Integrating Inter-religious Dialogue with Social Action: A Reflection from the Covid-19 Humanitarian Relief Mission

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Abstract
Even though the grassroots may not be actively involved in inter-religious dialogue, their inter-religious engagement is reflected in the social action and humanitarian endeavours especially during the COVID-19 outbreak where multiple religious-based organisations have channelled various types of aid. These social action elements can be integrated in the existing models of inter-religious dialogue. However, to realize this idea, the existing design of inter-religious dialogue need to be examined. This study aims at analysing the dialogue designs and determining whether the existing designs have integrated the cooperation and social action. A collective case study was employed and by using purposive sampling technique, ten organizations that were involved in inter-religious dialogue were selected. Data were obtained via interview and document analysis. The finding reveals that the most salient type of inter-religious dialogue in Malaysia is critical-dialogic education without action planning and alliance building stage. The flaw in the dialogue design might affect the effectiveness of the dialogue program. This study therefore, offers a novel and systematic approach for inter-religious dialogue as it proposes a socio-psychological framework to integrate intellectual discourse and social action. The finding also serves as a basis for the development of more appealing inter-religious dialogue for the grassroots.
Keywords: Inter-Religious Dialogue, COVID-19, Humanitarian, Cooperation, Social Action

Introduction
Other than a platform for exploring the truth (Al-Faruqi, 1992), inter-religious dialogue is also a good platform to understand traditions other than one's own (Lochhead, 1988). In Malaysian context, inter-religious dialogue is perceived as a tool to strengthen national unity and integration (Azizan, 2008). Khadijah (2005) for instance states that in order to clarify any misunderstandings in an inter-religious community, a dialogue where people can meet, discuss, exchange opinions and explore the truth while simultaneously preserving peaceful co-existence among the communities is crucial.

Khairulnizam and Suzy (2012) have identified the important roles of inter-religious dialogue and these include the instilling of mutual understanding and correspondence, the promotion

of co-operation in public affairs, the encouragement to unite and integrate, and the building up of trust for one another in order to live in harmony.

The Reality of the Implementation of Inter-religious Dialogue in Malaysia
Despite its benefits and significance, inter-religious dialogue is still underrated in this country. The less than encouraging implementation and participation of inter-religious dialogue in Malaysia is apparently influenced by the nature of the dialogue itself which is considered as highly intellectual. Ghazali (2005) for instance describes inter-religious dialogue as an intellectual discourse that involves the meeting of religious representatives. The topics for this dialogue normally revolve around philosophical and theological themes which are not suitable for the grassroots. The participants for dialogue with this nature are also expected to fulfil certain conditions such as well-versed in religious and textual study regarding the sacred scriptures of other religions (Rahimin et al., 2011).

Inter-religious Dialogue, Humanitarianism and Social Action
Inter-religious dialogue as a matter of fact is part of social action.   According to Al-Faruqi (1992), in order to address various needs of humanity, members of diverse religions should be involved in collaborative efforts in applying their religious teachings related to universal and moral values. This cooperative endeavour would transform the role of inter-religious dialogue from shared understanding to action that would benefit every religious group and the world in general (Fletcher, 2012).

Since suffering (e.g., poverty, victimisation, violence and patriarchy) affected everyone regardless of faiths and religions, therefore, people of faith should have the same mission to alleviate this suffering. The action and cooperation in addressing issues of humanity consequently will lead to dialogue (Knitter, 1995). According to Haney (2009), whenever people from different religious background commit to work on projects or address issues of common concern, dialogue of cooperation takes place. During the cooperation, religious orientation will be manifested and its significance in generating positive outcomes will be demonstrated.

