programme. They learnt that Islam sets human beings apart from other creatures on earth, by virtue of the intellect that Allah has gifted upon mankind.

4.4.3 Emotional Domain

To succeed, the Japan-Malaysia Youth Cultural Exchange Programme 2019 banked on the strength of the emotional connection between the Japanese youth and the host parents and families. The host parents were briefed well before the programme began, how crucial it was for them to be there for these youth, and build rapport to establish trust. The Malaysian host parents certainly did leave a strong positive

impression on the young minds of the Japanese, judging from the comments made by the Japanese youth. As noted by Kinginger et. al. (2016), meal times together with the host family are especially important, as it provides the chance for youth and hosts to share ideas on aesthetics of food and ideologies.

Based on the researcher's observation, from the photos and comments shared by the host parents in the specially created *whatsapp* group for the present study, throughout the programme, the host parents made sure that the youth they had been entrusted with felt welcome. For example, during the trip to Putrajaya, the researcher observed that the host parents ensured that the youth got their meal orders right, paid for these meals generously, and arranged the tables and chairs such that they were comfortable. Participant Kaito went so far as to comment that:

> People in Japan are cold. People in Malaysia are warm. Malaysian kindness . . . keep asking to eat (Online Interview, 30 August, 2019)

Other participants echoed similar sentiments, such as participant Yuta, who appreciated bonding with his host parents as well as host family members through simple daily activities:

> [liked] eating together . . . good memory
> (Online Interview, 30 August,2019)

Lack of understanding on how each party (youth and hosts) should treat one another can cause unnecessary confusion from either side, and may be perceived as lack of hospitality (Kobayashi & Viswat, 2015). Such negative consequences were not present throughout the present study, based on the researcher's observations and the Japanese youth's feedback. In fact, the participants attributed their positive experience to Malaysian Muslim culture and kindness, as participant Haruto pointed out:

> Everyone was very kind (Online Interview, 30 August, 2019)

Being a minority can affect self-esteem (Hutnik, 1991), pushing the youth to either assimilate, disssociate or acculturate (Hutnik, 2003) or refusing to inform others of their Muslim identity (Aaser, 2016). A minority youth can undergo alienation or identity crisis (Lynch, 2013), see Islam as a burden, part of an identity struggle that might even lead them to act in negative ways to free themselves of the "shackles of Islam" (Suleiman, 2017). It does not help if the youth's parents are migrants with more traditional backgrounds (Cook & Waite, 2015), leading to intergenerational clashes (Liu et. al, 2019), resulting in an emotional roller coaster (Mydin et. al., 2013). Such concerns further validate and necessitate the emotional input that must be invested into the present study.

It must be emphasized that none of the Japanese youth knew their host parents and family members prior to the Cultural Exchange Programme, yet these youth had used words that implied how the programme had impacted their emotions. Participant Tokuda stated that he:

> learnt important things close to my heart
> (Online Interview, 30August, 2019)

It is possible for participants of a youth cultural exchange programme to gain more than what they had hoped for as reported by Costas & Singco (2016). It would seem such was the case for the present study, as the Japanese youth felt respected and accepted despite their poor command of English. The majority of the Malaysian parents were hosting Japanese youth whose English was weak, but it did not stop them from emotionally bonding with these youth, and the youth appreciated this attitude, as participant Haruto noted:

> I didn't know English, but I can relax due to kindness of Malaysians (Online Interview, 30 August, 2019)

In any human-to-human relationship, the emotional connection is key. If the Japanese youth felt connected to their host parents and family, they would respect them and would be more likely to be inspired by the beliefs and actions of their host family members as Muslims. In other words, the Japanese youth would look up to their host parents as role models, whose words and actions are worthy to follow. This was what seemed to have taken place throughout the Cultural Exchange Programme.

In the Qur'an Allah mentions myriad kinds of emotions, thus proving how important the emotional domain is in human lives. Examples include: ". . . and We ordained in the hearts of those who followed him compassion and mercy. . ." (Al-Qur'an. Al-Hadīd. 57:27); "Verily the Companions of the Garden shall that day have joy in all that they do." (Al-Qur'an. Yā Sīn. 36:55); ". . . No fear shall be on you that Day, nor shall you grieve . . ." (Al-Qur'an. Al-Zukhruf. 43:68); ". . . He has put affection into their hearts . . ." (Al-Qur'an. Al-Anfãl. 8:63); "And if (at any time), an incitement to discord is made to you by the Evil One, seek refuge in Allah." (Al-Qur'an. Fussilat. 41:36); and "Praise be to Allah, Who has removed from us (all) sorrow . . ." (Al-Qur'an. Fātir. 35:33-35).

The *Al-Ta'āruf Concept* is about learning through the intercultural approach; a particular activity might evoke different emotions to culturally different groups of people. To make the present study successful, the researcher had to be mindful of how each of the activities in the programme would affect the emotions of both Malaysian hosts and Japanese youth. This is because, activities that are too intense or too boring or made them uncomfortable may spark negative emotions and therefore are not likely to optimise the learning experience. Thus, it was important to structure the Cultural

Exchange Programme in a way that was emotionally appealing to both the Malaysian hosts and Japanese Muslim youth, so that each of the activities planned create emotions that appeal to both groups.

Emotions make us human. If we were to neglect the emotional domain, we would have ignored the fact that the Prophet SAW applied a lot of emotions in his everyday dealings to engage with people. The Prophet knew it was never a matter of simply telling people what to do, what is right and what is wrong, telling them the rules and regulations of Islam to win them over. The Prophet was highly attuned to the various emotional states of his followers as Allah says: "It is part of the Mercy of Allah that you deal gently with them. Were you severe or harsh-hearted, they would have broken away.. ." (Al-Qur'an. Al-'Imrān. 3:159). Similarly, the *Al-ta'āruf* Concept in the present study required the researcher to be in tune to the emotions of Malaysian hosts and Japanese Muslim youths.

Hence, based on the researcher's observation, for example, there were times when activities had to be adjusted in terms of timing and content so that the participants did not feel overwhelmed. In addition, to make sense of their experiences, the Japanese Muslim youth would have reflected on their feelings as they participated in the activities daily. *Da'wah* cannot be a totally rational approach devoid of the emotional domain. Byextension, the *Al-ta'āruf* Concept infused in the present study could not have been executed without encompassing the emotional domain.

4.4.4 Cultural Domain

The cultural domain covers many aspects including but not limited to dress,food and language. Through the *Al-ta'āruf* Concept in the present study, the researcher observed how participants had the opportunity to witness that differences in culture can

enrich humanity and does not have to be a divisive factor. In Malaysia, people from different ethnic backgrounds work together in harmony. Malaysian Muslims belong to different ethnic groups including Malay, Chinese, Indian and more. For the Japanese Muslim youth, this is an important discovery because in Japan, they were looked down upon since they do not look Japanese, even though they were born and raised in Japan, and speak fluent Japanese. The Malaysian host parents and families treated the Japanese Muslim youth with much respect and kindness because they were honoured guests.

Based on the researcher's observations, the host parents and Malaysian youth wore different outfits on different days which reflected Malaysia's diverse cultural backgrounds. The ladies especially were seen wearing *baju kurung* or long dress or kurta-like blouses along with colourful *tudungs*. Likewise the males on Friday wore *baju Melayu* or *jubah* or a simple modern shirt.

The concept of multiculturalism was applied by the Prophet Muhammad SAW when he migrated to Madinah, whereby he paired up the Muslims arriving from Makkah (*Muhajirin*) with the Muslims in Madinah (*Ansār*), so that the *Ansār* may assist the *Muhajirin* as best they could as brothers and sisters in Islam. Although both the *Ansār* and the *Muhajirin* were Arabs, they came from different locations and therefore, had their own cultures; they had different ways of perceiving and doing things. Respecting peoples of different cultures is a landmark of Islam. Multiculturalism is to be celebrated, not shunned. This practice by the Prophet SAW underlined the importance of working together to achieve harmony between peoples of different cultural backgrounds. Equally important, becoming Muslim does not mean that a person has to denounce his or her ethnic culture. Just as an *Ansār* is both Muslim and belonging to the Madinan culture and a *Muhajirin* is both Muslim and belonging to the Makkan culture, a person

can be both Malaysian and Muslim, or Japanese and Muslim. Thus, the *Al-ta'āruf* Concept aimed to raise the awareness of the Japanese Muslim youth that being Muslim does not reduce their inherent cultural value.

