



Interfaith Dialogue Normalization Among Catholic Christians and Muslims in Manila, Philippines: Behavior Changes

Mohammad Jafari Malak ¹

Mohammad Reevany Bustami ² (Corresponding author)

ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
Received: 20 February 2026 Revised: 11 June 2026 Accepted: 23 June 2026 Online: 07 September 2026	This study aims to investigate interfaith dialogue phenomenon among Christians and Muslims in the Manila City as a Catholic-dominant society. The study utilized Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA), semi-structured interviews and a systematic process of thematic clustering. Thematic analysis produced 5 main themes including readiness for dialogue, common belief in the omnipresence of God, elimination of ignorance about religion of others, different interpretations of the role of leaders, and recognize the transformative role of religious leaders. The findings indicated that dialogue between followers of religions can be spontaneous and unplanned. It was revealed that religious leaders in Manila are well aware of their role in encouraging dialogue between followers of different religions. The findings reveal that readiness and shared belief in God are spontaneous behavioral catalysts for dialogue, emphasizing the necessity of formalizing informal dialogue through religiously informed leadership. Future researchers are suggested to compare the phenomenon of interfaith dialogue between religious leaders in the Philippines, China, Indonesia, Malaysia, and Vietnam.
KEYWORDS Catholic Christians Behavior Changes Interfaith Dialogue Muslim Normalization	

¹ PhD Student, Center for Policy Research, Universiti Sains Malaysia, Penang , Malaysia, Email: jafarimalekusm@gmail.com

² Prof. Center for Policy Research, Universiti Sains Malaysia, Penang, Malaysia, Email: reevany@usm.my

1. Introduction

In recent decades, religious conflicts and hostilities have escalated globally, particularly affecting the Abrahamic faiths including Christianity, Judaism, and Islam. A study by the Pew Research Center highlighted a surge in religious hostilities worldwide. Regions such as North Africa, the Middle East, and the Asia-Pacific have experienced the most intense increases. These hostilities manifest in various forms including government restrictions, harassment of religious minorities, mob violence, terrorism, and violent conflicts. For instance, the growing persecution of Muslims and Christians in countries like Sri Lanka, Libya, France, and Indonesia underscores the global scale of religious intolerance (Grim, 2014). More recently, incidents such as the 2017 Manchester suicide bombing and increasing anti-migrant violence in Germany further exemplify the urgent need for effective solutions to religious tensions (Smith, 2017).

Amid these challenges, the Philippines has emerged as a critical site for examining interfaith relations, as its increasing religious diversity makes it a microcosm of global religious dynamics. As religious encounters become more frequent and complex, interfaith dialogue has gained traction as an essential method for fostering mutual understanding, reducing tensions, and addressing religious conflict. This dialogue offers individuals from different faith traditions a safe space to exchange beliefs, promoting peace and coexistence (Boys & Lee, 1996; Helskog & Stokke, 2014; Swidler, 2006). This study is focused on the phenomenon of interfaith dialogue between Christians and Muslims in Manila, exploring the dynamics of such encounters and their potential to foster transformation in individuals' perceptions of other religions.

Religious conflict remains a persistent issue, exacerbated by ignorance, intolerance, and a lack of knowledge about other faiths. For example, surveys in the United States indicate a significant lack of understanding of different religions, with many people holding unfavorable views of Muslims, Evangelicals, and Mormons (Patel & Meyer, 2011; Pew, 2008; Krebs, 2014). Interfaith dialogue is seen as a promising tool for addressing this ignorance and reducing hostility (Boys & Lee, 1996; Gopin, 2002). While some view interfaith dialogue as a path to peaceful resolution, others argue that it can sometimes exacerbate tensions if not properly executed (Randolph, 2013). The need for empirical research into the effects of interfaith dialogue, particularly at the local level, is therefore crucial to understanding its potential for transforming perceptions of the "religious other" (Charaniya & Walsh, 2004).

This study also highlights the growing role of religious actors in global development. Over the last two decades, initiatives like the UN Inter-Agency Taskforce on Religion and Sustainable Development have emphasized the importance of religious leaders in promoting sustainable

development and peace. Religious institutions are often seen as more trustworthy than governmental bodies, especially in conflict zones, and can help mobilize support for global development goals (Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2019). Thus, understanding how interfaith dialogue contributes to community building and peacebuilding is essential for fostering a more inclusive and peaceful society.

This study contributes to the field by examining the processes and outcomes of interfaith dialogue between Christians and Muslims in Manila. It aims to explore how such dialogue can reshape individuals' worldviews, promote coexistence, and reduce the fear and misunderstanding that often accompany religious differences. Specifically, the research focuses on the role of religious leaders in guiding and facilitating these dialogues, as well as the potential for perspective transformation among participants. The research questions guiding this study are as follows:

- How do leaders and followers of Christianity and Islam in Manila prepare for and guide interfaith dialogue sessions?
- What happens when leaders and followers of Christianity and Islam in Manila engage in interfaith dialogue?
- In what ways does interfaith dialogue change a person's view of other religions?
- How do leaders and followers of different religions interpret the interfaith dialogue?
- What is the transformational role of religious leaders and followers in the interfaith dialogue?

By addressing these questions, this study aims to provide valuable insights into how interfaith dialogue can be an effective tool for reducing religious conflict, fostering mutual understanding, and promoting peaceful coexistence in a pluralistic society like the Philippines. The research also seeks to inform the practices of interfaith dialogue facilitators, providing guidance on how to create spaces conducive to meaningful learning and transformation.

2. Literature Review

It can be said that today people live in a multicultural society. As a result of globalization and migration, our contemporary world has become pluralistic, and monocultures are giving way to multicultures and multireligious. The Philippines is a multicultural, multi-ethnic and multireligious country. It is home to 90 known ethnic groups with over 150 ethno-linguistic communities. While

majority of Filipinos are Christian, a significant group (about five percent) are Muslim. The history of the Philippines has always been characterized by the cultural and religious diversity found in its 7,107 islands. Amidst the layers of differences that set the Philippines ethnic peoples apart, and the inevitable conflicts that these cultural and religious differences bring, still, its people continuously struggle to find unity and a shared identity as Filipinos. This is why Filipinos pursue an interfaith dialogue so that they may be able to understand and respect the differences in their beliefs and their cultures. As a multi-cultural, multi-ethnic and multi-religious country, the Philippines consider interreligious and intercultural dialogue and cooperation as a cornerstone of their state policy for peace and development. The Philippine Constitution allows the free exercise and enjoyment of religious worship. Filipinos believe that this approach contributes to the resolution of conflicts and upholds the principle of the inviolability of human dignity, particularly since it promotes tolerance and understanding amongst people with diverse ethnic, cultural and religious backgrounds. Filipinos have a wealth of experience in interfaith initiatives, dating back to the early efforts to improve understanding between Christians and Muslims at the outset of armed conflict in Mindanao in the 1960s (Aviquivil, 2015). Fortunately, and in contrast to many parts of the world, the level of tension between Christians and Muslims in the Philippines has declined in recent years. But on the other hand, increasing religious tensions in many countries make the interfaith dialogue for Filipinos again a major issue. In this chapter, the researcher seeks to discuss the definitions, dimensions, and significance of interfaith dialogue. This PhD Thesis is qualitative research which seeks to understand how Muslim and Christian believers contribute to peace, forgiveness and reconciliation in the Philippines. The researcher tried to look in academic journals, books and web sources to learn more about research topic.

Interfaith Dialogue as Conflict Transformation

According to Yucel (2010) “dialogue” is understood as meeting and communicating with other faiths, sharing thoughts and exchanging views and reaching mutual understanding and respect through focusing on common ground’. According to Basra (1992) dialogue can be defined as a conversation between individual or group of people, whether it is going in formal or informal way. Through dialogue, values, beliefs and practices of one’s civilization transmitted from one generation to the next and it is a mean of enhancing human relationship.

