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Interreligious Dialogue in Malaysia: Issues of its Implementation

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ABSTRACT

As the world continues to evolve, problems among religious adherents have increasingly rendered the need for interreligious dialogue to achieve mutual understanding. The dialogue is crucial as it is a platform to communicate, understand, and get to know others of different backgrounds and beliefs. Nevertheless, the implementation of interreligious dialogue has led to some criticism on the credibility of its practice, especially in Islam. Therefore, this paper attempts to identify the challenges that occur throughout the implementation of Interreligious dialogue and their causes. This includes the arguments and the views of leaders or religious figures as well as intellectuals in favor or against interreligious dialogue. To do that, this study focuses on literature reviews and has discovered that the issues brought upon the implementation of inter-religious dialogue were based on a less accurate description of the actual ideas and practices. The finding also shows that not enough Interreligious dialogue modules are available and this gap must be filled with fresh perspectives to serve as a resource for future dialogues.

Keywords: Issues, Criticisms, Interreligious dialogue, Modules

1. Introduction

Ahmad Faizuddin Ramli and Jaffary Awang (2018) observe that before Malaya was colonized interreligious dialogue was spontaneous and it took the form of the life dialogue. Not much of theological issues were discussed. Rather, the interreligious relation occurred more on an everyday life basis such as transaction, commerce, and marriage. Interreligious relation was generally harmonious.

According to Ramli and Awang's findings, Portuguese, British and Japanese colonists were the ones who changed the harmonious landscape of Malaya. While the Portuguese attempted to impose marriages between Christians and local people, the Japanese had stirred up conflicts between the Chinese and Malays. On the other hand, British colonists worsened the social tension by further segregating different races to different locations based on respective economic activities. Malays were placed in villages as most of them worked as fishermen and farmers. Chinese got to live in the cities because most were traders. Indians, on the other hand, were located in rubber and palm oil plantations.

The interference of colonists made it difficult for the country 'Malaysia' to be established post-independence. Just twelve years after independence, there was 13th May 1969 incident, which involved clash and bloodshed between Malays and Chinese, resulting in the death of more than a hundred people.

Since then, efforts were taken by the government to mend the bond among different races and facilitate in the unity among Malaysian people. Hereafter, there are many initiatives done through dialogue albeit not interreligious dialogue per says. The practice of interreligious dialogue became instrumental as a reaction to Islamisation process beginning in the early 1970s. Non-Muslim religious leaders worried that more Islamic values were imbued in the governmental sectors. They perceived Islamisation as a threat to their identity and religious survival. A platform named Malaysian Council for Christians, Buddhists, Hindus, Sikhs and Taoists (MCCBHST) was established to discuss common fear among Non-Muslims. Since then, there was a response to this concern by some Muslim NGOs such as *Angkatan Belia Islam Malaysia* (ABIM) or Malaysia Islamic Youth Movement. Henceforth, activities of interreligious dialogue blossomed.

Interreligious dialogue was a platform to communicate, understand, and get to know others of different beliefs and backgrounds to achieve a mutual understanding. It is also found to be the most appropriate medium to be utilized in multi-racial countries like Malaysia and Indonesia. Having said that, there are concerns in interreligious dialogue implementation.

This paper purports to identify the issues that occurred and the challenges that must be overcome in the practice of interreligious dialogue in Malaysia by exploring some views and criticisms of Malaysian scholars such as Ahmad Faizuddin Ramli, Jaffary Awang, Khairulnizam Mat Karim, Wan Sabri Wan Yusuf, and Arfah Ab Majid. Besides, the views of Anne Hege Grung, and Andrew Orton are taken into account.

2. Methodology

This paper employs a qualitative research method in the form of a literature review, with the primary purpose of introducing readers to the most recent library research on the topic of interreligious dialogue. The data collection is based on two main approaches: primary data and secondary data collection (Quran and Hadith). The researcher uses this data to examine the difficulties that arise as well as the challenges that must be overcome throughout the practice of interreligious dialogue.

3. Criticism and Rejection of Interreligious Dialogue

In this age of globalization, dialogue is one of the primary means of recognising and celebrating diversity. Interreligious dialogue is very important for different religious believers to communicate with each other and find a solution to any misunderstanding. This platform is critical in instilling harmony and fostering mutual understanding along with upholding their individual religious convictions. Various ideological threats have long been entrenched in Malaysia, bringing a new way of thinking that contradicts with *Ahl al-Sunnah wa al- Jama'ah*, the Islamic school of thought which is considered the mainstream and the school which applies a robust and most reliable process in solving Muslims' issues in general, according to the majority of scholars in the field. It follows that the stance held by *Ahl al-Sunnah wa al -Jama'ah* is the stance that is referred to in creating proper guidelines in interreligious dialogue.

The first issue of interreligious dialogue as perceived by some Muslims is the equation of religious pluralism to interreligious dialogue, as understood by some Westerners and Muslim philosophers alike (Khalif Muammar A. Harris, 2015). It seems that the equation is necessary in keeping up with the modern trend. religious pluralism. It follows that it is vital to accept the version of truth that is presented by other religions. According to *Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jama'ah*, this is problematic because there is hierarchy of truths and that Allah alone is the absolute Truth. It implies that the only true and approved religion in the sight of Allah is Islam based on verse 3:19 of the Qur'an.