It was important for the Japanese youth to learn that being Muslim does not mean one has to denounce one's ethnic ties and cultural heritage, so long as these are not contrary to Islamic values. If a person is Malay, being Muslim does not mean he must wear Arabic clothes and eat Arabic food. On the contrary, it is perfectly alright to wear the clothes and consume the food that is common in his ethnic group, as long as they are *halal*. It shows the diversity and richness of Muslim culture. Thus, within a short visit, the Japanese youth got to savour Malaysian dishes that are popular within the diverse Muslim community. For example, participant Tatsuki enjoyed:

> living with delicious rice (Online Interview, 30 August, 2019)

Within one week, Kawai's host parents and family taught him some basic Malay words which he presented during the Farewell Dinner. As a result, Kawai said that he:

> liked Malay culture . . . country is unique
> (Online Interview, 30 August, 2019)

The present study is meant to broaden the worldview of the participants, so they would be less likely to be pressured into conformity (Kamada, 2009) specifically back home in Japan. Adolescence is the ideal time for educators to focus on identity building (Samian, 2008); numerous interactions with others in their groups shape the identities of youth (Mead, 1940, cited in Sugimura et. al., 2015). In certain peoples, collectivism in the form of groups and relationships are more important (Sugimura et. al., 2015), a fact that needs to be accounted for when dealing with the Japanese. Through face-to-

face interactions with Malaysians and thereby, experiencing Malaysian Muslim ways of living, the Japanese youth observed new habits, as mentioned by participant Marisi:

> learn habits of Malaysians (Online Interview, 30 August, 2019)

In addition, the exposure has allowed them to benefit in terms of appreciating a foreign culture as well as Islam, as participant Yuta noted:

> deepen (understanding of) Malaysian culture and Islam (Online Interview, 30 August, 2019)

Considering the inferiority complex common among their South Asian parents (commonly the mother) married to the Japanese (Vestre, 2011), efforts must be made so that the Japanese Muslim youth do not inherit such a legacy. The negative perception that Islam is too rigid (Fathil & Fathil, 2011) and therefore impractical to adopt must be continually challenged. The participants must be encouraged to develop multicultural symbiotic ties (Sultana, 2019) with non-Muslims not at the expense of their Muslim identity. The cultural dimension must be addressed and cultural sensitivity (Abdulai, 2019) accounted for. Along these lines, the participants of the present study realised that for a country to do well, its citizens can come from different cultures, and do not have to be homogeneous like Japan. As participant Daiki commented:

> Tun Dr Mahathir a great leader for Chinese, Malay & Indians living together (Online Interview, 30 August, 2019)

The Japanese youth learned that, just as in Japan, the culture amongst peoples in Malaysia is to work hard in order to be successful and happy, as participant Tatsuki wrote:

> Really learned a lot, impressed with Malaysia, work hard host family (Online Interview, 30 August, 2019)

The week-long visit had piqued the Japanese youth's interest to explore beyond Japan, and to look into the possibility of furthering their studies in Malaysia, as participant Haruto stated:

> [. . . doing a personal] survey to study in Malaysia, know more about culture (Online Interview, 30 August, 2019)

Hence, the Japanese youth learned it's alright to admire certain aspects of another country, but this is all in the spirit of getting to know one another, and to continue learning from each other. Indeed, the aim of the interactions with the host parents/family as well as other Malaysians was to provide a starting point so that the Japanese youth want to return to Malaysia, perhaps to further their studies and develop themselves further, especially as Muslims.

4.4.5 Spiritual Domain

Adolescence opens a suitable window of opportunity when responsible adults must discuss true concepts of *tawhīd* (Oneness of God), the world of the unseen (*al-ghayb)* and more abstract concepts including society development and metaphysics (Al-Talib et. al., 2013). When it comes to providing Islamic education for Muslim youth and instilling *tawhīd*, a comprehensive approach must be considered, and discussions need to go beyond issues related to common topics such as dress and food (Sahin, 2013). As well, adolescence is the time for identity search. The extent to which identities are impacted or enhanced during an intercultural exchange programme is dependent on the quality of the interactions that the participants experienced throughout such a programme (Stoeckel, 2016). However, the context of the study by Stoeckel (2016) was

on an Erasmus programme in which the participants were Europeans, while the study by Cates (2017) was conducted among participants of an Asian Youth Forum. Nonetheless, the potential impact of quality interactions still applies in the present study.

A brief homestay can be transformative and is a platform to broaden one's horizon(Cates, 2017). Just as the three eminent Japanese highlighted in this study i.e. SulaimanAkira Hamanaka, Umar Mita, and Hajj Sugimoto had experienced living with practising Muslims, for the first time in their lives the Japanese Muslim youth experienced what it was like to live in an environment where they were surrounded by people who lived by the tenets of Islam. Allah says: ". . . for without doubt in the remembrance of Allah do hearts find satisfaction" (Al-Qur'an. Al-Ra'd. 13:28). Seeing mosques everywhere, being reminded of prayer five times a day was something new and refreshing. Not only that, a mosque is a place to find serenity, as noted by participant Tokuda:

Mosque is big - can chill at back (Online Interview, 30 August, 2019)

Since the Japanese youth came from different backgrounds, and from the fact that Islamic education was not easily available in Japan, it was deemed appropriate to have practical basic lessons on prayer, although this was done subtly at the masjid. At the mosque, the researcher observed that the host mother of the only female Japanese Muslim youth would deliberately take *wudhu'* in front of her and pray together with her, to encourage her to pray. One of the host fathers did a demonstration for *wudhu'* and the prayers were always done together. Consequently, the participants expressed interest to do better as a Muslim, as stated by participant Kawai:

> learnt to pray and take *wudhu'* (ablution). I knew the stuff before, but now doing it properly (Online Interview, 30 August, 2019)

Participant Tokuda agreed, stating that:

> At USIM, I learnt how to pray and perform ablution . . . and learnt how to take *wudhu'* to do better (Online Interview, 30 August, 2019)

The researcher observed that there were other interesting specifics that were explained to the Japanese youth, for example, why the *mimbar* in a masjid is hollow, as explained by the guide at the Islamic Arts Museum. They realised that Islamic practices that are true to Islam have a strong reason to be such, and are not the result of whimsical desires of the Muslim community. In Japan, finding a mosque within close proximity of one's dwelling is a luxury. Participant Haruto noted that in Malaysia:

> (You) hear *azan* anywhere you go. In Japan, perform *solat* only when I remember (Online Interview, 30 August, 2019)

Research has proven that it is possible for Muslim minority youth from a cross-cultural background to be proud of being Muslim and simultaneously have a sense of belonging and connectedness to their home country (Yuen & Leung, 2019 & Shazhadi et. al., 2017) whereby Islam is a stabilising factor in their growth and development. Such Muslim minority youth do not view Islam as a threat (Morgan & Poynting, 2016) and despite contradictory circumstances, these youth are motivated to do religious acts e.g. praying. However, to reach this level, the youth must have acquired a certain amount of knowledge and understanding about Islam. For the participants in the present study, although they had learned some basic Islamic principles back home in Japan, their understanding back then was much to be desired. Thus, all of their parents were

genuinely concerned that these youth would choose not to practice Islam once they become adults due to lack of proper understanding of Islam. Participant Tatsuki said:

> Before this, I learnt Islam via internet . . . thought it was enough but here . . . understand more detail (Online Interview, 30 August, 2019)

The majority of these Japanese Muslim youth were a product of mixed marriages between born Muslims (in many cases, the father) and born Japanese non-Muslim (commonly the mother). Hence, through the Cultural Exchange Programme, they experienced Islam at a deeper practical level. Participant Tatsuki, who admitted to having doubts about Islam and was on the brink of leaving Islam prior to joining the Cultural Exchange Programme, discovered something unexpected from the spiritual aspect:

> I feel proud being Muslim here, I am free to integrate *MashaAllah*. I will learn history and culture of Islam more and spread to others (Online Interview, 30 August, 2019)

Because of the very small number of Japanese Muslims in Japan, a school in Japan might have only one Japanese Muslim student. As participant Tatsuki declared:

> We were the only Muslims at school in Japan . . . I was relieved to hear that they (the other participants) were having the same experience, the same circumstances. I'm not alone (Online Interview, 30 August, 2019)

This is a clear declaration that these Japanese Muslim youth found strength in each other's presence. Being the only Muslim in school makes it all the more difficult for these minority Muslim youth to practice Islam. As a result of the Cultural Exchange Programme, they discovered other Japanese Muslim youth who were in the

same predicament. It is hoped that they would continue to be in touch with, and support one another once they returned to Japan.