Dialogue can help the people co-operates with each other in spreading ethical values, truth, benevolence, peace and challenging hegemony, exploitation, injustice, moral deviation, family

breakdown and other evils that threaten societies. Similarly, Mohd Shauki (2004 as cited in Ibrahim et al., 2012) says that the effective and successful dialogue can be seen through the way people or participant in that area having a mutual understanding and a consensus in solving the problem in their own religious worldview. In the context of the Philippines, the importance of the interreligious dialogue is to know how far the openness needed in order to fulfill the requisite of the multi-religion community in Manila, especially relationship between Muslim and Christian. In principle, the interfaith dialogue concerns in knowing each other, creates mutual trust and also builds the mutual relationship which in turn creates the peaceful all over the universe. According to Yankelovich (1999, p.16) "when dialogue is done skillfully, the result can be extraordinary: long-standing stereotypes dissolved, mistrust overcome, mutual understanding achieved, vision shaped and grounded in shared purpose, people previously at odds with one another aligned on objectives and strategies, new common ground discovered, new perspectives and insights gained, new levels of creativity stimulated, and bonds of community strengthened".

The Aim of dialogue is not reduction of living faiths and ideologies to lowest common denominator, not only a comparison and discussion of symbols and concepts, but the enabling of a true encounter between those spiritual insights and experiences which are only found at the deepest levels of human life (World Council of Churches, 2010). In view of this fact, the necessity of dialogue between the followers of the religions can be summarized in the following cases: Yunyasit and Baybado (2022) performed a study to examine the use of inter-religious dialogue (IRD) as a means of transforming conflict and promoting peace in two Southeast Asian regions: Mindanao in the Philippines and the three Southernmost provinces of Thailand, which have experienced ongoing ethnic conflicts. The research relied on secondary data analysis, drawing from academic articles and reports from various organizations and agencies. The study revealed that in both contexts, the practice and utilization of IRD were influenced by international trends in IRD as well as the perceptions of local actors regarding conflict and their role in conflict transformation and peacebuilding. The majority of actors involved view IRD as a valuable platform for establishing trust, fostering relationships, and building the capacity of affected communities. In both regions, an elicitive approach to IRD was observed. However, the IRD efforts in the Philippines appeared to exhibit more prominent elicitive traits, with a stronger and more active involvement of religious leaders and institutions. It was concluded that While IRD is recognized and likely to be embraced as a component of conflict transformation and peacebuilding initiatives by both state and non-state actors in these contexts, its impact is considered indirect and long-term. Consequently, IRD is

unlikely to occupy a primary position within these schemes, which may prioritize more immediate and direct measures.

Canete and Castillo (2022) conducted a study to examine the manifestation and significance of the Filipino Christian value of *pakikipagkapwa* (fellowship) in modern society. Employing empirical phenomenology, the research aims to explore and reimagine the ways in which dialogue with religious others can be cultivated, while comprehending the essence of *pakikipagkapwa*. The study delved into the contemporary understandings and practices of *pakikipagkapwa* among a selected group of Filipino Christians, emphasizing how this cultural value fosters interreligious dialogue. Additionally, the research investigates the relevance of dialogue between religious actors as they navigate the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic. According to the authors, *pakikipagkapwa* and interreligious dialogue contribute to community-building, promote social cohesion, and assist religious actors in finding meaning in difficult circumstances. These values and practices are seen as crucial in fostering relationships and understanding among diverse religious communities, particularly in times of uncertainty and crisis. John (2022) performed a study to review the impact of interfaith dialogue in Kaduna State from 1996 to 2022. The paper concluded that the dialogue between Christian and Muslim Kaduna State has brought more peace in the State; therefore, interfaith dialogue has been effective in peacebuilding among youth across religious affiliations and has brought about a change in the sermons preached in churches and mosques. Establishing an interfaith dialogue directorate in a State Ministry to coordinate the affairs of interfaith dialogue and awareness will be commendable. There is also a need to establish a committee of community religious leaders, which from time to time should, among other things, be charged with the task of reviewing the relationship between the parties.

In their study, Tahir and Ali (2022) emphasized the role of Almighty Allah as the absolute creator and the unique characteristics bestowed upon human beings. They argued that human beings possess reason, aesthetics, and ethics, which flourish in an environment of peace. The authors advocated for the right of every individual to choose their way of life, including their religious beliefs, and reject compulsion in matters of religion, as it violates human dignity and integrity. They highlighted the exploitation of diversity and differences for personal gain as a curse, while emphasizing that the aim of religion is to provide peace and tranquility. However, they expressed concern that religion has been manipulated to incite restlessness, terror, and fear, with the spread of hate in the name of religion being a particularly troubling phenomenon worldwide. The authors stressed the need for a deep understanding of the background, challenges, and prospects of interfaith dialogue and harmony in Pakistan as a means to serve humanity.

3. Conceptual Model of Research

An essential part of this research is the literature review. It consists of different sections. Firstly, by introducing definitions of interfaith dialogue, the researcher indicated the main definition for the study. In the second section, the researcher study interfaith dialogue features, and how this can be useful for making a positive relationship among followers of different religion in a multi religious country of Philippines. The researcher also clarifies some of main challenges of participants in the interfaith dialogue. The particularity of this study is related to its focus on the Philippines, and the specific relationship between religious activities and its ability to promote peace and tolerance. At present research, dialogue means all positive and constructive interreligious relations and connections with individuals and communities of Christianity and Islam faiths in Manila City, which are directed at mutual understanding and enrichment, in obedience to truth and respect for freedom. The research emphasizes that aim of dialogue is not reduction of living faiths and ideologies to lowest common denominator, not only a comparison and discussion of symbols and concepts, but the enabling of a true encounter between those spiritual insights and experiences which are only found at the deepest levels of human life. Although the benefits of interfaith dialogue are obvious; but still, it is not an easy work and therefore often painful endeavor. Nevertheless, research literature shows that there are some prerequisites for interfaith dialogue to be successful same as: a) an openness to learn from the other, b) Knowledge of one's own tradition, and c) A similarly disposed and knowledgeable dialogue partner from the other tradition.