Through his writing on the openness brought about by interreligious dialogue, Syamsuddin Arif (2014) echoed a similar sentiment. In fact, his writing in rejecting Interreligious dialogue is harsher and sharper, stating that the way interreligious dialogue is intended and executed will only bring people closer to scepticism. This is because he claimed that interreligious dialogue promotes the idea of all religions have equal access to truth. This is the idea of religious pluralism as mentioned previously. The idea of religious pluralism also carries and supports this equality of truth. As a result, if this claim is correct, interreligious dialogue and religious pluralism become the same because they share common notions and perspectives.

According to Earnie Elmie Hilmi, Kamarudin Salleh, and Nur Farhana Abdul Rahman (2019), some Malaysian scholars have defined interreligious dialogue as religious pluralism in their publications. They argue that religious pluralism and interreligious dialogue are common ideas based on the development of both terms' definitions. The definitions are crucial as they serve as a benchmark for describing a new concept. In this case, it is critical to look into the relationship between the two to look for any connection or parallel.

The *Projek Dialog* or Dialogue Project is a website that provides a space and platform for anyone who wishes to speak about religious and racial tolerance. It is a forum that aims to promote debate and understanding across different religions, races, and even ideas or philosophies. The concept of living together is "putting the value of equality, harmony, and peace between religions," according to one of the works released through this conversation space.

According to Anis Malik Thoha (2011), one of the views shared by pluralist thinkers is the principle of equality in religion. This also raises problems about the relationship between interreligious dialogue and religious pluralism. As a result, this research is critical in acquiring evidence and validating the relationship between the two.

Many parties are concerned about ideological threats and criticism like this because it includes religion and will generate doubts in the Malaysian community in particular. This research is critical since it is not a trivial matter when it comes to the understanding of religious pluralism. This is because the critiques and issues raised will ruin the practice of interreligious dialogue's image and legitimacy.

4. Issues of Interreligious Dialogue Implementation in Malaysia

The objection and criticism against interreligious discourse should not be dismissed lightly as these come from prominent individuals rather than a group of people. Syamsuddin Arif (2014) wrote that a Muslim must engage with the non-Muslims by performing da'wah with full responsibility, debate with knowledge, and lastly declare a war if there are no other ways. It differs from interreligious dialogue, which assumes that all religions are equally true, according to the author. The author also claimed that attempting and practising interreligious dialogue will only push one closer to disbelieving Islam. This declaration strikes a significant blow to the interreligious dialogue's credibility in pursuit of Islamic knowledge.

Syamsuddin Arif (2014) rejected interreligious dialogue because he disagreed with the three rules that dialogue participants must abide in the practice of interreligious dialogue; 1) all members are equal; 2) members should accept that beliefs of others are not necessarily wrong; and 3) all members are to put aside major differences and discuss issues that demonstrate similarities among religions. Syamsuddin Arif (2014) also added that Fazlur Rahman and Naquib al-Attas both criticised the practice of interreligious dialogue in everyday life, claiming that it might lead to theological confusion, compromise, syncretism, relativism, and even pluralism, all of which can lead to apostasy.

The researcher discovered that some scholars have fairly discussed and criticised interreligious dialogue, such as Robert Hunt, Albert Sundararaj Walter, Tun Mahathir Mohamad, Wan Sabri Wan Yusuf, Arfah Ab Majid, Kate Zebiri, and John Azumah as

found in the Doctor of Philosophy thesis by Khairulnizam Mat Karim (2015). This is a significant percentage that comes from intellectuals and should be taken into account while debating the issues. John Azumah (2002), in a paper titled "The Integrity of Interreligious dialogue," presented reasons for the rejection of interreligious dialogue by the Muslim community, specifically: i) theological issues; ii) the widespread belief that truth assertions are the biggest obstacles to dialogue ; iii) challenges inherited from tradition that relate to negativity and hostile portrayals of one another; iv) past burdens and the importance of honesty to oneself and interlocutors in dialogue; and v) challenges in re-examining perceptions of others based on existing realities.

Additionally, Wan Sabri Wan Yusuf and Arfah Ab Majid (2014) that despite interreligious dialogue being used and well appreciated in recent years, interreligious dialogue in Malaysia still has challenges in gaining the support of the country's population. Misinformed information on interreligious dialogue, such as its connection to proselytising and religious pluralism, was more prevalent than accurate information, which led to unfavourable perceptions and hesitations about participating in such dialogue. Based on the researcher's point of view, if this assertion is true, it is a very serious problem in the discipline of interreligious dialogue since it entails a tough attack that can affect various levels of society, causing one's faith to falter.

Some Western academics also offer explanations and justifications for rejecting Interreligious dialogue. One of the reasons, according to Anne Hege Grung (2011), is that it leads to the rise of syncretism in its practise. This is because, if a religion does not follow the implementation criteria put out by the authentic teachings, a free and tolerant debate allows for a mixing of opinions and beliefs. It again has to do with how religion is represented in interreligious discussions, but this time there is a worry about the thinning of religious lines. Most interreligious dialogue participants who seek to include spiritual or theological elements outside of a common ethical objective are familiar with this criticism. Even though Christians make up a sizable portion of the population where the discussion is taking place, certain Christian communities express their fear about syncretism.

Furthermore, it will open space for followers of other religions to attack from the standpoint of belief, particularly in Christianity, where there will be intra-religious clashes among those who hold different views. Pluralism, inclusivism, and exclusivism are three different standpoints on salvation. Freeman (2017) explained that people who believe in exclusivism believe that Jesus is the sole saviour of mankind, whilst those who believe in inclusivism believe that any religion can save its believers in their own way.