Corpuz (2020) opines that, dialogue of action is a genuine commitment to religion in order to achieve a just and humane society.   In the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, universal values such as respecting the rights and responsibilities of each individual and assisting the disadvantaged and most vulnerable members of society are promoted through inter-religious collaborations. As an example, a global Multi-Religious Faith-in-Action COVID-19 Initiative has been launched to increase awareness of the impacts of this pandemic on the world's population especially children. This initiative is a collaboration between Religions for Peace (RfP) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF). The global partnership on Faith and Positive Change for Children, Families and Communities will become the coordinator of this initiative.   Among the members of this global partnership are: Religions for Peace's Interreligious Councils, including senior leaders of the world's religious and spiritual traditions (i.e., Bahai, Buddhist, Christian, Hindu, Islamic, Jain, Jewish, Sikh, Zoroastrian and Indigenous spirituality). This global partnership will counter the COVID-19 pandemic through various ways such as promoting the importance of hygiene and sanitation in accordance with religious teachings and sacred texts that emphasize cleanliness as an element of holiness and providing

spiritual and emotional care and support for parents, children, the elderly and those who are affected by disruption and distress (UNICEF, 2020).

Religious-based Humanitarian Aids during COVID-19 in Malaysia
In Malaysian context, the social action and humanitarianism values could be seen in the humanitarian aids and services provided by several religious-based organizations during the Covid-19 outbreak in general and during Movement Control Order (MCO) in particular. *Jabatan Kemajuan Islam Malaysia (JAKIM)* for instance had launched *Tabung Musaadah* Covid 19, a religious-based relief program to provide financial support for the affected groups.

Under the same banner of *Tabung Musaadah* Covid-19, My Care Covid service was also initiated to provide emotional, spiritual and psychological support for the community during MCO. Other than Covid-19 related relief programs, other existing charity programs such as *Jabatan Agama Islam Wilayah Persekutuan (JAWI)* foodbank programmes continue to serve the vulnerable community during the pandemic (JAKIM, 2020).

The Malaysian Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (MCJCLS) mobilized a donation programme to National Kidney Foundation of Malaysia (NKF) and the Association of Social Services and Community Development Gombak District, Selangor, Malaysia. The donation covered 30,000 medical face masks and 200 sets of N95 face masks (MCJCLS, 2020).

A Buddhist organization, Taiwan Buddhist Tzu Chi Foundation Malaysia (TBTCFM), had set up a program known as Covid-19 Response, a donation program to provide equipment for the front liners (e.g., face shields and protective garments), hospital beds, households care assistance, face mask and many more (TBTCFM, 2020). Welfare Committee of Malaysia Hindu Sangam Penang State Council (MHSPSC) also launched a Zero Hunger Programme (Covid-19) which aimed at distributing Rice Packets to unfortunate families affected by Movement Control Order (MCO) (MHSPSC, 2020).

The Sikh community also initiated many programs as part of humanitarian aid mission during Covid-19. For instance, the United Sikhs Malaysia for example, had purchased and loaned medical devices such as pulse oximeters, oxygen concentrators and portable oxygen bags to patients under home quarantine (Nair, 2021).

Humanitarian aids and services provided by these religious-based organizations during the Covid-19 outbreak and MCO in this country has proven that all religions main endeavour is betterment of humanity just as proposed by Al-Faruqi (1992) and Knitter (1995). The collaboration of the religious-based organisations will make a great impact not only in addressing humanitarian crisis such as Covid-19 but also in strengthening inter-religious relations.

The inter-religious cooperation and social action in addressing humanitarian needs are also seen as more feasible for the grassroots instead of intellectual disco urse. Therefore, inter-religious cooperation and social action can be a good platform for the grassroots to get involved in inter-religious dialogue. According to Atalia (2017), inter-religious action is inexorably connected to "intra- and inter-religious dialogue, hermeneutical contestation and religious literacy" (p.20).

Nevertheless, in order to integrate cooperation and social action with dialogue, consequently redesigning the existing models of inter-religious dialogue, a few questions need to be considered:

1. What are the existing types and designs of inter-religious dialogue? Is it merely intellectual discourse or there are other types and designs?
2. Does the existing models of inter-religious dialogue have integrated cooperation and social action?