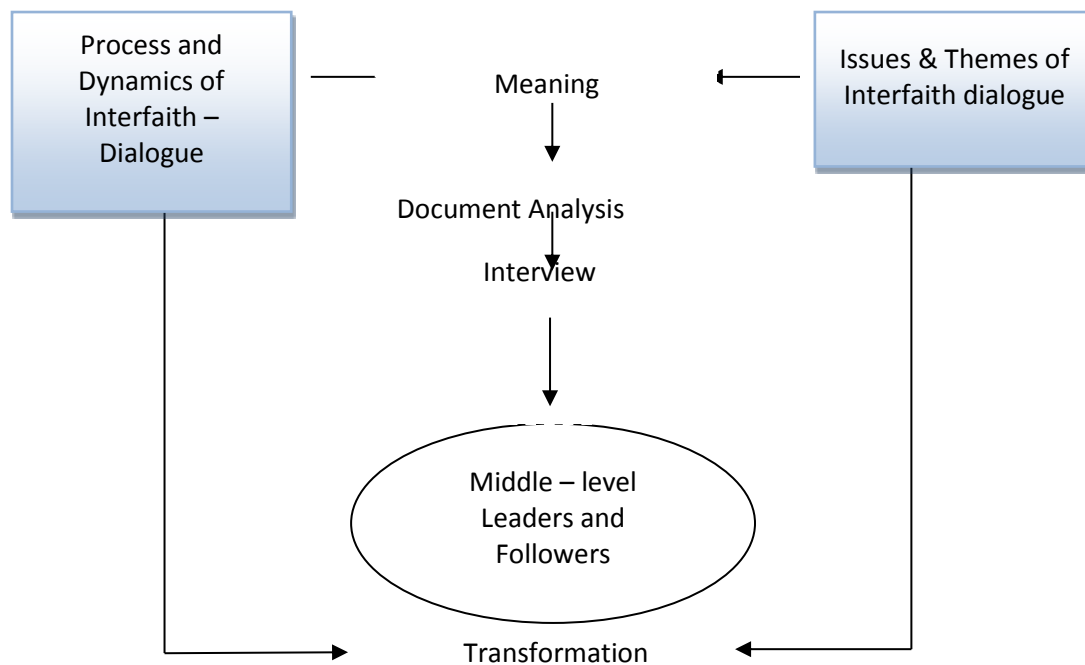


Figure.1. Conceptual Process of Research on Interfaith Dialogue

4. Research Method

This study employs IPA to explore the lived experiences of middle-class religious leaders, specifically pastors and mosque preachers, who participate in interfaith dialogue events in Manila City. IPA is a qualitative research approach that seeks to understand how individuals make sense of their personal experiences and the meanings they attribute to them (Smith & Osborn, 2003). The central objective of this research is to capture and interpret the personal perceptions of these religious leaders, focusing on how they experience and understand interfaith dialogue.

IPA is particularly suited to this study because it emphasizes the subjective experiences of participants, allowing for a deep exploration of how religious leaders perceive and interpret interfaith dialogue. Unlike quantitative research, which seeks to generalize findings, IPA focuses on depth and individual meaning-making. As Creswell (2012) explains, qualitative research—especially IPA—relies on the researcher as the primary instrument for data collection, employing an inductive approach to develop themes from participants' lived experiences. This aligns well with the study's aim of understanding how Christian and Muslim leaders in Manila prepare for, engage in, and reflect on their interfaith dialogue experiences.

Given the qualitative nature of this study, purposive sampling (Smith & Osborn, 2003) is employed to select participants who can offer rich insights into the phenomenon being studied. The purposive sampling strategy ensures diversity within the sample, both in terms of religious institutions and individual experiences. The researcher recruited participants from a range of religious institutions across Manila, including churches, mosques, and interfaith dialogue meetings. The study involved three Christian religious leaders (priests) and three Muslim religious leaders (two imams and one youth leader), as well as six followers (three Christians and three Muslims) each of whom had attended at least three interfaith dialogues.

Data were primarily collected through semi-structured interviews, which are well-suited for IPA studies (Reid et al., 2005). This method allows participants to share their experiences in-depth while providing the researcher with the flexibility to explore key topics that emerge during the interviews. The interviews were audio-recorded with the participants' consent, allowing the researcher to focus on the conversation and later transcribe the data for analysis. Interviews were conducted in locations chosen by the participants, such as churches, mosques, universities, or meeting halls, at mutually agreed-upon times to ensure convenience. Each interview began with a general question about the participant's biography, followed by more focused questions related to their experiences in interfaith dialogue. In addition to the interviews, the researcher collected relevant documents (e.g., photos, letters, meeting notes) to enrich the data and provide additional context for understanding the participants' experiences.

To maintain the interpretive focus of IPA, the research was structured around understanding the specific sense-making processes of each participant. In analyzing the interview data, particular attention was paid to the personal interpretations and perceptions that the religious leaders and followers ascribed to their experiences in interfaith dialogue. Throughout the analysis, the tensions or contradictions in their accounts were sought. This focus on interpretation and meaning-making ensured that the researcher did not simply catalog themes but also captured the ways in which participants made sense of their participation in interfaith dialogue. For example, when discrepancies arose between the Christian and Muslim leaders' experiences, these were carefully examined to understand how each participant negotiated their religious identity within interfaith contexts, and whether these differences reflected broader tensions or shifts in their worldview.

The data analysis process followed the steps outlined by Smith et al. (2009), which include reading and re-reading the transcripts, making initial notes, developing emergent themes, and searching for connections across themes. The researcher listened to and read each interview transcript multiple times to immerse themselves in the data. Initial notes were made on the

transcripts. They were focused on significant points or reflections that arise during the reading. The researcher then identified emergent themes and look for patterns across the interviews. NVivo software used to assist with organizing and coding the data, ensuring that the analysis is systematic and efficient. The researcher analyzed the data first on a case-by-case basis and then compare across cases to identify broader patterns or differences in the experiences of the participants.

To enrich the interview data, the researcher also collected and analyzed relevant documents, including photos, letters, and meeting notes from interfaith dialogue events. These documents were analyzed using content analysis, a method that allows for the identification of themes, patterns, and representations within the texts. The document analysis provided additional insights into the cultural and social context of the dialogue events, helping to triangulate and further validate the findings from the interviews. For instance, photos from the dialogue events revealed non-verbal communication cues that aligned with participants' verbal accounts, particularly in relation to moments of tension or connection between religious leaders. In this way, the documents served not only as contextual background but also as complementary data that enhanced the depth of the analysis. Ethical considerations were paramount throughout the research process. Participants were fully informed about the purpose of the study and their right to confidentiality and voluntary participation. They were asked to sign a consent form, and it will be clearly communicated that no personal identifiers will be used in the dissemination of research results.

5. Findings

The results are presented in two parts including descriptive and inferential findings. The descriptive section provides an overview of the key characteristics and patterns observed in the data. The inferential section explores the significance of these findings through statistical analysis. This section presents the results related to the demographic background of the participants and the general framework of their views regarding the research questions. The analysis aims to provide insight into the sub-themes and main themes that emerged from the interviews, giving the reader a clear understanding of the context in which the data was collected. The sample size for this study was determined by the redundancy criterion (Patton, 2002), in which data collection ceased once no new information emerged or responses became repetitive. In this study, 12 participants were interviewed. The participants included 6 Christians and 6 Muslims. They were all middle-level religious leaders or followers from diverse ethnic backgrounds residing in Manila City.

All participants had experience attending interfaith dialogue meetings, though their familiarity with such dialogues varied. Some had participated in interfaith conversations since a

young age, while others only became familiar with the concept of interfaith dialogue during their university years. The frequency of their participation ranged from moderate to very frequent. The demographic breakdown of the sample included 4 women and 8 men. Regarding employment, 2 participants worked in private institutions, 1 in government agencies, and 9 in religious centers such as churches or mosques. To maintain participant anonymity, Arabic numerals were used to identify the informants.

Readiness for Interfaith Dialogue

The analysis of interview data revealed that readiness for dialogue is a key component in successful interfaith interactions. This concept was central to the first research question of the study: "How do leaders and followers of Christianity and Islam in Manila prepare for and guide interfaith dialogue sessions?" The responses from participants indicated that readiness for interfaith dialogue involves a blend of spiritual preparation, personal commitment, and organizational structures. One participant described their approach as a combination of religious guidance and personal connections:

"Personally, we ask the Holy Spirit to guide us... a spontaneous reuniting with family-like friends of other religions" (Respondent #3).

For many participants, readiness was seen as a religious duty, guided by official church teachings and mandates. As one Catholic participant explained:

"preparation involves understanding church documents, such as Vatican II's Nostra Aetate and Unitatis Redintegratio, which promote the building of unity and peace across religious boundaries" (Respondent #23).

However, challenges remained, particularly when certain individuals were invited to join interfaith dialogues based on social or economic status rather than theological knowledge. In these cases, the role of religious leaders became crucial in preparing their followers for dialogue, guiding them through sensitive issues and encouraging respectful listening. As one participant pointed out, leaders should ask themselves and their followers whether they are ready to engage with "others" without the intention of conversion, focusing instead on fostering mutual respect and understanding (Respondent #12).