Besides, Orton (2016) noted that the selection of dialogue members by non-governmental groups is skewed, with the majority of youngsters and women being overlooked despite their significant role in the social landscape. As a result, the voices and perspectives of these groups would be ignored, and the interreligious dialogue will be dominated by a small group of men, leaving other groups unrepresented. Prejudice based on gender or age must be addressed to improve the effectiveness of interreligious dialogue.

The issue expressed against the practise of interreligious dialogue is that absolute truth is compromised. In this sense, some Western and Islamic intellectuals share the same opinion when it comes to rejecting interreligious dialogue as a meeting point. St. Augustinus, a Christian bishop and theologian remarked that the initial Christian convictions were restrictive in character, but that the passage of time forced its tenets' philosophy to alter to a more inclusive one (Syamsuddin Arif, 2017). He believes this is due to the interreligious dialogue's rules, which state that (i) dialogue participants are equal, (ii) all religions are not necessarily true, and (iii) leaving aside the main problem that is a point of conflict between religions.

5. Impediments and Difficulties in Engaging in Interreligious Dialogue

There is no denying that there are impediments and difficulties in engaging in such dialogue. Researcher have divided them into three categories: introduction, practice, and acceptance. In terms of introduction, the word "interreligious dialogue" itself needs to be presented and explained more frequently, particularly in nations with multi-racial societies. This is because interreligious dialogue is a highly effective platform in fostering and promoting social harmony. For instance, Siti Sofia Md Nasir (2018) referred to a heated "cyber war" between Prof. Dr. P. Ramasamy (Chief Minister of Penang II) and Prof. Dato' Arif Perkasa Dr. Mohd Asri bin Zainul Abidin

(Mufti of Perlis). In order to bring back harmony and to avoid the conflict from getting worse, former Minister in Prime Minister's Department (Religious Affairs), Dr. Mujahid Rawa called for a dialogue session between the men.

This demonstrates the necessity for frequent formal discourse sessions to educate and open people's minds about religion. It is also critical not only to handle any concern, but also to prevent any undesired disputes from arising. It is great that the government uses this platform to address racial issues and at the same time demonstrates that Interreligious dialogue is an excellent platform for developing interreligious cooperation.

Meanwhile, the practice is viewed as too narrowed down to the intellectual sphere (Rahimin Affandi Abd. Rahim et.al, 2011). It is usually exclusively executed and mobilised at the Institute of Islamic Understanding Malaysia (IKIM) and other institutes of Higher Education, but not in the public network. However, the Ministry of National Unity has made a huge step in promoting dialogue particularly among the youth, and to demonstrate that interreligious dialogue is one of the most effective means of achieving national concord. This shows how important it is to practise interreligious dialogue at all levels of society so that the resulting confusion and extremism can be resolved objectively without succumbing to emotions, thus preventing bad behaviours.

Apart from that, one of the most difficult obstacles to overcome in Malaysia is the absence of dialogue participants. This is because the dialogue members must be chosen based on a set of characteristics, such as academic background, experience, and general knowledge, in order to match the demands and requirements of the dialogue. Every conversation member, according to Ahmad Faizuddin Ramli and Jaffary Awang (2014), must have competence and abilities in dialogue knowledge in order to create a dialogue session that is intellectually and ethically sound. Based on the researcher's view, in dialogue, a person is not a representative of his/her religion but he/she is only voicing out his/her perspective about the issues.

Furthermore, a fundamental issue in the practise of Interreligious dialogue is the lack of modules or standards established to meet the criteria of dialogue while keeping the values and beliefs, in line with Islamic perspectives. Khairulnizam Mat Karim

(2015) said that devising and designing an appropriate new module is critical to effectively address a disagreement in the future. Governments and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in Malaysia should take the construction of new modules in the application of interreligious dialogue seriously in order to ensure that interreligious conversation can be implemented systematically according to the established processes.

Among the challenges that are also faced in the field of Interreligious dialogue is in the post-Covid era, which is the change from the aspect of physical and face-to-face implementation to discussion in the virtual world. According to Muhammad Hamnan Hibrahim (2020), based on the head of the Education and Human Capital Development Cluster of the Malaysian Professors Academy, Professor Dr Rosna Awang Hashim stated that this change process also affects many other parties, especially teachers, lecturers and students from the learning aspect which previously met face to face but switched to screen display. In this regard, the dialogue process and also dialogue members need to learn and adapt in a new arena to strengthen the quality of Interreligious dialogue practices.

Interreligious dialogue is still not entirely recognised by the community, which poses a difficulty in terms of acceptance. Some Malaysians are still doubtful of the Interreligious dialogue, believing it to be too religiously exclusive. This kind of criticism was made by figures such as Tun Dr. Mahathir Mohamad, Robert Hunt, and Sundaraj Walter (Khairulnizam Mat Karim, 2015).

6. Preliminary Analysis of Emerging Factors of Criticisms of Interreligious Dialogue

To protect the reputation of Interreligious dialogue, the criticisms and objections to the practice must be taken seriously. The weakness of its implementation is likely the source of objection in some quarters. Therefore, this researcher has identified five emerging factors that contribute to the criticism of inter-religious discourse: (1) misunderstanding of the concept of interreligious discourse; (2) lack of ethical adherence; (3) limited knowledge of the process of *da'wah*; (4) lack of authoritative dialogues; and (5) lack of effective dialogue modules.