Present study aims at achieving the following goals

1. To analyse the inter-religious dialogue designs using types of dialogue and four dialogue stages (Zúñiga and Nagda, 2001).
2. To identify the cooperation and social action elements in the existing model of inter-religious dialogue.

Materials and Methods
Qualitative Method
In order to explore the design of inter-religious dialogue, the qualitative approach was chosen as process and patterns are best examined with this approach (McMillan & Weyers, 2007).

Research Design
Case study research design was employed in this study for a deeper understanding of organizational inter-religious dialogue designs as the case study is associated with a description of the event, program, and process. Since this study involves more than one organization, it is known as "collective case study" design (Stake, 2000).

Sampling
For this study, purposive sampling technique was adopted. The main criterion in the selection of organizations for this study was the involvement or experience of the organizations in implementing inter-religious dialogue in Malaysia. Ten organizations that met this criterion were identified and the organizations selected are:

1. Higher Education Institutions:
    1.1 Centre for Civilizational Dialogue of University of Malaya (CCD)
    1.2 Intellectual Youth Club of International Islamic University Malaysia (IYC)
    1.3 *Majlis Perwakilan Pelajar University Sains Malaysia Kampus Kesihatan* (Student Representative Council of University of Science Malaysia Health Campus) (MPP (USM))
    1.4 Student Affairs Department Multimedia Universiti Melaka Campus (STAD)
2. Islamic NGOs:
    2.1 Islamic Propagation Society International (IPSI)
    2.2 Islamic Information Services (IIS)
3. Non-Muslim and Inter-faith NGOs:
    3.1. Archdiocesan Ministry of Inter-religious Affairs (AMEIA)
    3.2 Inter-faith Spiritual Fellowship (INSaF)
    3.3 Malaysian Consultative Council of Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Sikhism and Taoism (MCCBCHST)

4. Government's Support Organization
    4.1 *Institut Kemajuan Islam Malaysia* (IKIM) (Institute of Islamic Understanding Malaysia)

Data Collection
Data Collection Instruments
Interview
In order to ensure cross-case comparability, semi-structured interview was applied. Among the questions constructed were:
   i.   Can you provide an overview of your dialogue model?
   ii.   What are the goals of your dialogue model?
   iii.   Who are the participants?
   iv.   How are the participants chosen?
   v.   Can you take me step by step through your dialogue process as if I were a participant? (Pre-session, session, post-session)
   vi.   What are the activities that you include in the dialogue program?
   vii.   What are the design principles? (Flexibility, emotional connection, open-ended, safe space, individual/community change, storytelling etc.)

The list of interviewees is as follows:
   i.   Michael Chua (Ecclesiastical Assistant of AMEIA)
   ii.   Shah Kirit Kalkulal Govindji (Chief *Da'wah* Officer of IIS)
   iii.   Mohd. Sani Badron (Director/Senior Fellow, Centre for Economics and Social Studies of IKIM)
   iv.   Amir Farid Isahak (Chairman of INSaF) and K. Haridas (Treasurer of INSaF)
   v.   Kamaruddin Abdulah (President of IPSI)
   vi.   Fikri Idzhar Darus (Head Bureau of Training and Development of IYC)
   vii.   Thomas Philips (President of MCCBCHST)
   viii.   Nizam Shamil Razali (Assistant Manager Student Affairs and Sports Unit of STAD (MMU)) and Mohd. Luthfi Bakar (Assistant Manager Mosque and Accommodation of STAD (MMU))
   ix.   Nurhamizah Mohamad Rafiuddin, Suraya Mahusin, Muhamad Naim Ab.Razak Muhammad and Huzaifah Mohamad Jan (Former board members of MPP (USM))
   x.   Amran Muhammad (Deputy Director of CCD)

Document Analysis
In addition to the interview, this phase of data collection also relies on records and documents related to the dialogue implementation. Among the documents collected were meeting reports (from IYC, STAD (MMU), MPP (USM), CCD); bulletins (from CCD, INSaF); CD collections (from CCD); websites (from AMEIA, INSaF, MPP (USM), IIS); concept papers and program guides (from IKIM), annual reports (from INSaF), booklets or pamphlets (from IPSI, MCCBCHST) and inter-religious dialogue program working papers (from MPP (USM)). These documents compensated for any missing or overlooked information or data during the interview.