From the content analysis, four key components of readiness for interfaith dialogue emerged:

- Readiness to exchange views on religious topics: This involves initial mental and spiritual preparation for engaging with individuals from other faiths.
- Readiness to seek mutual understanding: This emphasizes focusing on shared beliefs and commonalities while avoiding the exaggeration of differences.
- Internal barriers to dialogue: Participants acknowledged the need to overcome barriers within their own religious communities, ensuring that leaders and followers are psychologically and emotionally prepared for interfaith engagement.
- Readiness to communicate with representatives of other religions: This encompasses physical, mental, religious, and intellectual readiness to meet and communicate with members of different faiths.

The effective role of leaders was identified as central to promoting the active participation of their followers in these dialogues. Their preparation, guidance, and support are critical in ensuring that interfaith dialogue is both meaningful and respectful. Through careful planning and fostering a culture of mutual respect, religious leaders can create an environment conducive to constructive dialogue and peaceful coexistence across religious divides.

Interfaith Dialogue Process

The second research question focused on the process of interfaith dialogue. Data from various interfaith dialogue sessions, including speeches from religious leaders, as well as their personal notes and letters to the researcher, illustrated the dynamic flow of conversations. This process can be broken down into several key stages:

- Belief in the Presence of God: The first stage of the interfaith dialogue process involves the belief in a shared spiritual presence. As one participant noted, "When people of various religions meet... God is present, and we experience it every time we are together and open to each other" (Respondent #1). This shared belief in a higher power sets the foundation for meaningful engagement and mutual respect.
- Readiness to Engage: The second stage is characterized by a willingness to communicate. Both religious leaders and their followers must be ready to engage in open dialogue. One respondent highlighted how interfaith gatherings foster friendship, trust, and a sense of

hope, emphasizing the importance of a welcoming heart to achieve harmonious coexistence: "When we have a welcoming heart, living harmoniously together is not only possible but indeed a taste of heaven" (Respondent #20).

- **Establishment of Supportive Institutions:** The third stage involves creating and nurturing interfaith networks and organizations that facilitate dialogue and collaboration across religious communities. Respondents described how interfaith dialogue has led to the creation of organizations, such as Unharmony Partners Manila, which have played an instrumental role in building friendships between religious leaders and promoting collaborative activities. For instance, partnerships have been established between the San Carlos Seminary, The Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter-day Saints, and the Embassy of Iran-Manila Cultural Section for cultural exchanges and educational initiatives (Respondent #18).
- **Motivating Action:** The fourth stage is about inspiring action and encouraging participation. This stage involves emphasizing the positive aspects of interfaith dialogue, including its potential to address global challenges such as religious discrimination, extremism, and fundamentalism. One participant reflected on the community-building aspect of dialogue, where diverse spiritual traditions come together to share resources and hospitality. These interactions foster mutual respect, discovery, and the opportunity to live out values of peace: "As a Catholic Christian, this is a wider avenue to live the Gospel imperative of being a peacemaker and witnessing the love of God and neighbor, regardless of religious affiliation" (Respondent #15).
- **Promotion through Media:** The final stage involves spreading awareness through the media. Publicizing interfaith activities through media coverage is essential for raising awareness about the value of interfaith dialogue. One respondent noted that media coverage helps demonstrate to the public that people of different faiths can collaborate for the common good: "Media coverage brings awareness to the public that people of different faiths are collaborating... and they can also reach out to others as friends" (Respondent #12). This stage helps combat religious intolerance and reinforces the importance of tolerance and cooperation.

Transformation of Perspectives

The third research question sought to explore how interfaith dialogue influences individuals' views of other religions. Analysis of the data revealed that one of the key effects of interfaith dialogue is the elimination of ignorance about other religions, which often leads to more tolerant and open-minded perspectives. Another significant transformation is how dialogue discourages negative depictions of other religions. Rather than focusing on their flaws, interfaith dialogue encourages a kind and open view, leading to a reduction of prejudice and fostering trust, cooperation, and friendship. As one respondent noted, interfaith dialogue shifts individuals from critical perspectives toward a more compassionate understanding, enhancing mutual respect and encouraging a deeper appreciation for diversity:

"Interfaith dialogue fosters positive transformation... strengthening the courage to see beyond the differences" (Respondent #5).

Participants also report that by learning about the positive aspects of other religions, they find themselves enriched, experiencing a more holistic view of faith. One respondent shared:

"The more we get to know each other's religions, the more we feel enriched by each other in God through the various teachings found in each other's Holy Scriptures" (Respondent #11).

For some, interfaith dialogue becomes a transformative experience, leading to a conversion of the heart. It encourages individuals to transcend their fears of the "other" and move beyond mere tolerance to genuine understanding. Dialogue allows participants to "humanize" rather than "demonize" each other, fostering a shared appreciation of their common humanity and faith. One participant explained:

"Interfaith dialogue could bring about a conversion of the heart... to appreciate each other's shared human condition" (Respondent #6).

Interfaith dialogue also teaches followers of different religions how to respect one another despite their differences. It promotes understanding by bringing together people who may not fully

agree on certain issues but can learn to appreciate each other's rituals, beliefs, and cultural expressions. As one respondent put it,

"Dialogue with open ears promotes understanding and respect for the religious other... it is important that different religions come together because the 'encounters' bring friendship and fraternity" (Respondent #11).

Religious leaders also play a crucial role in accelerating this transformation. Their understanding of the cultural expressions and beliefs of others deepens their capacity to find common ground and respect differences. As one respondent noted,

"A religious leader will not only understand the other, but can find commonalities with the other as a basis of working together" (Respondent #5).

Interfaith dialogue offers leaders the opportunity to engage with new ideas and practices, enriching their spiritual and human understanding.

Leader' and followers' interpretation on interfaith dialogue

The fourth question of the research seeks to understand the interpretation of leaders about interfaith dialogue. The analysis of the data shows that in the first step, some religious leaders and their followers are afraid to contact the leaders and followers of other religions. Another interpretation about interfaith dialogue sessions is "need to understanding others" to better understand themselves. Some participants believed that in many parts of the world, interfaith dialogue was not yet a necessity. This is especially true in countries where the majority of people believe in one religion. In this case, many religious leaders do not feel the need for dialogue because they believe that their religion is the only religion of salvation. Interfaith dialogue is based on the fact that "all truth is not with us." It is difficult for many religious leaders and their followers to accept this fact.

"Some may be pessimistic about the outcomes of such dialogues, but if they see the positive outcomes, they would be more open to such "bridges to more peaceful relations (Respondent #9).

Of course, this interpretation may not be acceptable to everyone. In many parts of the world, religious leaders have sought to encourage and support dialogue between followers of different religions. To what extent these efforts have reduced religious conflict is another matter. However, interfaith dialogue has become very common, both internationally and nationally. Most followers are supportive of the efforts of leaders to reach out/learn about them/other to promote understanding and acceptance. Everyone is looking for a peaceful and harmonious society to live in and flourish but lack the initiative/trust to reach out to the other.

"This is a question which I need to find out more. In the Catholic tradition, we have a wealth of documents where its members are encouraged to study and live the spirit of the council documents. The official Catholic Church documents like Nostra Aetate, Ecclesiam Suam, Redemptoris Missio, Evangelii Gaudium, and Evangelization in Modern Day Asia are examples articulating "a vision for dialogue with other religions and the world at large." The latest document, of course is the joint signed document by Pope Francis and the Grand Imam of Al-Azhar, Ahmad Al-Tayyeb. It is a document where two great world religious leaders co-signed with the hope to find a universal peace where all can enjoy in this life "(Respondent #8).

OR

"The interpretation of interfaith dialogue is concrete. The Interfaith Dialogue becomes a dialogue of life, a dialogue of action, a dialogue of religious expressions and cultures and traditions by walking together in the path towards God, praying together and working together for peace building or helping social projects" (Respondent #12).