4.5 Conclusion

In line with the *Al-ta'āruf* Concept in the Cultural Exchange Programme, the Japanese Muslim youth were removed for a period of time from an environment in Japan where religiosity and spirituality was not the norm in society. They were then introduced to an environment in Malaysia where religiosity and therefore, spirituality, could be seen, heard and felt consistently by the common presence and practices of Muslims. This was deliberately done so that the Japanese Muslim youth could experience for themselves the difference between these two environments, and what it would mean to them as Muslims.

By and large, the Japanese are indifferent towards religion. Even if a Japanese believes in a particular faith, it is something that he or she would not discuss or mention in the open, as religion is considered too personal to be shared with others. For Japanese students, any kind of lesson or activity related to religion is prohibited by law from being carried out in school. The environment is such that religion is not seen, heard or felt whether one is in school or out on the street. For a Japanese child, the exposure for religious education he or she gets will be at home, if the parents are able to teach. Or, if there is a Muslim community where he or she lives, they might pool their resources together to organise classes at the local mosque or at an Islamic Centre. However, many Japanese Muslim families live nowhere near a mosque or Islamic Centre. For many Japanese Muslim youth, an environment connected to spirituality is absent. In comparison, when the Japanese Muslim youth were in Malaysia, they could see, hear and feel the presence of spirituality several times a day. They heard the *azan* each time

it was time to pray. They prayed together in congregation during the prayer break a fewtimes each day throughout the Cultural Exchange Programme.

From an environment almost devoid of remembrance of God, they were exposed to one where they were reminded of God every single day. Further, every activity they did throughout the Cultural Exchange Programme was linked back to Islam and their purpose of life as Muslims. As Allah says, ". . . without doubt in the remembrance of Allah do hearts find satisfaction." (Al-Qur'an. Al-Ra'd. 13:28). In this way, the spirituality element was infused into the *Al-ta'āruf* Concept in this programme.

In this chapter, the researcher presented the results of data analysis relating to theexperiences of the Japanese Muslim youth who enrolled in the Cultural Exchange Programme. These results helped the researcher to conceptualise the experiences in relation to the seven elements of *Al-ta'āruf* : *Tahāwur* (dialogue); *Ta-'arūf* (mutually knowing, mutually interacting); *Ta-'āyush* (to coexist); *Tasāmuh* (tolerate each other's differences); *Tabādul* (exchange of ideas); *Ta-'akhī* (to associate as brother); and *Al-ta-'āyush Al-Silmīyy* (to co-exist peacefully and in harmony) and explained how each of these have contributed to heighten the Muslim identity of the Japanese Muslim youth. In other words, these seven elements of the *Al-ta'āruf* Concept were the factors that came into play to strengthen the Muslim identity of the Japanese Muslim youth.

Throughout the Cultural Exchange Programme, the Japanese Muslim youth had experienced positive human interactions especially with the host family and other Malaysians in general. They felt valued, respected and treasured as human beings. After a full eight days, the Cultural Exchange Programme finally came to a close. It took six months of detailed preparations by the researcher - convincing the official organiser, the Chiba Islamic Cultural Centre (CICC) to be the official partner who would coordinate matters in Japan especially in promoting the programme to the youth and

their parents, and handling their enquiries and application process. In Malaysia, the researcher searched for and identified host parents/families, drew up the detailed itinerary, contacted organisations which were willing to support the programme and sought support from other community leaders who could sponsor activities and events in their different locations. By the grace of Allah, nothing untoward happened to any of the visiting Japanese students and they safely returned to Japan on the final day of the programme.

In the next chapter, the researcher will reflect on whether or not the findings have answered the research questions and achieved the objectives of the study. Also, the researcher will state if this study has contributed to the current studies of cultural exchange programmes and studies of the Concept of *Al-ta'āruf* . Comments and suggestions for future studies will also be presented.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This research project set out to conceptualise the *da'wah* approach to Japanese Muslim youth. At the time of this research, there was no specific programme targeted to youth taking place at, or organized by the Chiba Islamic Cultural Centre (CICC). The CICC was understaffed even at the time this thesis was written. The Chairman of CICC had a full-time job as the principal of a private school in Chiba. There was no other CICC staff to back him up. He gave lectures at the CICC, these lectures were informative in nature, but meant for the general public, not tailored with the youth in mind. Such state of affairs was not unique to the CICC. Given extremely scarce resources and how scattered the Japanese Muslims were in terms of locations, the needs of the second generation Japanese Muslim youth were not met. They were born into a world that was already laden with expectations to live just like any Japanese does. As soon as they started school, they found themselves in highly uncomfortable and contradictory circumstances. It did not help that if one of their parents was a non-Japanese born and raised in a developing country, this parent was likely to have an inferiority complex in relation to the perceived superiority of the Japanese way of life, thus making the situation even more complex.

5.1 Conclusions

In the present study, the researcher has provided more depth into specific factors that are at work to push the second generation Japanese Muslim into rejecting Islam in

their lives, namely; a prevailing culture of indifference towards religion in Japan; how second-generation Japanese Muslims are treated as outsiders by ethnic Japanese because of their physical appearance; how these Japanese Muslim youth longed to be accepted by their ethnic Japanese friends as part of their normal development in adolescence; and how the fact that their parents did not have the same experiences living as a Muslim in Japan meant that the parents could not truly grasp what they are going through, and therefore create an intergenerational gap between these youth and their parents, which are not helping these youth to see Islam in a positive light.

5.1.1 Impact of The Present Study: A Success

Based on the findings of the current study which was founded on the *Al-ta'āruf* Concept, the researcher concludes that the main objective of the Japan-Malaysia Youth Cultural Exchange Programme 2019 to strengthen the identity of Japanese Muslim youth has indeed been achieved, thus proving that the cultural exchange experience promises a bright future to contribute towards strengthening the confidence of Muslim minority youth, not only in Japan, but potentially in other countries. It implies that religiosity can be heightened through the intercultural approach embedded in the *Al-ta'āruf* Concept.

The present study thus becomes part of the broader scholarship on the Muslim identity formation of second generation Japanese Muslim youth in particular, and Muslim minority youth in general. The present study has exposed the second generation Japanese Muslim youth to first-hand intercultural experiences living with host Muslim families in a majority Muslim country, started a long-term relationship between the youth and the host family, and enabled these youth to gain insights on how practising

Muslims live based on the values of Islam. The CICC Chairman, Hajj Kyochiro Sugimoto said:

> I have been to Malaysia ten times, but this programme, first time. . . CICC is very happy (with the programme). . . This programme motivates Muslim youth to join *da'wah* activities in soft way(Farewell Dinner, 23 August, 2019)

Being experiential in nature, the approach applied in the present study is different from many other *da'wah* initiatives carried out by Muslim NGOs in Japan and Malaysia. The intercultural approach is hoped to complement the theoretical formal instruction that is usually applied by Islamic NGOs in educating youth about Islam, which usually takes place in a classroom or lecture hall. Besides, the cultural exchange approach requires physical travel, which Allah mentions: "Say: 'Travel through the earth and see how Allah did originate creation; so will Allah produce a later creation: for Allah has power over all things'" (Al-Qur'an. Al-'Ankabūt. 29:20). Physical travel is particularly significant in a cultural exchange programme as it exposed the participants to new horizons and new possibilities, resources of a culture they have not experienced previously.