Data Collection Procedures

All interviewees were provided with Informed Consent and a Research Overview and Participant Information for them to read and sign. Before the interview, the interviewees were told to introduce themselves, state their positions in the organizations and describe their role in the implementation of inter-religious dialogue.

Although the interview guide or protocol was prepared in English, most of the interview sessions were conducted in Malay. The interview sessions conducted in English were with the Ecclesiastical Assistant of AMEIA, Michael Chua, President of IPSI, Kamaruddin Abdullah, INSaF Treasurer, K. Haridas, and the president of MCBCHST, Thomas Philips. All interviews were recorded with permission from the interviewees. The recorded interviews were then transcribed in 'word' format.

Some documents, for the purpose of document analysis, were prepared in advance by several organizations during the visit of the researcher for the interview session such as in the cases of IYC, IPSI, IKIM, MCCBCHST, STAD (MMU) and MPP (USM). However, some documents were not prepared by the organizations during the interview sessions and the researcher had to return on a later date to collect them as in the cases of CCD and INSaF. Some documents were also retrieved online such as those from AMEIA, IIS, MCCBCHST and INSaF. These documents together with the interview transcripts were analysed systematically using the qualitative data analysis method.

Data Analysis

The data obtained from the interview transcripts and organizational documents were analysed using three-step process of analysis (Miles & Huberman, 1994). The data was first reduced by summarizing and comparing it to the main framework of this study (i.e., the inter-group dialogue types and four dialogue stages (Zúñiga & Nagda, 2001: 314-315). (See Table 1). Among the themes that emerged for the design of dialogue include topic, participant, format, goals, duration and activities.

The reduced data was then displayed by developing matrices of various data sets and being compared. The data was also displayed using the cross-case analysis method as this study involves more than one case (collective and multiple case studies). Applying the same principles as within-case analysis, the data gathered from ten organizations were organized in a matrix to analyse the similarities and differences in the inter-religious dialogue types and design by each organization.

Table 1: *Types of Dialogue and Applications for Each Stage*

Types ———————— Stage	Collective inquiry	Critical-dialogic education	Community building and social action	Conflict resolution and peace building
Setting the environment	Build a container for dialogue for safety and trust issues to emerge. Develop group consensus.	Develop guidelines for dialogue. Build relationship.	Discuss, clarify and set ground rules. Share personal beliefs and experiences about race and race relations.	Orient group members. Decide to engage in dialogue.
Developing a common base	Explore beliefs and assumptions leading to public suspension of judgments. Dialogue about personal, work related or general topics.	Develop a common language. Explore multiple social identities, commonalities and differences.	Ask what the state of race relation in our community is. Ask what the nature of the problem with race is.	Map and name problems and relationships. Explore and clarify issues and group development.
Exploring questions issues, conflict	Increase suspension of judgment and trust. Inquiry and creativity flow. Explore personal, work related or general topics.	Explore issues of conflict and social justice. Explore in/out group dynamics and issues.	Ask participants about the main changes they would like to see in the community. Ask what kind of public policies can help.	Continue clarification of issues. Probe relationships to choose direction for change. Build scenarios-experience a change in the relationship.
Moving from dialogue to action	Assess experiences. Explore transfer of learning and skills into daily life.	Plan action. Envision and seek opportunities for action. Build alliances.	Ask what participants will do as individuals and with others to make a difference.	Plan action. Act together to make change happen. Monitor and evaluate.