On the other hand, the content of the interviews shows that despite being aware of the positive effects of interfaith dialogue over the last half century, many efforts still need to be made to include practical results. The bitter truth is that over the past thirty years, religious strife has increased violence, murder, and religious hatred in many areas. In practice, the world has seen that many religious leaders - for various reasons - have added to the fire of discord and war between nations and have not been the cause of peace.

"Interfaith dialogue is not well understood yet by all religions, not even by Christians even though the Catholic Church has already published documents about it during the

Vatican II Council (1962-1965). Religions gain much when entering in interfaith dialogue with the right attitude. It is a way to learn and understand the different from me. When we meet together, we can talk and explain our differences and believe. There should be more awareness by the leaders of all religions to promote interfaith dialogue in their communities so that all would be open for it" (Respondent #16).

Briefly, there are a few points: First, people's interpretations of the effects of dialogue are different; Second, their interpretations about dialogue are relative and diverse; Third, all leaders and followers in Manila emphasized on necessity of interfaith dialogue; Fourth, they all emphasized seriousness in dialogue and practical action to avoid violence; Fifth, all consider avoiding bias in dialogue, and sixth, many interviewees believe that interfaith dialogue has not yet reached the stage of maturity in Manila.

Leader transformational role

The fifth question emphasizes the transformational role of leaders in interfaith dialogue. The fact is that in many societies, religious peace or war originates in the minds of leaders, and ordinary people are at their service. That is why the positive attitude of religious leaders towards interfaith dialogue is fundamental. Of course, people do not always follow their leaders, and variables such as people's level of education, free media, and interfaith dialogue meetings can isolate fanatic religious leaders. But in response to the question of what is the transformative role of religious leaders, one informant says:

"Religious leaders must be in the forefront towards interfaith dialogue and must be the catalyst among their group especially among the conservative sections (Respondent #5).

"The religious leaders should be seen as caring, sympathetic, and willing to listen" (Respondent #3).

Accordingly, many interviewees emphasized that when we see our leaders give the necessary respect to others, acknowledge each other's dignity as persons, and that see themselves as equal, then they are setting a good example and laying a field of better and loving possibilities for the rest. Therefore, leaders are role models for their followers. In religious leaders will pursue from meeting to concrete action, especially assisting and helping those who do not belong to other

religions, then common believers will begin to realize that people of other religions are also their brothers and sisters. In short, the power of religious leaders to influence positively their followers is immense; hence, if they do and practice interreligious dialogue, their actions alone will have a positive influence to their followers.

"Leaders are responsible in living out their being leaders by the examples they set, by the life they live" (Respondent #7).

One of the most important roles of religious leaders is to try to eliminate the fear of "others." Ordinary people are accustomed to the current routine in all aspects of life. They are mostly not seeking change, but more important than "fear of change" is insecurity, violence and war, and religious hatred. For this reason, in societies where there is religious diversity, overcoming the fear of talking to leaders and followers of other religions is a fundamental factor.

"Most important of all is the courage to build bridges instead of walls. Not to be afraid to say and believe that it is possible. Many, even good people, at that; do not believe in the vision of breaking down walls of division. Many feels at ease with where they are now, very exclusive, engaging only to their own group, and do not feel the need to reach out to the others who are different than their own group" (Respondent #2).

Indeed, when religious leaders initiate/participate in interfaith dialogues they are sending a message to their communities to follow their example and reach out to others with love and compassion; respect others culture and extend a hand of friendship.

One of the important roles of religious leaders is to change the position of themselves and their followers from a defensive position to a position of friendship and companionship. The goal of interfaith dialogue is not to defend one's beliefs and values in front of others. The role of the leader is to recognize differences but to emphasize the similarities.

"Some leaders only cooperate as long as you listen to them. They are only trying to prove their point by gathering evidence" (Respondent #16).

In view of the above, the role of religious reformers can be summarized as follows:

- Overcome your fear and the fear of talking to followers of other religions through active presence in joint meetings
- Pioneering friendship and emphasizing similarities between religions
- A practical model for their followers
- Avoid defensive behaviors
- Avoid propaganda to attract followers of other religions, and
- Practical belief in the freedom to choose one's religion and practice one's religion

Horizon and integration of data

After being aware of the general view of informants about each research question, the method of thematic analysis - which is common in phenomenological research-, was used to determine the basic components of data. In this section, the results of the thematic analysis are presented, but at the same time, it should be noted that the researcher used four indicators of Guba and Lincoln (1989) to determine the accuracy and validity of the research data. To ensure the validity of the data after coding, the results were provided to 5 participants to confirm the accuracy of the data. The researcher also tried not to interfere with his mental assumptions as much as possible in coding and determining categories. In addition, the comments and suggestions of the research supervisor were used to determine the reliability of the data. Finally, in order to increase the power of generalizing the results, efforts were made to select informants among people with different economic, social and cultural backgrounds

Based on the findings , data analysis led to the production of 5 main themes, 20 sub-themes and 43 basic concepts. The relationship among basic concepts in general atmosphere of interviews was explained in the previous section. In the next section, the researcher's personal analysis and interpretation is presented according to the structure of interpretive phenomenological analysis.

Interpretive analysis

An important part of phenomenological research is the understanding of the "inner world" of the participants and the researcher's freedom in interpreting and extending the initial results. The researcher also tries to provide a more logical and general structure of the phenomenon experienced individually and collectively by the participants (Anderson, 2010). The researcher's first interpretation is to understand the relationship between the two elements of the first audience, the event (conversation) and the second audience (Figure 5.1). The content analysis of

the interviews and the main and basic categories show that each of these two elements of the first and second audience contains components that affect themselves and the event.