There are many ways of reaching out to peoples of different nations, beliefs and backgrounds, for the purpose of *da'wah*, to spread the word of Islam, as well as to clarify misperceptions of Islam. The audience demography, in this case the second generation Japanese Muslim youth, must be taken into account and seriously considered, their needs and preferences looked into, before an attempt is made to design a programme suitable for them. The Concept of *Al-ta'āruf* was applied with the purpose of strengthening the faith of the second generation Japanese Muslim youth who reside in a Muslim minority country.

5.1.2 The Five Domains of Human Connection: A Key Component of *Al-ta'āruf*

The events throughout the present study had been designed in such a way as to incorporate all five domains of human connection: 1) physical; 2) intellectual; 3) emotional; 4) cultural; and 5) spiritual. Such a step was crucial to increase the likelihood of success for the programme because, although the incoming youth and host parents/families belonged to different ethnic groups and nationalities, infusing the five domains based on Islamic Education ('Ulwan, 2004) ensured "effective communication pertinent to the heart, mind and emotion" (Sharif & Shamsudin, 2017). All five domains acted as the conduits by which the present study connected with, engaged and reached out to the Japanese Muslim youth who enrolled in this programme. Plenty of thought and time were invested into planning, preparing and executing the present study as it required the involvement of many parties.

5.1.3 Parents of Muslim Minorities Deserve Help from Muslim Majority Communities

Committed Muslim parents believe it is their responsibility to raise children who grow up to become firm believers, people who believe in Islam with conviction. But the path to achieve this is never easy. More often than not, it is long and difficult, especially for Muslim minority parents. Japan is just one example of Muslim minority parents struggling to raise their children to become righteous Muslims. Muslims from majority Muslim countries, therefore, must do all they can to extend assistance where possible.

Like many other Muslim minorities in other countries, the Japanese Muslim youth constantly felt they were treated as the "Other" in their own birth country, even as they held a Japanese passport and are of Japanese nationality. Islamophobia is real. Efforts

must be invested so that these Japanese Muslim youth do not fall into the trap of radicalisation and terrorism. To strengthen their Muslim identity, to increase the likelihood of the second generation Japanese Muslim youth more likely to share their Muslim identity with their non-Muslim teachers and friends and not hold back, something quite out of the ordinary needed to be done.

According to the official organizer, CICC, the second generation Japanese Muslim youth already knew about certain basic knowledge about Islam, for example, the oneness of God. However, this was no indication of the strength of their faith. Knowing is not equal to believing. The amount of knowledge one has does not necessarily reflect the depth of belief. The challenge was how to move the faith of the second generation Japanese Muslim youth from a level of knowing to believing with conviction. Believing with conviction is an ideal; the researcher believes that the Japan-Malaysia Youth Cultural Exchange Programme 2019 has contributed in a small way towards moving the Japanese Muslim youth a step nearer towards this ideal. There is no telling what will happen in the coming months and years, whether the positive outcomes of this programme will remain in the Japanese Muslim youth. Only time can tell. For that matter, every person's journey is different.

5.2 Recommendations

The present study started off as an experimental programme. Most of the second generation Japanese Muslim youth actually had never seen anything outside of Japan. They were born and raised in Japan. They had no idea how other people live outside of Japan. Their only source of information was the media, which until today tends to portray Islam negatively, which did not help grow their self-confidence as young Muslims. As stated in their feedback, most of them had been hiding their Muslim

identity prior to coming to Malaysia, since they did not want to be viewed differently by their non-Muslim friends. The researcher deemed it worthwhile to try a different approach of *da'wah*, which incorporates mostly experiential learning: Let the second generation Japanese Muslim youth experience living with a practising Muslim family in a Muslim majority country, which also celebrates diversity. Let them experience getting up close and personal with Muslim families, and see for themselves the practicality and beauty of living Islam.

5.2.1 Consider Innovative *Da'wah* Strategies for Youth

Adolescence is the time when boys and girls begin to take a closer look at themselves, trying to comprehend what is seen and what is unseen. This is the time when the *tawhīd* concept must be discussed and taught to them, with the objective of raising them to become strong and confident Muslims. Having said that, a natural part of the growing up process to become confident is a need to be liked and accepted by others, the desire to belong. At a younger age, a child's need to be accepted and to belong is fulfilled by the immediate kith and kin, especially parents and siblings. In the adolescent stage, the need to be accepted by peers is stronger. Not only that. Feelings of attachment to the community where one is raised is a powerful human emotion. Any Japanese youth is likely to feel a strong desire, a longing to be as Japanese as they can, since this is part of their national identity, having been born and raised in Japan. However, the second-generation Japanese Muslim youth are perceived and treated as *gaijin* (meaning "strangers", "undecideables", "outsiders", implying "You don't belong here") in two levels: race and religion. All of the second generation Japanese Muslim youth who participated in the Cultural Exchange Programme are the offspring of

mixedmarriage, where one parent was Japanese, and the other parent a non-Japanese. Physically they did not look Japanese.

For the second generation Japanese Muslim youth, to be committed Muslims, the desire to be Muslim must be significantly stronger than the desire to be accepted as a Japanese. The Cultural Exchange Programme is an intervention which attempted to create a sense of acceptance and belonging among the second generation Japanese Muslim youth. Essentially, the programme was designed to help them realise that they can choose to identify with the Muslim heritage. That it is alright for them not to embrace the Japanese way of life where it conflicts with the Muslim lifestyle, for instance, drinking saké, an alcoholic beverage which is deeply rooted in Japanese tradition. Through the Cultural Exchange Programme, they learned that there is an alternative way to be accepted and have a sense of belonging.

The present study is mostly experiential in content, which was one of the long-term strategies adopted by the Prophet Muhammad SAW in *da'wah*. The approach used in this Cultural Exchange Programme also took into account that the prevailing cultural forces shaping the identity formation for Japanese youth cannot be ignored, and is not the same as the Western perspective.

The present study explored an innovative *da'wah* strategy to reach out to minority Muslim youth. Over the years, it is common to hear about *da'wah* being carried out by way of conferences, seminars and workshops. There is even a relatively new method now called Street *Da'wah*, where Muslim activists approach the public on the street to share with them the beauty and truth about Islam. In conferences, seminars and workshops, participants register themselves to learn about various facets of Islam from learned teachers. It is likely that people who attend such sessions already have an interest and the capacity to sit and learn for an extended period of time, since such

sessions usually would last from almost an hour to several hours a day. But not everyone is willing to go through such a process of learning. The youth might attend under the instruction of their parents or guardian and yet learn nothing. We need to consider alternative and innovative forms of approaching the youth, especially for those who are not particularly interested in such channels of learning. Not everyone learns by sitting down, listening to the teacher and taking notes. We need to explore and identify new modes of reaching out to them, to grow the interest to learn about Islam.

5.2.2 Apply the *Ansār-Muhajirin* Relationship in Future CEPs

The Prophet Muhammad SAW is the best example how to run our lives, including how to resolve contemporary problems in raising the young generation in a multicultural setting, no matter where they reside or come from. Allah says: "And you (Muhammad) (stand) on an exalted standard of character." (Al-Qur'an. Al-Qalām. 68:4).