Based on the preliminary findings, the criticism arises from a misunderstanding of the concept of interreligious dialogue, highly likely to be interpreted through the works of Western scholars. In fact, Muslim academics and intellectuals have extensively developed the fundamentals and notions between the science of discourse and faith based on Islamic principles in order to build a harmonious co-existence. However, there is no disputing that there is a degree of openness in interpreting a notion that leads to varied interpretations, particularly under the subjects of comparative religions.

Quite possibly, the objections are the result of personal opinions on the dialogue members who do not adhere to dialogue ethics, thus causing misconceptions in the community or among scholars. Ethical dialogue behaviors are important as these are the key to controlling and shaping religious discourse in front of the world. Therefore, it is important to get religious organisations to be involved to provide monitoring and record tracking to ensure that an interreligious dialogue abides by their religious teachings and perspectives.

A limited and rigid grasp of the concept and technique of *da'wah* also contributes to the series of criticism against Interreligious dialogue. Some argue that this type of discourse is not included under the technique of *da'wah*. Nonetheless, a cursory examination reveals that this *da'wah* is not a kind of coercion. Propositions referenced in the Qur'an (*Surah al-Baqarah*: 256):

> "There is no compulsion in religion; truly the right way has become clearly distinct from error; therefore, whoever disbelieves in the Shaitan and believes in Allah he indeed has laid hold on the firmest handle, which shall not break off, and Allah is Hearing, Knowing."

This shows the connection between *da'wah* and interreligious dialogue, that it is performed openly and without force.

Another criticism is the lack of knowledgeable dialogue members that open to discriminatory selection of dialogue panels based on age and gender. Panelists should be carefully chosen as they represent and provide arguments on behalf of their religions. Age and gender are not as important as their backgrounds are. Selection should be made based on their expertise about the topic and scope of the

discussion to ensure suitability. They must be capable of conversing calmly not provocatively, attentively, and clearly.

The absence of effective modules as guidelines is harming the practice of Interreligious dialogue. Proper modules, for instance, should be designed especially for those representing Islam to avoid misinterpretation and confusion. There is no doubt that such modules have been developed concerning the scientific gap in Interreligious dialogue, however, there are still concerns regarding interreligious disputes as well as prevarication. Thus, these loopholes need to be closed by creating more effective and comprehensive guidelines.

These are several challenges to the continuation of the practice of Interreligious dialogue in Malaysia. These criticisms came from academics and scholars who are highly reputable and have significantly contributed to the field of Islamic knowledge. Nevertheless, this researcher has discovered that there is no evidence that the practice of Interreligious dialogue contradicts with Islamic perspective. This researcher also believes that the objections stem from the misunderstanding of the importance of dialogue which is a process of identifying existing differences and calmly discussing them. Dialogue does not require all humans to be alike; but the willingness to explain and accept the differences of others and focus on their similarities.

7. Conclusion

The concerns and objections that arise must be evaluated and studied against the truth because it affects religions and beliefs. Furthermore, the obstacles to its practice must be understood in order to effectively address and overcome them. Intellectuals and religious leaders largely pioneered the science of interreligious dialogue. In this light, this research is critical in determining the validity of the criticisms directed at the Interreligious dialogue, which is mostly undertaken by elite groups with huge followers and societal influence. However, proper etiquette in dispute situations is critical so that it can be debated using scholarly arguments rather than emotions while remaining in harmony with one another. The researcher not found any evidence that shows Interreligious dialogue are born from the epistemological issues and lead to the issues and the criticisms. In reality, academics have discovered a variety of evidence demonstrating the value of interreligious

dialogue, particularly in promoting national unity. Furthermore, a study is needed to build and form a new module to complement the existing modules, which are still less published, particularly in Malaysia. Proper modules are critical for a basic guide to the dialogue participants, as well as in managing the practice of dialogue so that there is a safety net in the ocean of freedom.

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Tinkering Epistemology with Ontology: Reformulating Popper's Reformulation of the Problem of Induction with Eastern and Western Ontology

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ABSTRACT

Karl Popper thought that he had successfully resolved the philosophical problem of induction by replacing inductive logic with deductive logic in every aspect of the philosophical analysis of science. In examining Popper's approach, it may seem, however, that, instead of resolving the original problem, what he has resolved was a reformulated problem of induction. Nevertheless, by "reformulating" Popper's reformulation by using the relevant ontology from contemporary Eastern and Western philosophers, this paper maintains that this re-reformulated meta-account can be used to argue that the first impression that the problem has not been resolved can be replaced with the idea that Popper's reformulation of the problem of induction into the problem of scientific growth has its meaning in a contemporary context. The key significance of this reformulation is: By examining the paired concepts—such as "inductive inference vs. deductive inference" or "context of discovery vs. context of justification"—from the perspective that "scientific reasoning is to find a stable causal environment or situation to derive regular causal conclusions", we can then maintain that instead of regarding these concepts as mutually exclusive in the "practice of causal inquiry", it is better to assume that they have a complementary relationship—this situation manifests exactly what Popper believed: In the process of scientific inquiry, there is always a dynamic interdependence between conjecture and refutation.