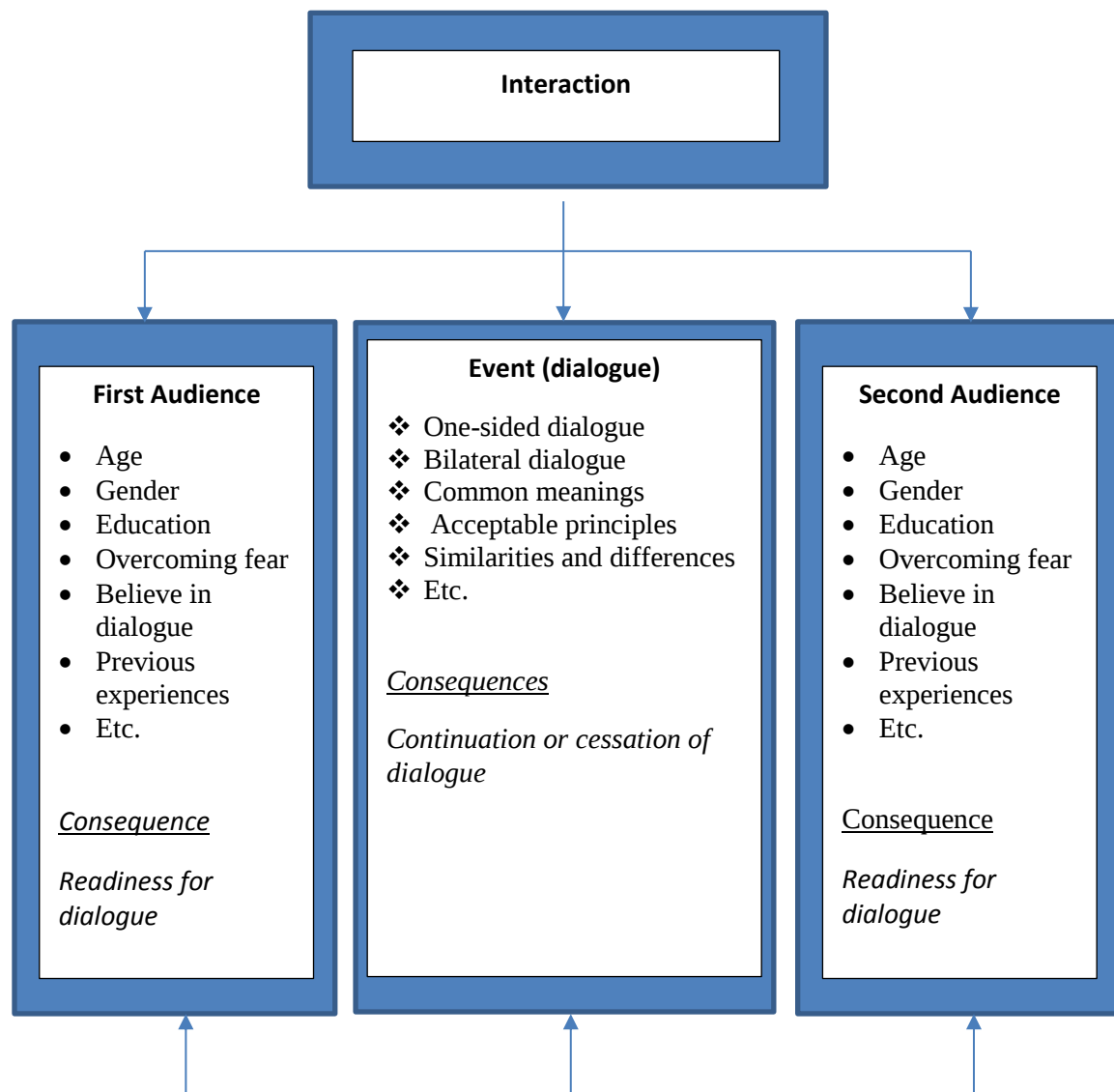


Figure 2. Interaction of elements in interfaith dialogue sessions

Data analysis and above figure showed that individuals are influenced by personal factors in interfaith dialogue sessions. For example, the question is that “to what extent variables such as age and gender can affect interfaith dialogue”. Although the answer to this question requires separate research, the interpretation of interviews’ content analysis shows that older people as well as women show more flexibility and readiness for interfaith dialogue. This finding implies that these

demographic groups may approach dialogue with a greater willingness to listen, understand, and engage in meaningful exchanges with individuals from different religious backgrounds. Women are often recognized as caregivers and nurturers within societies. They may have a heightened interest in interfaith dialogue due to their role in fostering understanding, empathy, and peace within their families and communities. Additionally, women may have a personal stake in interfaith dialogue as they are more likely to be affected by issues related to religion and culture, such as marriage, family dynamics, and social norms.

Elderly individuals, on the other hand, may have a greater interest in interfaith dialogue due to their accumulated life experiences and the wisdom they have gained over the years. With age, people tend to reflect more on their beliefs, values, and the broader societal context. They may seek opportunities to engage in interfaith dialogue as a means to deepen their understanding, bridge generational gaps, and contribute to a more harmonious and inclusive society. Also, variables such as level of education, overcoming the inner fear of talking to followers of other religions, heartfelt belief in dialogue, previous experiences of conversational sessions, and so on can affect a person's level of readiness to participate in interfaith dialogue sessions. The personal interpretation of the present researcher is that in the current climate of Manila, the majority of Christian and Muslim leaders and followers are reasonably prepared to participate in interfaith dialogue meetings.

The notion of being "reasonably prepared" implies that individuals have taken steps to equip themselves for interfaith dialogue. This could include acquiring knowledge about other religions, developing an open mindset, and cultivating a willingness to engage in meaningful conversations with followers of different faiths. For example, one of the participants said that:

I am not very familiar about instances of followers of different religions coming together for dialogue. However, I believe, such efforts to interact despite the differences in belief indicate a promising and positive point that there is hope for unity and harmony awaiting future generations. (Respondent #11)

The statement reflects a personal perspective on the idea of followers from different religions engaging in dialogue. The individual admits limited familiarity with instances of such interactions but expresses a belief that these efforts to bridge differences in belief signify a promising and positive development. The statement suggests that these dialogues offer hope for unity and harmony in future generations.

In addition to the characteristics of the dialogue audience, the characteristics of the dialogue are also very important. It is also important to pay attention to the characteristics of the event (interfaith dialogue); whether those who enter the dialogue sessions just want to say what they like to say or they also have the ability to hear other people's messages. Do the parties to the dialogue derive common meanings from their words, do they have common religious principles, and to what extent are their similarities and differences? Analysis of the interviews shows that all informants paid attention to these basic features of interfaith dialogue when attending the meetings. Finally, Figure 5.1 indicates that there is an interrelationship between the characteristics of the audience and dimensions of interfaith dialogue. Accordingly, the characteristics of the audience affect the conversation process and dimensions of the dialogue also guide the behavior of the audiences.

The second interpretation of the researcher is to identify the relationship of participants (perceivers) with the subject of meetings (the subject of perception) (Figure 5.2).