It must be remembered that upon his migration to Madinah, the Prophet SAW made a unique arrangement whereby the local *Ansār* were requested to help the *Muhajirin* in all possible ways. Establishing unity and brotherhood is a critical factor in starting the Muslim community in Madinah, a landmark of Islamic tradition; this is the idea that the present study adopted. The Japanese Muslim families were up against a wall in raising their youth as Muslims, just as the Makkan Muslims were up against a wall, prosecuted to the extreme in Makkah. Under such circumstances, the assistance of the Madinan Muslims were timely and much needed. The *Ansār* rose to the occasion with exemplary kindness and consideration, extending spaces in their homes, doing all they could to support the *Muhajirin* to begin life anew. Similarly, in the present study, the Malaysian Muslim host parents rose to the occasion, extending

their homes to provide shelter and all basic necessities with the aim of establishing a long-term relationship with the second generation Japanese Muslim youth. In this programme, the Japanese Muslim parents only had to cover the costs of their children's flights, whilethe Malaysian host parents covered all ground costs in Malaysia such as meals, accommodation, utilities, *takaful* insurance, boat ride and museum entry fees. This programme did not allow any of the Malaysian host parents to make a profit. On the contrary, they were required to spend on the Japanese Muslim youth just as they would their own sons or daughters on a normal day.

The host parents had been briefed earlier that the present study was an application of the *Ansār-Muhajirin* concept. The Malaysian host families would be the *Ansār*, supporting the Japanese Muslim parents in providing an avenue for the second generation Japanese Muslim youth to experience how Muslims in a multicultural society live relatively harmoniously. Certainly Malaysia has its own set of issues when it comes to racial tensions, but by and large, its citizens still are able to accept each other's differences. The Malaysian Muslim host parents took upon this role whole-heartedly, doing all they could to make sure that the Japanese youth under their wings felt welcome and at home. Therefore, the *Ansār-Muhajirin* relationship is a strategy that is highly recommended to be adopted for future cultural exchange programmes involving Muslim minority youth.

5.2.3 Find Committed Host Parents

Commitment from host parents was critical for the success of this research, as thequality of the interactions between the Japanese Muslim youth and the host parents and family members would colour the perceptions of the youth. In this research, host parents were considered suitable if they had a proven track record in raising youth,

either their own offspring, or those under their wings. One household was childless, but upon due consideration, the researcher decided to include them since they were professionals in the field of education, dealing directly with youth themselves, and hence were qualified to interact with the Japanese Muslim youth entrusted to them.

Making them feel cared for was a human way of reaching out to these Japanese Muslim youth. The host parents played the role of caring adults, treating them with attention and care by providing them meals, bringing them to events and places of interest, fetching them home, looking after them when they fell ill (one of them was a little unwell for a few days upon arrival) and being there to answer their queries to the few who could speak English. For the Japanese Muslim youth who could barely speak English, they could feel the presence, care and attention just by the mere presence and positive gestures of their host parents and family members. The positive gestures and body language sent a strong message to indicate that the Japanese Muslim youth were welcome into their Malaysian homes. Caring was the first step. Although it is true that communication will inevitably crop up as an issue in cultural exchange programmes, it is proven that participants of such programmes in the end experienced a sense of accomplishment, provided they were given opportunities to work together to achieve common goals. As well, Japanese youth look for deep positive interactions in the cultural exchange setting which were present throughout the present study.

5.2.4 Identify Local Youth Volunteers Early

For the present study, focus was given to the incoming second generation Japanese Muslim youth. For future studies, the researcher recommends looking into theexperience of the local youth as well. Also, it would be good to identify and source an equal number of locals (Malaysian) youth volunteers who would be present

throughout the programme, not necessarily the children of the host parents themselves. Each Malaysian youth would be paired with a Japanese youth right from day one, so that they could start practicing the language they were assigned to learn, and pick up subtle positive behaviours e.g. mannerisms from each other. For childless host parents, the researcher would suggest to arrange for an equal number of Malaysian Muslim youth of the same gender to stay with them temporarily, to enable the Japanese Muslim youth to interact with the Malaysian Muslim youth within the comfort of home. For example, if a host family were to take in two Japanese Muslim youth, both females, arrangements would be made to have two Malaysian Muslim female youth to stay with the family throughout the period of the programme to allow proper *ta-'arūf* and therefore maximise bonding.

5.2.5 Create A Safe Environment for Learning

Prior to receiving the second generation Japanese Muslim youth, the Malaysian Muslim host parents had been briefed about the circumstances leading to the present study. The host parents understood the issues and challenges faced by Japanese Muslim families in raising these second generation Japanese Muslim youth. They were fully aware that they must support these youth wherever possible, making them feel welcome despite the language barrier, as most of the second generation Japanese Muslim youth had a low level of English proficiency. None of the host parents could speak Japanese. They only spoke Malay and English and some of them, a bit of Arabic. In the beginning, some of the Japanese Muslim youth felt uncomfortable and were not at ease, given their low level of English proficiency. But the host parents made them feel welcome and made sure the language was not an issue. At the farewell dinner, all the second

generation Japanese Muslim youth without hesitation raised their hands when asked if they wanted to return to Malaysia. As told by Tokuda's host mother to the researcher:

> I was very concerned since Tokuda was very quiet . . . I was not sure if he was comfortable . . . but on the third day, suddenly he was taking out all kinds of presents. . . He was more relaxed, more at ease, smiling . . . My husband and I were surprised (Personal Communication, 7 September, 2019)

After the Japanese Muslim youth left, although the feedback given was that the programme was too packed, the host parents reported that they still succeeded to slot in pockets of time available to bond with their Japanese Muslim youth. Host mother, Sabariah, told the researcher at the end of the programme:

> I certainly want to visit my son (the Japanese Muslim youth she hosted) in Japan. . . Felt like sending my own child to college [. . .] (Personal Communication, 1 September 2019)

Host mother Ani echoed the same sentiment, saying:

> The house is so quiet now (Personal Communication, 1 September 2019)

Host mother Rosila said:

> I miss everyone, especially the Japanese youth (Personal Communication, 1 September 2019)

5.2.6 Manage the Communication Gap Proactively

Proactive steps need to be done earlier to prepare all youth and host parents to deal with the communication gap better. For the coming batch of Japanese Muslim youth, a list of common everyday English words and phrases will be prepared, and all of the participants will be required to acquire a minimum number of words prior to

landing in Malaysia. Learning basic English will be an additional goal for the next batch onwards, an asset which will be valued by the Japanese biological parents. It will also facilitate communications between host parents and incoming Japanese Muslim youth.

5.3 Concluding Remarks

Naturally, after a time lapse following completion of research such as this study which is intended as an intervention programme, there would be concerns over how the participants might be getting along. Have the effects of the intervention worn off? Have the participants changed in any way? The researcher was able to follow up with a few parents of the Japanese Muslim participants about a year after the present study. According to participant Riku's mother:

> *Alhamdulillah* (praise be to God), my son Riku has changed a lot . . . He has been reminding his younger siblings to listen to their mother . . . The thing that makes me so grateful is that he often goes to the mosque to perform *jama'ah* (congregational) prayers especially for *Maghrib*, *Isha'* and *Fajr*. Imagine how a mother feels . . . when a child wakes up earlier to pray at the mosque, while the mother herself needs to be awakened (Personal Communication, 30 September 2020)

The researcher also followed up with the father of another participant, Yuta. According to Yuta's father:

> After joining the Cultural Exchange Programme last year, my son become quite confident with Islam. Before the programme he was below average as a Muslim. . . Now Yuta is above my expectations. Most of the tasks I give him, he can do it well. The programme built his confidence towards Islam. I do not push him, he does it willingly (Personal Communication, 15 September 2020)

The reader of this thesis might recall participant Tatsuki, who, upon completing the Cultural Exchange Programme, declared that he would:

> live a little more dignified as a Muslim (Online Interview, 30 August 2019)

Indeed, he is now back to working on his YouTube channel which he originally created to raise awareness about Islam. When he arrived in Malaysia last year, before he participated in the present study, he had already started on the same channel, but, as his host parents told the researcher, had doubts whether Islam was the right path for him and was not too sure if he would continue with the YouTube Channel.

It must be mentioned that participant Riku, Yuta and Tatsuki all came from practising Muslim families. Having a practising and supportive family, the researcher believes, is a strong factor in helping these youth to sustain their interest and commitment to live as Muslims for the rest of their lives.