Adapted from Zúñiga and Nagda (2001: 314-315)

Results and Discussions
Types and Designs of Inter-Religious Dialogue

Based on the cross-model analysis, critical-dialogic education was found to be more salient compared to the other three types of dialogue (i.e., collective inquiry; community building and social action and; conflict resolution and peace building). Therefore, the finding confirms that the existing models of inter-religious dialogue is intellectual in nature rather than cooperative and interactive. The analysis also reveals that the typical dialogue formats applied by the organizations are forum, seminar, conference, public lecture, talks and roundtable discussions. The application of a forum can be seen in STAD (MMU), MPP (USM) and IYC critical-dialogic educational type.

AMEIA's "Understanding World Religions," a program that invited a speaker to discuss on religion he was representing in a particular week, best describes a critical-dialogic education type of dialogue with public lecture format (Informer 1). CCD's *"Dialog antara Penganut Agama Mengenai Isu-Isu Semasa"* (i.e., conflict resolution and peace building) (Centre for Civilizational Dialogue [CCD], 2008) and INSaF's monthly meeting (i.e., collective inquiry) (Informer 2) that had limited number of participants, normally take the format of roundtable dialogue. In this format, all participants have an equal opportunity to share their thoughts as opposed to the forum, public lecture or seminar format where not all participants have the same opportunity to be involved in the discussion process.

Seven out of ten organizations only included presentation sessions and discussions in most of their programs. However, two organizations, specifically INSaF and IIS applied a slightly different approach in conducting dialogue. Instead of relying on presentation sessions and academic discussions alone, these organizations also included activities that led to bonding among the participants. INSaF for example had included hi-tea session at the end of one of its critical-dialogic educational dialogue programs titled "Karma, Faith and Divinity." This session provided participants with the opportunity to get to know each other better (The Pure Life Society [PLS], 2006).

IIS included a chess competition and sailing activities during the break of its conflict resolution type of dialogue with Hindu Sangam (Informer 3). Table 2 provides a brief overview of the cross-models analysis discussed in this section.

Based on this reality, most of prominent comparative religion and inter-religious dialogue scholars propose that inter-religious dialogue can only be participated by religious leaders, scholars, experts and the like. Al-Faruqi (1992) for instance, asserted that dialogue should be restricted to the elite or intelligentsia since the Muslim grassroots do not have sufficient knowledge to engage Western Christians in the case of Muslim-Christian dialogue.

Likewise, Kamaroniah (2001) also offers further support to this argument when she stresses that only those with competent knowledge and are strongly committed to their religions are allowed to participate in inter-religious dialogue. Based on these conditions, it seems to be only the elite and the intellectuals can reap the benefits of inter-religious dialogue while the grassroots will remain ignorant about the others.

Nevertheless, the spirit of volunteerism and humanitarianism demonstrated by inter-religious community consisted of the grassroots during the COVID-19 pandemic, provide optimism that the grassroots can also get involved in inter-religious dialogue through dialogue that is integrated with social action. This spirit is consistent with the premises endorsed by Al-Faruqi (1992) and Knitter (1995). These two scholars propose that in order to address the needs of humanity, dialogue should be followed by action or vice versa. The subsequent analysis on stages of dialogue will further explain the symbiosis between dialogue and action.

Table 2: *Cross-models analysis on types and designs of inter-religious dialogue*