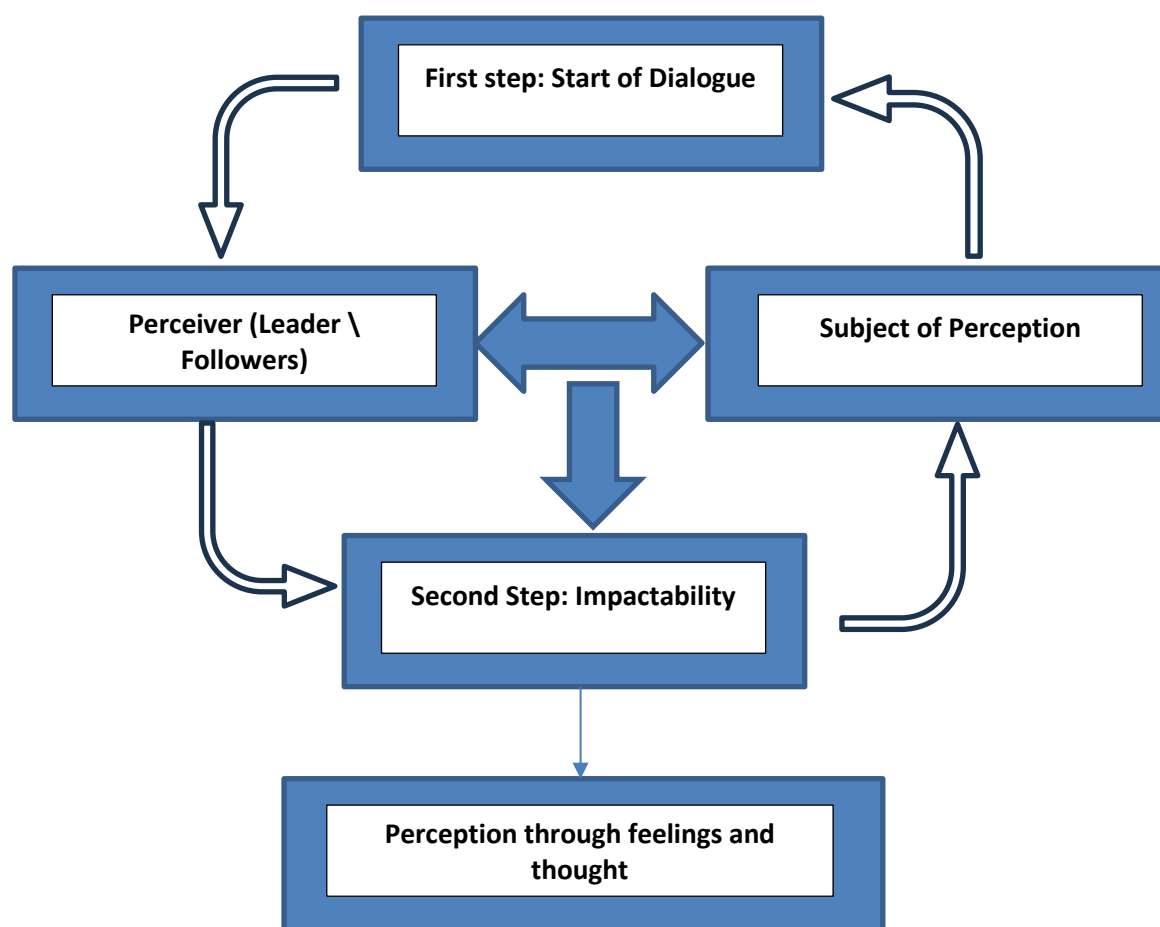


Figure 3. Process of perception formation in interfaith dialogue

According to Figure 3 all those who participate in interfaith dialogue sessions first show their willingness to communicate with leaders and followers of other religions. Attempts to "communicate" also indicate that they seek to understand "religion of others" as well as a deeper understanding of "own religion." Participants' interest in understanding the subject (knowing religion of others) automatically leads them to the second stage. They participate in joint interfaith dialogue sessions to influence other's perceptions. This influence occurs through the two main channels of emotion and intellect (mind). For this reason, through the analysis of basic concepts, it is possible to extract categories that are either emotional or intellectual. For example, many informants in both Christian and Muslim groups have pointed to the role of emotional and rational behaviors such as kindness, food habits, overcoming fear, rational acceptance of each other's opinions, rational emphasis on similarities rather than differences, and so on. Accordingly, the present researcher (at the same time as a researcher and cultural advisor of Iran in the Philippines) has repeatedly witnessed the positive impacts of leaders and followers of different religions on each other.

Conceptual Contributions of the Research

This study underscores the significant role interfaith dialogue can play in peacebuilding, particularly in societies marked by religious diversity and historical tensions. In the context of Manila, Philippines, the findings reveal that dialogue between different faiths is driven by a genuine commitment to fostering understanding and reconciliation. It emphasizes that participants treat interfaith dialogue as a serious, mission-driven endeavor, not just a casual exchange, driven by both religious imperatives and the socio-political realities of the Philippines, where past religious conflicts heighten the need for dialogue. The key conceptual contributions of this study are as follows:

This study reaffirms the critical role of interfaith dialogue in fostering peace, overcoming historical divisions, and promoting mutual understanding. It highlights the agency of religious leaders as key drivers of dialogue, emphasizing the need for mutual respect, sincerity, and a collective commitment to bridge religious divides. Religious leaders play a crucial role in guiding dialogue, overcoming obstacles, and inspiring communities to embrace values of respect, friendship, and collaboration. Through their leadership, they contribute to the broader goal of building a more peaceful and harmonious world.

The study further emphasizes the transformative impact of interfaith dialogue in building relationships, reducing prejudice, and fostering peaceful coexistence. However, it also points to the

persistent challenges related to power imbalances between religious minority and majority groups. For meaningful societal transformation, it is essential to address issues such as discrimination, political inequality, poverty, and minority rights, alongside dialogue, in order to create lasting change.

This study highlights the potential of interfaith dialogue to improve understanding, empathy, and appreciation among religious leaders and followers. By eliminating ignorance about other religions' beliefs and practices, dialogue helps dispel stereotypes and misconceptions. It also emphasizes the power of dialogue in fostering friendships and positive contributions to society. Grassroots initiatives, in collaboration with religious leaders and government authorities, are crucial for nurturing a culture of peace and mutual respect. Investing in dialogue and community-building strengthens social cohesion and resilience, contributing to a more inclusive and harmonious society.

Lastly, this study stresses the importance of recognizing and addressing the diverse interpretations and challenges surrounding interfaith dialogue. It highlights the pivotal role of religious leaders in fostering understanding among different religious communities and advancing interfaith cooperation. Positive leadership, through its transformative potential, can promote peaceful coexistence and build stronger interfaith relations.

6. Conclusion

The most important findings are presented separately for research questions. The first research question was "How do leaders and followers of Christian and Muslim in Manila prepare for and guide interfaith dialogue sessions,". Findings indicated that dialogue between followers of religions can be spontaneous and unplanned. Indeed, for some of leaders and their followers, the willingness to engage in interfaith dialogue is a religious mission, while it must also become an internal task. Accordingly, many participants in interfaith dialogue consider attending meetings to be a very serious matter. This seriousness is quite understandable in a city like Manila and in a country like the Philippines. In fact, the awareness of the leaders and followers of the two main religions in the Philippines, Christianity and Islam, and the bitter political and historical events in some parts of the country revealed the need for this seriousness. The findings also show that religious leaders in Manila are well aware of their role in stopping violence and spreading peace. For this reason, the response of some participants shows that interfaith dialogue is not a new phenomenon, and for many years they have been working to arrange special order and purpose in Manila City. This finding is in line with a study performed by Karimi and Sailii (2015) who

examined the role of Christian religious leaders in employing interfaith dialogue to resolve conflicts from Christianity's perspective and elaborated the fact that how these leaders can encourage mutual inter-religious dialogue between the Christian and Muslim communities. They stated that Christianity considers the existence of other religions particularly Islam aside it and forms medium for a budding inter-faith dialogue. Also, religious leaders and other members participated in World Council of Churches asserted that relationship building with Muslims is based on friendship fostering, mutual respect, developing togetherness sense as well as the urgency for rejecting antagonism and prejudice.

Of course, sometimes there are obstacles. Participating in interfaith dialogue is not for everyone with prior knowledge. Many followers who attend meetings are more likely to be invited because of their social and economic positions, and it is religious leaders who play a key role in dialogue sessions. From what has been said, and in a nutshell, the readiness for interfaith dialogue includes four basic steps.

Generally, it can be said that religious leaders can play an important role in guiding the interfaith dialogue sessions. They can encourage Christians and Muslims to be responsible for understanding and knowing each other as well as to make an effective communication together. They can promote the sense of friendship and unity that can be reached irrespective of ethnicity, religion, race and some other factors. As it is mentioned in *Nostra Aetate Declaration*, in the current era in which the ties among various people are stringer than before and mankind is becoming closer together, the Church is forming closer relationships with other religions to promote love and unity among humans and in fact among nations.

On the other hand, religious leaders can help followers of religions to have positive attitudes towards other religions by reminding them that God is mankind creator and all the humans are created by this one God. Therefore, they should treat each other with courtesy and respect due to the fact that their relationship with God depends on their relationship with humans including Muslims and Christians. In addition, religious leaders can remind their followers that every religion is a symbol of human endeavor in searching for the truth-God. As a result, both religious and moral aspects are inherent intrinsic in religions act as tools or means to achieve Salvation.

The findings related to the second question show that the process of interfaith dialogue consists of several stages: belief in the presence of God; religious leaders and followers should be ready to talk to each other; establishment of non-governmental organizations consisting of members of different religions, as well as encouraging other organizations to participate in interfaith dialogue; encourage

individuals to participate in interfaith dialogue by emphasizing its positive and beautiful aspects; and advertising and propaganda for interfaith dialogue.

It can be said that this finding is consistent with the results of Muwahidah (2010) who indicated that interfaith dialogue plays a crucial role in building relationships, reducing prejudice, promoting reconciliation, and demonstrating peaceful coexistence. However, achieving societal transformation and addressing power imbalances between the Muslim minority and Christian majority remains challenging. Efforts should focus on dismantling discrimination, acknowledging conflicts, incorporating discussions on political processes, poverty alleviation, minority rights, and power relations. Superficial harmony must be avoided, and both majority and minority groups should be empowered to actively participate and critique existing norms and structures.

The findings for the third research question highlighted that the most important contribution of interfaith dialogue to religious leaders and followers is the elimination of their ignorance of the religion of others. Indeed, interfaith dialogue also prevents other religious leaders from simply denigrating the negative aspects of other religions. Interfaith dialogue transforms a critical view of each other into a kind and open view. The other finding emphasized on role of religious leaders in accelerating interfaith transformation perspectives. The realization of why the other believe this way and that way, and what is the meaning and significance of the cultural expressions of their faith are the transformative character of doing interreligious dialogue. It expands the horizon of a religious leader in such a way that he realizes the many possible ways of loving and praising God through culture, common action, and belief.

