

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 Islam among 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'aruf* , 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 by them. 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 converts 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 to conform 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 likelihood that 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 Muslims to 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 impossible for 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'ir*) 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 togetherorganised 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 Makkah 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. They prayed 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 successful presence. 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 views and 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 predominantly non-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'i*) 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 their religion, 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 report that disclosed that only elderly men were seen in the mosques are disturbing, as children and 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 *madrassahs*, 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 that getting a good grasp about Islam is a serious matter. It is also reassuring to see that there are 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 their way 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* (Sarhini 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 (Sarhini 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 relationships with 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 further 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 (Kinging 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 (Kinging 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'aruf* 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'aruf*. The process of 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'aruf* 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'aruf* 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'aruf* 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.