1. Introduction

The problem of induction is well-known in Western philosophy history – the Classical empiricist philosopher, David Hume, once used the game of billiards as an example to present the problem in the following way: After repeatedly observing the game of billiards where a white ball hits a coloured ball many times, how do we, as observers, predict that the coloured ball will roll forward in a similar way in a similar situation in the future? According to Hume, the logical answer is that relative to the coloured ball, the white ball has its "causal power", which enables it to push the coloured ball forward; or there is a "necessary connection" or "uniformity of Nature" between the white and coloured balls resulting in the white ball necessarily connecting with the coloured ball in any similar situation. However, as an empiricist, Hume was not satisfied with the idea of "causal power", "necessary connection", or "uniformity of Nature" because these lack the empirical basis of how we experience the existence of the power exerted by "causal power". As finite knowers, how do we experience and assert that causal connections "necessarily" exist or that there is a "uniformity of Nature" which enables the necessary connection between the two balls? In contrast, Hume questioned what it is exactly that is observed during a game of billiards. He maintained that, according to our cognitive experience, what we observe is nothing more than the white ball being spatiotemporally contiguous with the coloured ball; the rolling of the white ball is prior in time to the rolling of the coloured ball; and the rolling of the white ball is "regularly associated" or "constantly connected" with the rolling of the coloured ball in all similar events. However, the three observations mentioned above still seem unable to explain why we have the feeling of "causal power", "necessary connection", or "uniformity of Nature"; or, to put it in another way, where do our sense of "causal power", "necessary connection", or "uniformity of Nature" come from? Hume maintained that this feeling or sense comes from our expectation. The next question is why we have this expectation. According to Hume, we "expect" similar events to happen again at a later moment after observing the many instances of white balls hitting coloured balls. As such, our expectations are then not brought about by causal power, necessary connection, or uniformity of Nature that are imperceptible to sensory experience, but by "custom or habit" that

we form according to the constraints of our sensory experience, that is, our custom or habit drives us to "expect" similar events happening again. (Hume, 1978a; Hume, 1978b)

Hume's approach to "psychologizing causality" is that causality, as urged by human being's custom or habits, does to a certain extent impact the psychologizing of the problem of induction which is the problem closely related to the problem of causality. Karl Popper questioned Hume's approach. According to Popper, Hume's approach does nothing more than formulate the problem of induction into the following traditional philosophical form: "What is the justification for the belief that the future will (largely) be like the past?" (Popper, 1972) However, the problem of induction expressed in this form cannot be answered because it involves a subjective and psychological concept namely, belief. This belief takes into consideration human subjective psychological expectation, custom, or habit and as such, it seems that it is impossible for us to find an "objective" criterion to resolve a "subjective" problem. For this reason, Popper suggested that a non-falsifiable problem of induction with subjective or psychological connotations should, through reformulation, be converted into a falsifiable problem with objective or logical form. Popper's idea is that if a traditional problem of induction involving subjective psychological expectation, custom, or habit can be reformulated into a testable theoretical statement with a specific regularity law, then the theoretical statement can be tested for refutation by the relevant test statement. Accordingly, the problem of induction can then be rephrased as follows: "Can the claim that a general theory with a theoretical statement be true or one that is false be justified by 'empirical reasons' through either test or observation statements?" (Popper, 1972) For Popper, the reformulated problem of induction has an objective or logical form that can be tested on empirical grounds. Furthermore, Popper presumes that there is a principle of transference, that is, the principle that what is true in logic is true in psychology. Therefore, once the reformulated problem with objective and logical form is solved, the solution can then be transferred to the traditional induction problem, which has subjective and psychological implications. In the end, the traditional induction problem can be regarded as being solved. (Popper, 1972)

The contentions of the paper are: Did Popper really solve the traditional problem of induction? Or, did he just solve the reformulated version of the problem, leaving the

original version of the problem intact? Or, did Popper solve the traditional problem of induction, but did not clearly state in what sense he did it? By closely examining Popper's approach to reformulating the problem of induction, it may first appear that this approach did not solve the problem as the process seems to replace the original problem with another. And so, it may be argued that solving a different problem does not mean resolving the original problem. This paper maintains that the first impression of the problem not being resolved can be changed if we reformulate Popper's reformulation of the problem of induction by using the relevant ontology from contemporary Eastern and Western philosophers. This re-reformulated meta-account of Popper's approach shows that Popper's reformulation did indeed solve the problem. The key significance of this re-reformulation is that from the perspective that "scientific reasoning is to find a stable causal environment or situation to derive regular causal conclusions" in regards to paired-concept such as "inductive inference vs. deductive inference" or "context of discovery vs. context of justification", we can maintain that these concepts have a complementary relationship instead of being mutually exclusive in the "practice of causal inquiry". The situation manifests exactly what Popper believed: In the process of scientific inquiry, there is always a dynamic inter-dependence between conjecture and refutation.

2. On Popper's Reformulation of the Problem of Induction

Karl Popper, who thought his "peculiar reformulation" of the traditional philosophical problem of induction was "decisive," (Popper, 1972) declared in *Objective Knowledge* that he had resolved the problem of induction and successfully replaced inductive logic with deductive logic in every aspect of philosophical analysis of science. The first part of the paper discusses how well Popper solved the traditional problem of induction and examines whether the elimination of inductive logic in philosophical analysis of science is valid.

Popper acknowledged that while he did not resolve the problem of induction as originally framed by Hume, he had addressed the problem by reformulating it. (Popper, 1972) Reformulation, as Popper emphatically pointed out, was a crucial process in solving the "traditional" problem of induction. Through reformulation, Popper was able to make testable what was previously untestable. (Popper, 1972)

The analysis of Popper's method begins with the historical background of these problems. In *Objective Knowledge*, Popper recalls how Hume raised two problems of induction and gave answers to each: (Popper, 1972)

A logical problem (H_L): Are we justified in reasoning from [repeated] instances of which we have experience to other instances [conclusions] of which we have no experience?