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, plans for the next Japan-Malaysia Youth Cultural Exchange Programme had to be postponed indefinitely until it is safe to travel. Nevertheless, in June 2020, the Japanese Muslim participants reconnected with the Malaysian youth volunteers virtually. Six of the nine Japanese Muslim youth were present. The other three had Internet connection problems and were not able to join. Nevertheless, plans are afoot to keep this virtual connection going every fortnight to keep the *Al-ta'āruf* Concept alive and well, in preparation for the next Japan-Malaysia Youth Cultural Exchange Programme. In each virtual session which lasts for about an hour, the Japanese and Malaysian youth take turns to share cultural elements unique to their respective countries.

The Japan-Malaysia Youth Cultural Exchange Programme 2019 was an attempt to respond to the dire need of the Japanese Muslim minority community who face greatchallenges to instill a strong Muslim identity in their children. For future Cultural Exchange Programmes, it was agreed by both the Japanese and Malaysian

coordinators that under no circumstance shall the programme be commercialised and turned into a profit-making enterprise. This clause is to ensure that both the Malaysian and Japanese sides take upon their roles with the right and pure intentions for the sake of *da'wah*, not spurred by a desire for profit. The long-term goal is to allow the programme to grow over time, finding volunteers, host parents and partners who are willing to play their roles, and replicate the programme in future. In addition, future studies may explore possible ways of aligning intercultural research ideas and concepts in the Qur'an; there is great possibility for us to uncover more gems in the Qur'an provided we are willing to do the work.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: E-Banner To Promote The Cultural Exchange Programme

Appendix 2: Day-to-Day Report

Day One: Saturday, 17 August 2019 - Arrival & Welcoming Dinner

For some of the host parents, the day began very early as their Japanese youth arrived well before Fajr. The Chairman of Chiba Islamic Cultural Centre, Hajj Kyoichiro Sugimoto, also safely arrived in the morning together with his son, a participant of the programme. A banner was displayed to help the students spot the waiting hosts. At 5pm, the Welcoming Dinner began at a host parents home in Ampang, Selangor. During dinner, the researcher observed that the Japanese students carried themselves well. They were respectful of both their host family members and their Japanese fellow students. They had no trouble helping themselves to Malaysian food. In the beginning, they were rather quiet, possibly because they were not conversant in English. However, when the Japanese students were together, they communicated with each other in a more lively way. After a brief welcoming remarks by the Malaysian host, as planned, they returned to their respective homes early to rest and prepare for the following day.

Day Two: Sunday, 18 August 2019 – Preparing Local Cuisine and Distributing Food to the Poor (*Asnaf*) in Rawang

Upon arrival in Rawang, the Japanese students, their host families and interpreters were greeted warmly by the local Kejiranan Rukun Tetangga (KRT) committee members, led by the gracious sponsors for the day, Tuan Syed Omar and his wife, Puan Roslinah Omar. After a sumptuous breakfast, the Japanese and Malaysian youth were subdivided into smaller groups where both nationalities were represented. The Japanese youth had their first taste of preparing, cooking and packing local cuisine for the *asnaf* folks around Rawang area. With the guidance of the host parents and elders, the youth were tasked with preparing the basic ingredients to cook dhall curry, fry the marinated chicken and cut the vegetables for salad, and cook huge pots of tomato rice, all within 3 hours. Once ready, they packed the cooked dishes along with other basic dry foods needed, including rice and other items. *Zuhur* prayer was done at a nearby mosque, before proceeding to the 5 predetermined locations where the different *asnaf* groups were waiting. The distribution process took about 2 hours, and the Japanese students and host families congregated again for tea and '*Asr* prayer at the sponsors' house, before calling it a day.

Day Three: Monday, 19 August 2019 - Briefing on Halal Industry, Halal Slaughtering, Tour of Halal Organic Chicken Factory

The founder and Managing Director of *Ayam Dr Zainol* organic chicken factory, Dr Zainol Ahmad Haja himself greeted the participants, volunteers and host families of the Cultural Exchange Programme. Dr Zainol took the time to explain the basis for halal slaughtering, backed by Qur'an and Sunnah evidence. He stressed that halal meat is best not just for Muslims, but for everyone. At this juncture, the second generation Muslim Japanese students began to ask questions about the halal concept and its relation to Islam and the Muslim way of life. This was the beginning of the many queries that would be raised by the Japanese Muslim students, especially to their host parents, about Islam. Later, both the Japanese and accompanying Malaysian youth were given the opportunity to slaughter the organic chickens for the first time in their life, inside the real slaughtering section. Before the guests left, Dr Zainol feted everyone to a hearty lunch of rice, fried chicken and mushroom chicken soup.

The next stop was at Masjid USIM, where *zuhur* prayer was performed. The Dean of the Faculty of Leadership & Management of the university and his team members greeted the entourage. A Japanese lecturer was also present as an interpreter. The staff of the Faculty of Leadership & Management introduced the guests to the interactive Global Halal Game (http://islamicgames.com.my/global-halal-game/) which provided a basic understanding of the halal concept in Islam. After '*Asr*, the USIM Masjid gave a brief presentation on the functions of the mosque which included lectures, burial ceremony and Hajj courses. The youth were given a short demonstration of how to perform the ablution and prayer. The day ended with a short reminder on the significance of the Muslim personal identity since the Almighty Creator has created the human being as the best and special creation.

Day Four: Tuesday, 20 August 2019 – Team Building at Radiant Retreat,Visit Benefigs Farm & Bonding at Saujana Janda Baik

The Japanese Muslim students and host families congregated early morning at Radiant Retreat for a series of teambuilding activities: obstacles, archery, fishing and crazy golf, with the professional assistance of 2 facilitators from Radiant Retreat. Before lunch, the participants were shown how to tap rubber and local bamboo. They saw for themselves what local fruit trees – rambutan, mangosteen, and durian looked like. After lunch, everyone proceeded to Benefigs, a nearby fig farm. At the entrance of Benefigs, they saw the verses from the Qur'an: "By the Fig and the Olive, and the Mount of Sinai, And this City of security, We have indeed created man in the best of moulds" (Qur'an:95:1-4). The next stop was at Saujana Janda Baik, a riverside homestay. Here, both the Japanese and Malaysian youth interacted well, playing ball and bathing in the river.

Day Five: Wednesday, 21 August 2019 - Islamic Arts Museum, Malaysian-Japanese International Institute of Technology (MJIIT)

To gain insights on Islamic cultural knowledge, the Japanese Muslim students and the host families went for a guided tour of the Islamic Arts Museum. However, they only succeeded to visit 5 of the 12 galleries as they only had 2 hours to spend. From there, they proceeded to Masjid Wilayah, also for a guided tour. Following lunch, they made their way to the Malaysian-Japanese International Institute of Technology (MJIIT). At MJIIT, a Malaysian student who used to study in Japan and a Japanese professor took turns to present their views of living in Malaysia versus living in Japan. At the end of the session, the youth had the opportunity to see a few of the highly advanced laboratories themselves.

Day Six: Thursday, 22 August 2019 – Nasyrul Qur'an, Meeting with Prime Minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad, iftar at Local Surau

The first stop was at Nasyrul Qur'an, where the Japanese students and their host families had a guided tour of the second largest Qur'an printing facility in the world. After that, the Japanese youths were whisked to the Perdana Leadership Foundation, to meet face-to-face with Tun Dr Mahathir and his wife, Tun Dr Siti Hasmah Mohamad Ali, for a good half an hour. The Japanese are well-known to have a high regard for YAB Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad; it is a mutual appreciation. In the evening, the Japanese students and the host families convened at Surau Dagang Avenue in Ampang to join the Jemaah for *iftar*, breaking fast together. Surau Dagang Avenue regularly holds *iftar* every Monday and Thursday. After breaking fast, they performed *Maghrib* prayer, followed by dinner, after which the Japanese students gave a brief presentation about Japan to those present at the surau.