Org.	CCD	IKIM	IPSI	IYC	AMEIA	MPP (USM)	INSaF	MMU	MCCBCHST	IIS
Types	CE, CR, CI	CB,CE	CE	CE	CE	CE	CE, CB, CI	CE	CI	CE, CR
Theme/ Topic	General, issue based, sensitive	General, moral	General	General, theology	General, theology	General, theology	General, theology	General, theology	General	Theology
Participant	Grassroots Elite	Grassroots Elite	Grassroots	Grassroots	Grassroots	Grassroots	Grassroots Elite	Grassroots	Elite	Grassroots Elite
Format	Seminar, roundtable	Seminar, roundtable	Seminar	Seminar	Seminar	Seminar	Seminar, workshop, roundtable	Seminar	Roundtable	Seminar, roundtable
Goals	To promote generic skills	To provide accurate understanding about Islam	To clarify non-Muslim misunderstanding towards Islam	To increase inter-religious understanding	To expose Catholics to other religions	To increase inter-religious understanding	To promote unity in diversity	To increase inter-religious understanding	To discuss current/work related issues	To support daᶜwah activities
Duration	Few hours (CE,CI) 2 days (CR)	2 days (CB) Few hours (CE)	Few hours	Few hours	6-7 weeks for a single program (few hours for a week)	Few hours	Few hours	Few hours (CB,CI,CE)	Few hours	Few hours (CE) 2 days (CR)
Activities	None	None	None	None	None	None	Activities	None	None	Activities

Note. CB = Community building and social action; CR = Collective inquiry; CR = Conflict resolution; CE = Critical-dialogic education;   NA = Not Available

Inter-group Dialogue Stages Analysis

Stages of dialogue as outlined by Zúñiga and Nagda (2001) serve as a guide or a map for dialogue practitioners when delineating the design of the dialogue. The four stages facilitates the dialogue program to maintain consistency with the main objectives aimed at each stage, to guarantee the transition to following stages and to accomplish the overall goals of dialogue (Zúñiga & Nagda, 2001). The failure of inter-religious dialogue program to be systematically implemented and comply with the four dialogue stages, will render the ineffectiveness of the inter-religious dialogue program.

The finding reveals that, most of inter-religious dialogue models in Malaysia are identified as a single event in the format of forum, seminar or public lecture. As a matter of fact, inter-group dialogue is described as a process rather than a single event, (Zúñiga & Nagda, 2001) as it progresses through a series of stages and sustained for eight to twelve facilitated meetings (Zúñiga, et al., 2007).

The analysis using the four stages of dialogue implies that, even though there were some models had fulfilled all four stages, their potential to achieve specific goals in each stage was relatively unfeasible since the transition from one stage to another in a single event needs to occur in a very short period. The finding also reveals that some dialogue models remained at a certain stage and did not progress into the subsequent stages.

This was especially so for the critical-dialogic education type of dialogue. The analysis indicates that most of inter-religious dialogue models (e.g. IYC, IPSI, STAD (MMU) and MPP (USM)) only reached the first, second, and third stage of dialogue. In most cases, the fourth stage which supposed to include action planning and alliance building could not be identified.

As an example, an inter-religious dialogue forum titled "Do All Paths Lead to Paradise?" that was conducted by IYC in 2010 only took few hours (i.e. from 7.30 am to 1.00 pm) (Intellectual Youth Club [IYC], 2010). The fourth stage could not be identified in this forum as it ended with concluding remark by the speakers related to the topic and no further discussion on action planning and alliance building.

IIS's Muslims and Buddhists inter-religious dialogue titled "Sowing Seeds of Understanding and Harmony" that was conducted in 2010 was the only critical-dialogic education type of dialogue that progressed to the fourth stage. There had been a special session that focused on future collaboration between Buddhists and Muslims. The future plans including the initiation of religious talks, visits, youth programs and conducting special question and answer programs (Islamic Information and Services Foundation [IIS], 2010). This was how IIS critical-dialogic education program fulfilled the fourth stage of dialogue.

Inter-religious dialogue program such as *"Dialog antara Penganut Agama Mengenai Isu-isu Semasa"* organized by CCD, was an example of conflict resolution type of dialogue that had fulfilled all four stages. This closed dialogue led to the development of an action plan to resolve the issues that had been raised. The outcome of the dialogue was forwarded to the related minister and documented for future reference (Centre for Civilizational Dialogue [CCD], 2008).