Hume's answer to H_L: No, however great the number of repetitions.

A psychological problem (H_{PS}): Why, nevertheless, do all reasonable people expect, and believe, that instances of which they have no experience will conform to those of which they have experience? That is, why do we have expectations in which we have great confidence?

Hume's answer to H_{PS}: Because of "custom or habit"; that is, because we are conditioned, by repetitions and by the mechanism of the association of ideas; a mechanism without which, Hume says, we could hardly survive.

These two problems and their answers had an effect on the commonsense problem of induction, which is derived from the commonsense theory of knowledge and its answer: (Popper, 1972)

Commonsense problem of induction (C_s): How can these expectations and beliefs have arisen?

Answer to C_s: Through repeated observations made in the past.

Hume's criticism on the commonsense problem of induction led to the formulation of the so-called traditional philosophical problem of induction (T_r): (Popper, 1972)

The traditional philosophical problem of induction (T_r): What is the justification for the belief that the future will be (largely) like the past? Or, perhaps, what is the justification for inductive inferences?

When Popper tried to solve the T_r problem, he found it to be insoluble. T_r was wrongly formulated, he argued, because it was framed in subjective or psychological terms. In addition, the problem presupposed that a "regularity" existed. From

Popper's viewpoint, it was impossible to find an "objective" criterion to consider a "subjective" problem. As such, Popper suggested that T_r be treated as a psychological problem concerning the acquisition of knowledge rather than as a problem of logic. (Popper, 1972)

Popper traced the problem of T_r to Hume's H_L and H_{PS} formulations and argued that it was H_{PS} and Hume's answer to it that constituted the insolubility of T_r. (Popper, 1972) Popper decided to ignore H_{PS} and deal only with H_L. He justified abandoning the H_{PS} concept by arguing that if something is true in logic, it is also true in psychology — the so-called principle of transference. (Popper, 1972) Popper reasoned that because there is no way to solve T_r (because of its "subjective, psychological, unjustifiable" nature), he had to go back to its origin — Hume's two problems — to see whether they could be solved. Because H_{PS} is the insoluble essence of T_r, it should be ignored in favour of H_L. If H_L could be solved as Popper believed, the probable answer for H_{PS} would be established through the principle of transference. (Popper, 1972)

While Popper agreed with Hume's answer to H_L, he objected the formulation of H_{PS}. In formulating H_{PS}, Popper argued that Hume presupposed "a process of valid inference" for an unjustifiable problem, "look[ing] upon these as 'rational' *mental processes*." (Popper, 1972) Implicit in Popper's argument is the belief that the formulation of H_L was somewhat influenced by the inherent inclination that human beings have "expectations" as per H_{PS} and its answer. (Popper, 1972) Thus, to lessen the influence of H_{PS} and make H_L testable, Popper "restate[d] Hume's H_L in an objective or logical mode of speech." (Popper, 1972) As a result, we have Popper's engineering of reformulation — an approach to turn an untestable logical problem into one that is testable. (Popper, 1972) Popper renamed this reformulated, testable problem L_1. (Popper, 1972)

> L_1: Can the claim that an explanatory universal theory is true be justified by "empirical reasons"; that is, by assuming the truth of certain test statements or observation statements (which, it may be said, are "based on experience")?

Table 1: Comparison of terms in Hume's H_L or T_r and Popper's L_1 (Popper, 1972)

Hume's H_L or T_r (subjective terms) (before reformulation)		Popper's L_1 (objective terms) (after reformulation)
Belief (<u>instances of which we have no experience</u>)	$\rightarrow$	Statements, <u>explanatory universal theory</u>
Impression (instances of which we have experience)	$\rightarrow$	Observation statement, test statement
Justification of a <u>belief</u>	$\rightarrow$	Justification of <u>the claim that a theory</u>

Table 2: Comparison of statements of Hume's H_L and Popper's L_1 (Popper, 1972)

Hume		Popper
Instances of which we have experience [impression]	$\rightarrow$	Test statements (observation statements, basic statements) = singular statements describing observable events
<u>Instances of which we have no experience</u> [belief]	$\rightarrow$	<u>Explanatory universal theories</u>
H_L	$\rightarrow$	L_1
Are we justified in reasoning from [repeated] instances of which we have experience to other instances [conclusions] of which we have no experience?	$\rightarrow$	Can the claim that an explanatory universal theory is true be justified by "empirical reasons"; that is, by assuming the truth of certain test statements or observation statements (which, it may be said, are "based on experience")?
[justification of a belief]	$\rightarrow$	[justification of the claim that a theory is true]

From Popper's point of view, H_L had been successfully reformulated into an objectively testable new mode, L_1. However, he noticed that L_1 is a problem that can never be answered because a theory by any number of empirical reasons cannot be "verified" or "confirmed". On the other hand, a theory can be "falsified" by introducing a single contradictory empirical reason. Thus, L_1 can be reformulated into a more general form, L_2. This second reformulation is the so-called problem of induction: (Popper, 1972)

L_2: Can the claim that an explanatory universal theory is true or that it is false be justified by "empirical reasons"; that is, can the assumption of the truth of test statements justify either the claim that a universal theory is true or the claim that it is false?

