

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'aruf* 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'ir* 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'aruf* 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 (Mutiarra, 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 Exchange Programme 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 works in 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 daily basis, 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 up from the airport the day they landed in Malaysia on day one, dedicate every single day of 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, joined by 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'aruf* 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'aruf* 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 Allah and return to the worship of idols and other abominations. They have tortured 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 part of 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 most righteous 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'arūf* 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 in a 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 binMalik: 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-Nafis challenged the theory by Galen regarding blood circulation. Ibn-An-Nafis 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 for all 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.

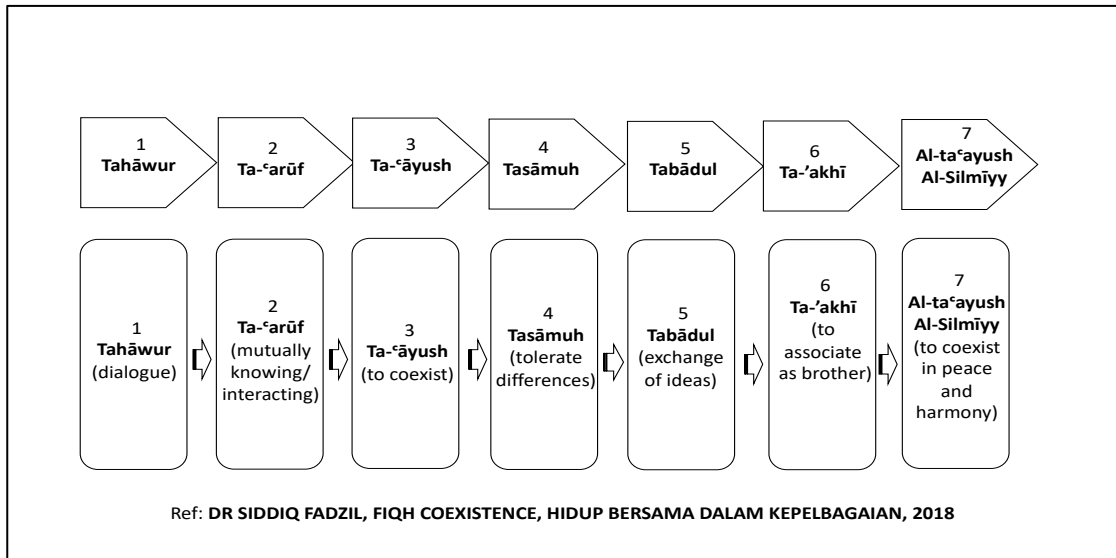


Figure 1.1: The Concept of *Al-Ta'aruf*

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 Muslim youth 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 Muslim youth, 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 welcome and 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'arūf*, is about 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'arūf* 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'arūf*, 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'arūf*, and the Concept of *Al-ta'arūf* 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'aruf* 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 emphasized by 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 done to 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 deeper understanding, 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'aruf* 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'aruf*, 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.