Likewise, INSaF's inter-religious dialogue program titled *"Hari Raya* Celebration and Religious Harmony Workshop"* had been identified as the community building dialogue type which conformed to all four stages. Other than workshop and *Hari Raya* Celebration, this program had also included re-commitment to efforts towards religious harmony which signifies action planning and alliance building (Inter-faith Spiritual Fellowship [INSaF], 2010). Most organizations that were involved in the collective inquiry dialogue type such as MCCBCHST monthly meeting had also fulfilled the criteria required for all dialogue stages (Informer 4).

Even though there were several inter-religious dialogue programs that progressed from the first to the fourth stage, these programs were categorized under the conflict resolution, community building and collective inquiry. Programs identified under the most salient type of dialogue in Malaysia (i.e. critical-dialogic education) however were unable to fulfil all dialogue stages. The summary of inter-group dialogue stages analysis for each organization is shown in table 3.

The fourth stage is the most important stage of dialogue as this is where the action planning and alliance building take place. In order to make inter-religious dialogue more appealing for the grassroots, the focus should be at interaction and cooperation among the participants rather than intellectual discussion. Inter-religious understanding, harmony and other anticipated outcomes of dialogue might be achieved not only through intellectual discussion but also through interaction and cooperation.

The proposition on positive effects of contact which is better known as Contact Theory was first introduced by Gordon Allport (1954). This theory is among major theories that address in-group or out-group bias and provides interventions that reorganize social boundaries (Paluck & Green, 2009). Allport (1954) suggested that inter-group contact will produce positive effects provided that it fulfils four key conditions:

    i.   Equal group status within the group encounter
    ii.   Common goals
    iii.   Co-operative interactions
    iv.   Support from those with social influence and power

For this reason, inter-religious dialogue practitioners should consider to include the fourth stage of dialogue which aims at action planning and alliance building since these two activities reflect the application of the Contact Theory.

Table 3: *Inter-group Dialogue Stages Analysis*

Stages of Dialogue ———— Organization	Stage One: Forming and Building Relationship	Stage Two: Exploring Differences and Commonalities of Experience	Stage Three: Exploring and Discussing Hot Topics	Stage Four: Action Planning and Alliance Building
CCD	**CE**-No clear guidelines explained **CR**- Decide to engage in dialogue with PANEL and form group members **CI**- Build an environment for dialogue for safety and trust issues to emerge by inviting Mrs Alia Hogben	**CE**-Explore multiple perspectives on certain issues, commonalities and differences in presentation sessions **CR**-Explore and clarify issues such as conversion issue **CI**-Dialogue about the selected topics (e.g., the gap between Islam and the West)	**CE**-Explore issues of conflict during Q & A session **CR**-Continue clarification of issues **CI**- Inquiry and creativity flow	**CE**-No specific attention for this stage **CR**-Plan action -Did not monitor and evaluate the program **CI**-Asses experience -Explore transferring learning and skills into daily life

Table 3 –Continued

IKIM	**CB-**Share personal beliefs and experiences about particular issue (e.g., social problems) **CE-** No specific attention to this stage	**CB-**Did not discuss the nature of the problems (e.g., social problems) **CE-** Explore multiple perspectives on certain issues, commonalities and differences in presentation sessions	**CB-**No suggestions on the possible changes in the community and potential public policies that help **CE-** Explore issues of conflict during discussion session	No specific attention to this stage in all types of dialogue
IPSI	**CE-**Develop guidelines for dialogue	**CE-**Explore multiple perspectives on certain issues, commonalities and differences in presentation sessions	**CE-**Explore issues of conflict during Q & A	No specific attention to this stage in this type of dialogue
IYC	**CE-**Develop guidelines for dialogue	**CE-**Explore multiple perspectives on certain issues, commonalities and differences in presentation sessions	**CE-**Explore issues of conflict during Q & A	No specific attention to this stage in this type of dialogue
AMEIA	**CE-**Begin relationship building during small group discussion	**CE-**Explore multiple perspectives on certain issues, commonalities and differences in presentation sessions	**CE-**Explore issues of conflict during Q & A	No specific attention to this stage in all types of dialogue