We can learn something interesting about L_2 by reviewing Popper's tetradic schema of the growth of scientific knowledge: (Popper, 1972)

$$P_1 \to TT \to EE \to P_2$$

where P_1 = Problem 1, TT = Tentative Theory, EE = Error Elimination, and P_2 = Problem 2, a new problem that arises when TT cannot pass the test during the EE stage.

From a semantic point of view, L_2 obviously falls into the TT $\to$ EE stage, whereas T_r or Hume's H_L is in the initial stage, that is, $P_1 \to TT$. It appears that Popper moved the (original) problem (of induction) from the $P_1 \to TT$ stage (the traditional problem of induction) to the TT $\to$ EE stage (what Popper called "the problem of induction"). Then, the immediate question is: why did Popper do this?

Recall that Popper had repeatedly claimed that the formulation of the problem of induction (L_2) was different from that of the traditional problem of induction (T_r) or Hume's H_L. We already understood that L_2 and T_r were derived from Hume's H_L. As such, we hold the idea that L_2, T_r, and H_L represent the same problem in different formulations.

In order to answer as to why Popper moved the problem of induction from the $P_1 \to TT$ stage to the TT $\to$ EE stage, let us return to Table 2, paying particular attention to the three underlined terms: "instances of which we have no experience," "belief," and "explanatory universal theories." In Popper's view, an untestable, subjective problem should be reformulated into a testable, objective problem. Thus, "instances of which we have no experience" in H_L should be replaced by "explanatory universal theories" in L_2. (Popper, 1972) In addition, Popper argued that the term "belief" in T_r (as seen in Table 1) equalled to "instances of which we have no experience" in H_L. As such, based on Popper's thinking, if we can solve L_2, then there will be no problem in H_L, and through the principle of transference, the answer to H_{PS} will be valid and T_r will no longer be a problem. (Popper, 1972)

How well did Popper solve the traditional problem of induction? If we accept Popper's idea of reformulation, it's fair to say that he did indeed resolve the problem of induction. He transformed Hume's H_L into L_1 (verification form) and L_2 (falsification form) and asserted that if we could resolve L_2, then Hume's H_L would be resolved. Popper did provide the answer to the problem of L_2 because we can falsify any theory that contradicts empirical cases. In this sense, we can say that Popper's strategy did solve the problem of induction in his well-designed problem-resolving structure.
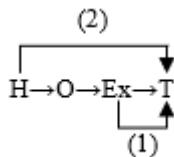
3. From the Method of Learning by Repetition of Observation to the Method of Learning by Trial and Error

Although Popper's strategy seems to have solved the problem of induction in his well -designed problem-solving structure, the first impression of Popper's approach is that it did not solve the problem. This is because the function of the reformulation process is to change the original problem into another one. As such, it can be argued that solving a different problem does not help in resolving the original one. In order to defend the adequacy of Popper's approach in resolving the problem, we then need to come up with a meta-account in order to be able to interpret and justify that Popper's approach did indeed solve the problem.

In order to develop a meta-account that can be used to reinterpret and justify what Popper did in his engineering of reformulation, let's return to Popper's tetradic schema of the growth of scientific knowledge: $P_1 \rightarrow TT \rightarrow EE \rightarrow P_2$. Popper noticed that his schema could not explain the dynamics of stage $P_1 \rightarrow TT$. Therefore, he expressed a strong attitude against inductive inference: "As against all this, I happen to believe that in fact we *never* draw inductive inferences or make use of what are now called 'inductive procedures'… …The method of learning by trial and error has been mistaken for the method of learning by repetition." (Popper, 2015) Thus, Popper refused to accept inductive inference as a probable method of acquiring knowledge at the $P_1 \rightarrow TT$ stage and wanted to replace inductive logic with deductive logic instead. (Popper, 1972)

Popper offered two reasons for this. First, he wanted to replace the unsound, closed system of inductive inference. Popper pointed out that "experience results from

learning through repeated observation—[it] is a closed system of prejudices where critical examination is usually resisted and often resented." (Popper, 2015) Popper's viewpoint of the traditional inductive schema can be illustrated as follows:

(1) Verification (confirmation)
(2) A theory-pregnant process (we can treat it as the traditional problem of induction)

Figure 1: Traditional Inductive Schema

where H = Hypothesis, O = Observations, Ex = Experiments, and T = Theory established. Note that this model includes verification or confirmation and that the process is "theory-pregnant." We can treat it as the traditional problem of induction.
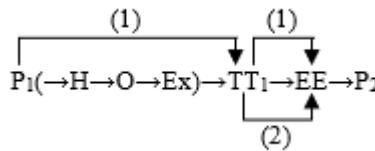
As any hypothesis is proposed with a problem in mind, I suggest that we place P (problem) before H in the schema. Thus, the complete schema will look like this:

$$P \to H \to O \to Ex \to T$$

This schema is a restatement of a part of Popper's schema—namely, the $P_1 \to TT$ stage. Popper argued that this part of his schema was established through a process of confirmation that lacks an objective criterion, which is impossible to attain, to test its validity. As such, the validity of this entire "theory-pregnant" process cannot be justified, and the growth of knowledge impossible. It is thus a close-ended system. (Schilpp, 1974)