Day Seven: Friday, 23 August 2019 – National Heart Institute, International Institute of Islamic Civilisation (ISTAC), Farewell Dinner

The Japanese youth were brought to the National Heart Institute (NHI) where they saw how Muslims and non-Muslims worked side by side in harmony. They were given briefings by NHI staff about the relevance of scientific imaging. At the end of the briefing, a Japanese student asked how *solat* (prayers) is performed if the heart surgery takes hours to complete. The question was fielded by Datuk Dr Ahmad Khairuddin, a practising Muslim himself. The next location visited was the International Institute of Islamic Civilisation (ISTAC), where the Japanese youth and their host families were shown some rare collections consisting of ancient manuscripts, circa 1200's. Later, the men did the Friday congregational prayer at the ISTAC masjid, while the ladies performed *Solat Zuhur* at a nearby surau, as the masjid was overcrowded. At 6pm, the Japanese youth gathered for the farewell dinner, together with their host families.

Day Eight: Saturday, 24 August 2019 – Depart to Japan

During the farewell at airport, when a one of the Malaysian hosts hugged Tatsuki and asked when he wanted to come back to Malaysia, he said, "Tomorrow". Tatsuki worked part-time as a waiter to raise ¥40,000 to buy his plane ticket. His father decided on Thai Airways and topped up the extra fee. Tatsuki said that he had "come out of hiding and isolation" since he could be himself in Malaysia. The Cultural Exchange Programme has indeed changed his perspective on having a solid Muslim identity.

Some participants felt impacted when handing over the contributions including food to the needy. The programme ended with another delightful high tea and local cuisines including the famous 3D Jelly cake of a sponsor. Our sincere appreciation to Mr Syed Omar, his wife Mrs Roslinah Omar and their family plus the hard working KRT committee members. May Allah grant them barakah. For the Japanese Muslim youth in particular, the aim of the brief experience was to provide some insight on the spirit of assisting the poor based on Islamic principles, especially zakat.

Farewell Dinner Agenda

1. Introduction by M.C. – Jamilah Samian
2. Each Japanese youth presented a personal 4-minute talk on their experiences
3. Remarks by Malaysian youth representative
4. Remarks by host parents' representative
5. Closing remarks by Hajj Kyoichiro Sugimoto, representing the official organiser, the Chiba Islamic Cultural Centre (CICC)
6. Thank you note by Malaysian representative host parent
7. Video show – highlights of the Cultural Exchange Programme
8. Maghrib prayer
9. Dinner
10. Disperse at 10.00 pm

Appendix 3: List of Digital Documents

No.	Description	Remarks/Link
1.	Proposal for Japan-Malaysia Youth Cultural Exchange Programme 2019	Enclosed
2.	Poster used by Chiba Islamic Cultural Centre (CICC), Shizuoka Muslim Association and Osaka representative to promote the programme	Enclosed
3.	Host Parent Application Form	https://bit.ly/2X38kQX
4.	Student Application Form	https://bit.ly/2NdIytD
5.	Student Declaration Form	https://bit.ly/31VjcUT
6.	Banner to welcome visiting youth	Enclosed
7.	Host Parent/Student Feedback Form	https://bit.ly/2X77BhU

Appendix 4: Online Feedback from Japanese Muslim Youth

No.	1
Name:	Haruto
What I liked about the programme:	Culture. Everyone was very kind
Suggestions for improvement:	Nothing special
Top 3 things you learnt in the programme:	1. Malaysian culture and kindness. 2. The importance of zakat, halal and creatures. 3. Feelings of caring for people The importance of workship and how to worship
What is one thing you are doing differently now that you have returned to Japan?	Cherish worship. I can't hear Adhan.
Would you participate in future programmes?	Yes

No.	2
Name:	Kawai
What I liked about the programme:	Difference in culture
Suggestions for improvement:	I wanted more opportunities for interaction
Top 3 things you learnt in the programme:	1. Deep in Islam 2. Communication 3. Cooperation, cooperation
What is one thing you are doing differently now that you have returned to Japan?	I want to study cultural differences with other countries
Would you participate in future programmes?	Yes

No.	3
Name:	Yuta
What I liked about the programme:	There were many programmes to deepen Malaysian culture and Islam, and it was a week of studying
Suggestions for improvement:	There are few programmes for student interaction
Top 3 things you learnt in the programme:	1. Halal production methods 2. Islamic history 3. Malaysian culture
What is one thing you are doing differently now that you have returned to Japan?	Participate in exchanges with nearby Muslims
Would you participate in future programmes?	Yes

No.	4
Name:	Riku
What I liked about the programme:	What everyone can participate in
Suggestions for improvement:	The lecture is not good. Uninteresting.
Top 3 things you learnt in the programme:	1. The importance of halal. 2. The warmth of Malaysians. 3. I feel that it is very easy if the area is Muslim.
What is one thing you are doing differently now that you have returned to Japan?	I want to take the lead in helping people!
Would you participate in future programmes?	Yes

No.	5
Name:	Marisi
What I liked about the programme:	It was gathered as planned. All programmes were completed. I was able to go to various sightseeing spots. Knowing Malaysian culture through nature. A lot of Muslim friends of the same age. I used a lot of English to communicate with local people.
Suggestions for improvement:	Everyone had little time to buy souvenirs.
Top 3 things you learnt in the programme:	First, I was able to learn how to live as a Muslim by interacting with Muslims of the same age. I haven't had any Muslim friends of the same age, so I was able to interact with Muslims of the same age and get to know them immediately. Second, I have never been able to tell my friends that I am Muslim. I am scared of how everyone has an image. However, the non-Muslim people I met in this programme were probably surprised, but I was glad to know about Islam, and I realised that if I told them properly, I could understand Islam. Third, until now, there was only interaction with Muslims living in Japan. However, I felt that Muslims living in Malaysia are very enviable because they are more comfortable to live in than Japan. Also, I thought it was good because there were various ideas of Islam.
What is one thing you are doing differently now that you have returned to Japan?	I want to start by making more Muslim friends by participating more in the Muslim community in Japan.
Would you participate in future programmes?	Yes

No.	6
Name:	Kaito
What I liked about the programme:	I was able to do things that I could not do in Japan (useful as Muslims).
Suggestions for improvement:	I want free time.
Top 3 things you learnt in the programme:	1. Importance of teamwork. 2. Experience of Islamic culture. 3. Tips for how you can live as a Muslim in future.
What is one thing you are doing differently now that you have returned to Japan?	I want to share what I got this time with my friends.
Would you participate in future programmes?	Yes

No.	7
Name:	Tokuda
What I liked about the programme:	There were many people of the same age and it was fun.
Suggestions for improvement:	I wish I could play and go out together after the programme was over.
Top 3 things you learnt in the programme:	1. I did a lot of things that I could not experience in Japan. 2. The importance of halal. 3. The greatness of the old Muslim.
What is one thing you are doing differently now that you have returned to Japan?	I worship (solat) everyday.
Would you participate in future programmes?	Yes

No.	8
Name:	Daiki
What I liked about the programme:	I was able to learn more about Islamic culture.
Suggestions for improvement:	Not!
Top 3 things you learnt in the programme:	1. The importance of respecting multicultural culture. 2. The importance of zakat. 3. Preciousness of life.
What is one thing you are doing differently now that you have returned to Japan?	Respect people
Would you participate in future programmes?	Yes

No.	9
Name:	Tatsuki
What I liked about the programme:	First, the country I was going to was Malaysia. Warm, national character, passion for working for Islam, living with delicious rice. Second, the participants were mostly Muslim. We were the only Muslims at school in Japan, but here we were very comfortable with the majority. I was relieved to hear that they were having the same experience in the same circumstances while talking. I'm not alone. Finally, a rich programme content. It was a very packed schedule, but there was so much to learn and it was a lot of fun.
Suggestions for improvement:	I was happy as a male participant, but I thought it would have been better if I made the gender ratio closer. In particular, I was worried because there was only one Japanese Muslima. I made a Japanese friend with the same circumstances, but she didn't. I enjoyed the programme, but I was busy, so I wanted to have more time to talk with my host parents and participants. (Actually, the time to go home is late, but I wanted to talk a lot, so on the last day I was talking to my host parent until 3:00 am in the morning.)
Top 3 things you learnt in the programme:	1. While the number of Japanese people interested in Japanese culture is decreasing, Malaysians are very interested. 2. Love & Respect is a very important keyword in this country, and this is the secret to the successful realization of a multi-ethnic nation. 3. Be proud of being Muslim.
What is one thing you are doing differently now that you have returned to Japan?	Try not to be afraid as a Muslim and live a little more dignified.
Would you participate in future programmes?	Yes