This finding is in line with the results of Yunyasit and Baybado (2022) who studied the use of inter-religious dialogue (IRD) in conflict transformation and peacebuilding in Mindanao (Philippines) and the Southernmost provinces of Thailand and found that IRD was influenced by international trends and local actors' perceptions of conflict. IRD was seen as valuable for building trust, relationships, and community capacity. An elicitive approach was observed, with stronger involvement of religious leaders in the Philippines. However, IRD's impact was considered indirect and long-term, making it less prioritized compared to immediate and direct measures in conflict and peacebuilding initiatives.

It was also aligned with the findings of Cornelio et al. (2012) who highlighted the transformative effects of participation in an interfaith community on young individuals, including humanizing religious differences, fostering friendships, and empowering them to contribute positively to their community

In fact, it can be said that ordinary catholic and Muslim people in Manila have been cohabitating in their everyday life in spite of discord coming from religious differences and conflicts around them. They have accepted individuals with different religions as their friends and neighbors. It can be due to the peacebuilding strategies used by the religious leaders and the government that can help people to keep being in touch and avoid serious conflicts.

The findings related to the fourth question show that in the first step, some religious leaders and their followers are afraid to contact the leaders of other religions. This initial and natural fear is to some extent the fear of the unknown and strangers. Of course, many religious leaders do not feel the need for dialogue because they believe that their religion is the only religion of salvation while interfaith dialogue is based on the fact that "all truth is not with us." However, most followers are supportive of the efforts of leaders to learn about others to promote their understanding about different religions. Briefly, there are a few points: First, people's interpretations of the effects of dialogue are different; Second, their interpretations about dialogue are relative and diverse; Third, all leaders and followers in Manila emphasized on necessity of interfaith dialogue; Fourth, they all emphasized seriousness in dialogue and practical action to avoid violence; Fifth, all consider avoiding bias in dialogue, and sixth, many interviewees believe that interfaith dialogue has not yet reached the stage of maturity in Manila. The fifth question emphasizes the transformational role of leaders in interfaith dialogue. Findings revealed that positive attitude of religious leaders towards interfaith dialogue is fundamental. In fact, leaders act as a role model for their followers.

After the thematic analysis resulted in the production of 5 main themes, 20 sub-themes and 43 basic concepts, the researcher's interpretation of the data was done in three stages, which led to other findings. The first finding indicates that individuals are influenced by personal factors such as age and gender in interfaith dialogue sessions. In addition, variables such as level of education, overcoming the inner fear of talking to followers of other religions, heartfelt belief in dialogue, previous experiences of conversational sessions can affect a person's level of readiness to participate in interfaith dialogue sessions. Finally finding indicated that there is an interrelationship between the characteristics of the audience and dimensions of interfaith dialogue. The second interpretation of the researcher is to identify the relationship of participants (as a perceiver) with the subject of meetings (the subject of perception). Finding reveals that interaction between the perceiver (participants in interfaith dialogue sessions) with the subject of perception (interfaith dialogue) leads to their mental and emotional impact. In this way, the feeling and mentality of the person before and after interfaith dialogue sessions will be different. The third finding focused on the relationship between mental meanings. The mind, influenced by religious perception and

environmental perception, has formed the "initial perception" of individuals about different religions. Interfaith dialogues simultaneously may have positive or negative effects on religious and environmental meanings and forms a "secondary perception". This transformation leads to a change in the religious behavior and, of course, the social behavior of leaders and followers.

Given the current political climate in the United States and ongoing religious conflicts globally, it is crucial to examine the long-term effects of interfaith dialogue. Understanding how such dialogue influences individual communities can provide valuable insights for practitioners aiming to establish interfaith dialogue groups in their own communities. Furthermore, the findings from this study offer insights that can guide future research endeavors and contribute to the development of theoretical frameworks. The implications of these findings will be discussed in the following sections.

This study highlights the importance of deliberate planning and management in interfaith dialogue meetings. Facilitators play a crucial role in shaping the trajectory of these sessions, and intentional planning and guidance can help ensure that the desired outcomes are achieved. It is recommended that dialogue sessions occur in a series, allowing participants to build relationships, become comfortable with one another, and engage in conversations on challenging topics like faith and religion. The study also emphasizes the significance of extended timeframes for dialogue sessions, with intervals between sessions for reflection and meaning-making based on their experiences. In terms of the structure and participant dynamics, equality is important, but it doesn't necessarily refer to equal numbers. Instead, it is about giving equal focus and time to discussing topics from each faith tradition. The study suggests that this approach is more influential in fostering successful dialogue groups, where all participants feel welcomed and valued, and the contributions of a few are as important as those of many.

Collective leadership emerges as a powerful approach in interfaith dialogue groups. Having representatives from each tradition as leaders helps address issues of representation and marginalization within these groups. Collective leadership allows for shared guidance and management of dialogue sessions among multiple individuals. The observed meetings in the study consistently aligned with the stated goals and guidelines of the dialogue group. Therefore, it is important for dialogue sessions to have the necessary time and flexibility to address the concerns and expectations of the diverse participants, and having shared leadership responsibilities among several individuals increases the likelihood of achieving this. Lastly, this study underscores the importance of creating a sense of safety within the space where dialogue sessions take place. While some scholars have advocated for neutrality in such spaces, this was not a requirement for the

dialogue group in this study. In fact, participants emphasized the significance of holding dialogue sessions in different places of worship throughout the community, rather than in a single neutral location. This suggests that practitioners and facilitators of interfaith dialogue should carefully consider the choice of venue for dialogue events and align their decisions with the preferences and desires of the participants within the dialogue group.

Like any other research, the present study had limitations. The first limitation is that there was no control to prevent previous researchers from misrepresenting their findings. However, the researcher tried not to negatively influence the views of previous researchers on research steps such as conducting interviews, coding, and interpreting the results. Another limitation is that the researcher cannot be absolutely sure that his findings reflect the performance of all of Manila's religious communities. Thus, the generalizability of the findings should be done with caution. The third limitation can be influenced by the researcher religious' view (as a Shiite) about interfaith dialogue. In fact, the researcher as a Shiite may not have a precise understanding of real concerns of Catholic Christians and Sunni Muslims in a Catholic city such as Manila.

Despite these limitations, the experience of four years of living in Manila, as well as the professional responsibility of the researcher (as cultural advisor of the Islamic Republic of Iran in the Philippines) especially provided him many opportunities to participate in different interfaith dialogue sessions and meeting people from various religions. Therefore, according to these facts and research findings, some suggestions can be made for future researchers:

The first suggestion is based on the fact that the present researcher had his main focus only on identifying the phenomenon of interfaith dialogue in the city of Manila, while the content of these conversations has not been studied. Therefore, it is suggested that in the next research, the content interfaith dialogues should be examined and analyzed. The second suggestion emphasizes the expansion of the statistical population. While the focus of the present study was on the city of Manila, the majority of the country's Muslims live in the Mindanao region. Therefore, it is suggested that future research examine interfaith dialogue between Muslim and Christian leaders in the Mindanao region of Philippines. The third suggestion focuses on the specific situation of the Philippines. While the Philippines is a predominantly Christian country, its neighbors have different religious backgrounds. For example, the majority of Indonesia and Malaysia's population are Muslim, the Vietnamese are predominantly Buddhist, and the Chinese are religiously diverse. Accordingly, future researchers are encouraged to compare the phenomenon of interfaith dialogue between religious leaders in the Philippines, China, Indonesia, Malaysia, and Vietnam.

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