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Table 3 –*Continued*

INSaF	**CE-**Relationship building during activities such as Hi-tea occurred at the end of dialogue not in stage one **CB-**Share personal beliefs and experiences about particular issue (e.g., Religious harmony in practical ways at school, home, workplace and places of worship) **CI-** Develop consensus among members	**CE-**Explore multiple perspectives on certain issues, commonalities and differences in presentation sessions **CB-**Discuss the nature of problems in inter-religious/inter-ethnic relation **CI-**Dialogue about current or work related issues	**CE-**Explore issues of conflict during Q&A **CB-**Discuss about the changes in inter-religious relation at school, home, workplace and places of worship that participants would like to see **CI-**Further explore the issues	**CE-**No specific attention for this stage **CB-**Ask participants how they will make a difference **CI-**Asses experience related to the topic discussed
MPP (USM)	**CE-**Develop guidelines for dialogue	**CE-**Explore multiple perspectives on certain issues, commonalities and differences in presentation sessions	**CE-**Explore issues of conflict during Q & A	No specific attention to this stage in this type of dialogue
MMU	**CE-** Develop guidelines for dialogue	**CE-**Explore multiple perspectives on certain issues, commonalities and differences in presentation sessions	**CE-**Explore issues of conflict during Q & A	No specific attention to this stage in this type of dialogue
MCCBCHST	**CI-**Form group consensus on certain topic in the monthly meeting	**CI-**Dialogue about current or work related topics	**CI-** Further explore the issues	**CI-**Assess experience related to the topic discussed

Table 3 –*Continued*

IIS	**CE**-Develop guidelines for dialogue **CR**- Decide to engage in dialogue (e.g., Inter-faith dialogue with Hindus groups)	**CE**-Explore multiple perspectives on certain issues, commonalities and differences in presentation sessions **CR**-Explore and clarify issues of concern and group development	**CE**-Explore issues of conflict during Q&A **CR**-Continue clarification of issues	**CE**-Plan action -Envision and seek opportunities for action and build alliances **CR**-Plan action -Did not monitor and evaluate the program

Note. **CB** = Community building and social action; **CR** = Collective inquiry; **CR** = Conflict resolution; **CE** = Critical- dialogic education

Conclusions

This research has proven that the main goal of most inter-religious dialogue programs in Malaysia is sharing and exchanging religious knowledge and values through forum, public lecture and other formats that are more synonymous with intellectual discourse. For this reason, this type of dialogue was categorized as critical-dialogic education. The nature of this type of dialogue can be considered as intellectual thus limit the participation from the grassroots in general. Based on the dialogue stages analysis, present study reveals, most of the existing models of inter-religious dialogue especially the critical-dialogic education missed the fourth stage (i.e., the most significant stage for cooperation and social action).

In order to ensure the grassroots can be involved in inter-religious dialogue, this study suggests that, the existing models of inter-religious dialogue should focus on community building and social action type of dialogue instead of critical-dialogical education type. Additionally, the existing model of inter-religious dialogue should also be redesigned and integrated with cooperation and social action. The desired outcomes of inter-religious dialogue such as increased level of inter-religious understanding and harmony can also be achieved through cooperative interaction and working together towards a common goal as suggested by the Contact Theory (Allport, 1954).

The efforts mobilized by inter-religious groups during COVID-19 humanitarian missions were good examples of social action that can be integrated in the inter-religious dialogue. The existing paradigm of inter-religious dialogue in Malaysia revolves around intellectual discourse, forum or public lecture where there is no conducive environment for the participants to engage in cooperative interaction. Present study offers a novel and systematic approach to inter-religious dialogue that integrates intellectual discourse and social action. In order to guarantee the effectiveness of inter-religious dialogue, dialogue practitioners in Malaysia should also consider to employ socio-psychological framework such as the inter-group dialogue stages as proposed by Zúñiga and Nagda (2001) and the Contact Theory (Allport, 1954) in designing their inter-religious dialogue model in addition to the theological framework.

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