Appendix 5: Verbal Feedback from Japanese Muslim Youth

No	Name of Japanese Youth	Verbal Remarks
1	Kaito	Good memory. learn about halal, didn't know why halal food, met Tun Dr Mahathir, eat together, listen & talk to them, taking wudhuk to do better, not much experience talking.
2	Yuta	Experienced cooking for poor people and handing the food over, learn to slaughter, saw Qur'an preparation, learn habits of Malaysians.
3	Riku	People in Japan are cold. People in Malaysia are warm. Malaysian kindness, keep asking to eat, diversity and live together, male/female complement roles, halal meal, would like to be as friendly like Malaysians.
4	Kawai	Learn zakat. I thought zakat is 2.5% only, but giving direct (to those in need) is good. Ate halal food. I learnt how it's being done, learnt to pray and take wudhu. I knew the stuff before, but now doing it properly. Now I know the minbar in a masjid have hollow to project the voice, Qur'an has many calligraphies, room to improve my English.
5	Haruto	Survey to study in Malaysia, know more about culture, didn't know English but I can relax due to kindness of Malaysians, hear azan anywhere you go. In Japan, perform solat only when I remember. Cook and give poor people, learn to take wudhu and solat, happy making fun of him.
6	Daiki	Learnt slaughtering, not easy taking life of animal. Tun Dr Mahathir a great leader for Chinese, Malay & Indians living together, cook & give to poor. Don't know much English but Malaysia hospitality . . . Malaysians made effort to talk to me . . . I want to return favour to others for what Malaysian did to me.

No	Name of Japanese Youth	Verbal Remarks
7	Tatsuki	Really learned a lot, impressed with Malaysia, work hard host family, Malaysia already thankful and felt hospitality. Everyone here likes Japan - anime, drama, character. Slaughtering chicken – felt pity but it's responsibility. Before this, I learnt Islam via internet e.g. YouTube. I thought it was enough but I came here to understand more detail. Giving to poor face-to-face, even did it in Pakistan e.g. giving clothes but did not see the people in need. I learnt basic knowledge in Islam in Malaysia unlike Japan. In Malaysia, people not fighting, Live together well. I feel proud being Muslim here, I am free to integrate MashaAllah. I will learn history and culture of Islam more and spread to others.
8	Marisi	Like Malay culture, country is unique, taught Malay language. I hope in Japan the number of Muslims will increase in future. I hope halal will spread in Japan.
9	Tokuda	Learnt important things close to my heart, slaughtering was good chance, mosque is big - can chill at back, At USIM, I learnt how to pray & perform ablution, give food to the needy, Malaysians are intricate (procedures) such as halal certification.

Appendix 6: Feedback from Host Parents

No	Full Name	Comments
1	Mrs Rosila	- Programmes are too tight and too long - not enough bonding time with host family - Group is too big - Not enough interpreters to handle the big group as they tend to ask lots of questions even on Islamic aspects till my children got so exhausted but they are grateful and enjoyed it regardless - Priorities in all aspects should be given to our guests - More youth to youth bonding sessions - At my place they stayed up quite late to talk to each other, played card games, Q&A Did jemaah prayer together. - Usually I will ask them to sleep early but this time I let them stayed on since they didn't get to bond during the day
2	Mrs Sabariah	It is clear that we have a stock of youths who are committed to Islam and can be counted to do *da'wah* or simply, make friends beyond the shores with other muslims. It is also clear that there is a problem to attract JP youth to Islam, as there are muslim youths who do not like Islam because of their strict upbringing, and there are muslim youths who do not know about Islam because maybe not exposed to it. Perhaps we can use this programme as a starting point to connect our youths together . . . the Malaysian youths who can do da'wah (or simply just go as Cultural exchange ambassadors and do soft da'wah) and our JP youths 3. using the JP youths that came here, maybe we can now start a relationship with their mosques/communities etc One example is the Nagoya Mosque which Tatsuki is very actively involved in (his father is chairman), Maybe we can start a relationship with the youths from there. Definitely definitely my family would like to visit the children that we hosted, and it would be nice if we can also visit the youths there. Perhaps when the organiser goes there we can follow.

No	Full Name	Comments
		The messages are very good because you connect our activities daily, with Allah swt..I think even the Muslim youths in Malaysia sometimes (and me, a Muslim ex youth) , have to take this message to heart.everything we do, everything we are, everything we have, is because of Allah swt. and it is very easy to forget that in our daily lives. When Bro Fakri connected the activities to the 5 pillars, this is very good practice and habit for us too. The boys are very impressed with it when we talked about this in the car..how we should do more remembering, and when we remember we will inshaAllah behave differently and when we behave in a good manner, we will be attractive to other JP non muslims

Appendix 7: Feedback from Malaysian Volunteers

No.	Name	What I liked about the programme:	Suggestions for improvement:
1.	Naima	I liked how we involved the Japanese youth in activities that would be normal school activities for Malay students, but was a once in a lifetime type of experience for the Japanese students. I feel like they were able to experience real Malay culture as well as 'Muslim culture'. I was given an insight into their lives as a minority and how difficult life in Japan really is for them, as they aren't able to eat freely or even find halal meat easily. I learned that I should be grateful and appreciative of the fact that I live in a muslim country where food is easy to come by.	I think the activities should be more timely and prepared. I was very disappointed in the university visits and felt like they could have made a bad impression on the Japanese youth (as they definitely made bad impression on me). I think in each location, the people in charge should be well informed and prepared before arrival, as to avoid any confusion or wasting of time. I also felt very conflicted and uncomfortable during the iftar at the surau when a man had the audacity to catcall a fifteen-year-old girl. Not only did he proudly laugh at his own comment, other men also joined him in laughter. I was horrified, especially since we were in a place of worship and were meant to be respectful. If I had the authority, I would have put that man in his place right then and there. I also wish that there was more free time so the students who were on vacation could have more time to visit places that they wanted to visit, instead of only following a schedule and barely having any time for anything else. Overall, I really did enjoy the programme but these were some small things that really bothered me
2	Rohaya	A lot of hands-on activities like slaughtering chicken, cooking Malaysian dishes, etc.	More fun, less academic. But can still be Islamically engaging. More time for the Japanese to bond amongst themselves. Maybe the schedule should be discussed between both parties so they know what they signed up for without being disappointed/surprised once the programme starts. More engaging activities, rather than sit-in lectures. Programmes should cater to the age

			group accordingly. Probably will not join future programmes as we will be busy from next year onwards. But I hope this programme taught everyone a lot of things so that everyone can improve and create a better programme next time, in sha Allah.
3	Lina	Meeting with new people.	More free time for bonding.
4	Suraya	Everyone I met and everything we did really touched my heart. So many different perspectives I got to learn from. Thank you so much for this week! I'm very, very thankful for this opportunity. I apologise if I did anything wrong this week. Hope to see them again sometime soon (in Japan!) I'm very happy to contribute again in this programme	

Appendix 8: Feedback From Japanese Parents

No.	Parent	Feedback
1	Tokuda's mother	"Yes, he enjoyed all experiences. The greatest thing is that he started salat at school! Before he didn't pray at school, but he heard other members did, so he also decided to start at school."
2	Tatsuki's mother	"Thank you so much for creating great memories for Tatsuki. He told us a lot about Malaysia and gave us the presents. We are very glad for having you as the host parents. All the things you have done for him was more than I expected. Thank you again. May Allah reward you all. Please give us the chance to entertain you in Nagoya! We will see each other soon, InshaaALlah."
3	Daiki's mother	"Alhumdulillah (my son) tells us Malaysia all the time (emoji) alhumdulillah, He seems to have talked about being Muslim with his friends while staying there. Mashallah, You sent me back my son who grew up."
4	Riku's mother	"(My son) is so excited. He wants to tell everyone about the programme."