Popper's second reason was that if inductive inference was rejected, an open-ended growth theory of scientific knowledge would then be possible. Popper said that "if we [give up the justification of inductive inference], we also become aware of the logical gap between induction by repetition and method of trial and error." (Popper, 2015) He concluded that "since reason and logic tell us that, rationally, that there is no induction nor justification, only criticism and elimination, it is then a good idea to see whether those facts of scientific discovery cannot be interpreted—or perhaps,
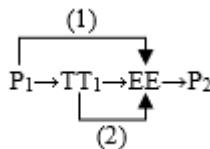
better interpreted—as procedures of trial and error." (Popper, 2015) With these statements, Popper technically transferred the problem from stage $P_1 \rightarrow TT$ to stage $TT \rightarrow EE$. As such, T_r was avoided, and Popper's tetradic schema completed—ruled by deductive inference, that is, by critical rational approach. (Popper, 2015; Popper, 1972) Contrast in Popper's tetradic schema:

$$P_1(\rightarrow H \rightarrow O \rightarrow Ex) \rightarrow TT_1 \rightarrow EE \rightarrow P_2$$

(1) Deductive inference
(2) Falsification

Figure 2: Popper's Tetradic Schema

Or concisely,

$$P_1 \rightarrow TT_1 \rightarrow EE \rightarrow P_2$$
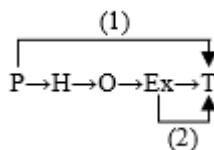
(1) Deductive inference
(2) Falsification

Figure 3: Condensed Popper's Tetradic Schema

with an inductivist's schema:

$$P \rightarrow H \rightarrow O \rightarrow Ex \rightarrow T$$

(1) Deductive inference
(2) Falsification

Figure 4: An inductivist's Schema

It is clear that Popper was smart enough to manipulate the appearance of T_r, or

Hume's H_L, by his own admissible technique, that is reformulation, in order to reach his soluble conclusion. In addition, Popper maintained that the justification problem of inductive inference should not be regarded as a psychological and historical question, but instead be regarded as a logical, methodological question of validity. (Popper, 1972) Thus, he was able to ignore inductive inference, replace it with deductive inference, and complete his schema of the growth of scientific knowledge. (Popper, 1972)

Popper's attitude toward T_r is acceptable because we cannot establish whether inductive inference is valid. The concept of falsification at the TT $\rightarrow$ EE stage, of which Popper emphasized, is an important part of scientific research as it plays a critical role in the trial-and-error process. Popper's rejection of the inductive method may, however, invoke criticism that his rejection does not consider the real situation of scientific research.

Defenders of the inductive method may maintain that what is certain is that an inductive conclusion inferred from true premises can neither be justified as true nor false. However, it generally provides more information than only premises. For example, a set of data about the movement of a planet cannot, by itself, give us any ideas about the phenomenon. However, with an explanatory universal theory about the revolving behaviour of the planet based on the operation of inductive inference, scientists will not only be able to explain the phenomenon but also predict the planet's future behaviour. For these defenders, this is the function of inductive inference, that is to expand our knowledge and predict an event in the future. As there is no guarantee that the newly established theory is true, we must test our theory against the empirical phenomena. It is through this testing procedure of trial and error, as maintained by Popper, our knowledge can be developed steadily.

The concept of falsification at the TT $\rightarrow$ EE stage, which Popper emphasized, is an important part of scientific research as it plays a critical role in the trial-and-error process. Despite this important contribution, Popper's rejection of inductive inference is, however, dubious. For the defenders of inductive method, Popper's rejection may be a "confusion of context of discovery and context of justification." (Reichenbach, 1963) It is generally claimed that deductive inference (or falsification) is important in the context of justification, whereas inductive inference

(or confirmation) is crucial in the context of discovery. Therefore, there should not be any substitution between deductive inference (or falsification) and inductive inference (or confirmation), rather these two inferences should be regarded as being supplementary to each other. Our immediate query then is: Did Popper's rejection of inductive inference depict his confusion between context of discovery and context of justification? Or, is it possible that a new meta-account can be provided so that Popper's rejection of inductive inference can be reinterpreted as having its pivotal function in constructing his image of scientific reasoning and the growth of scientific knowledge?

4. An Ontological Meta-Account for Reinterpreting Popper's Reformulation: Reformulating Popper's Reformulation with Eastern and Western Ontology

Although Popper's rejection of inductive inference from scientific research may seem dubious, his way of re-characterizing the nature of scientific reasoning is insightful, in that it may bring up an ontological implication. What then is the ontological implication? Recall that Popper pointed out that if scientific reasoning was to be characterized as an inductive inference, which in turn is to be characterized as a method of learning by repetition, we never conduct scientific inference. According to Popper, the method which is adopted to conduct scientific reasoning should in fact be regarded as a method of learning by trial and error. By re-characterizing the nature of scientific reasoning in this way, scientific reasoning is no longer to be regarded as a closed system with theory-pregnant prejudices where critical examination is usually resisted. It is, instead, to be regarded as an open-ended process of theory growth.

It may seem that it is Popper's methodological insistence in holding that scientific reasoning is a method of trial and error which brings him to the conclusion that the development of scientific knowledge is an on-going, open-ended process. Our immediate query is: In addition to this, is there an ontological background or reason to further support this conclusion? In the following section, we show that some contemporary Chinese and Western philosophical ideas about the ontological structure of the world can be of help in providing such support.

Let's first examine how Yuelin Jin, a prominent Chinese philosopher in the twentieth

century, applied an ontological approach when commenting on Hume's solution to the problem of induction, which is the origin of Popper's criticism.[1] (Chen, 2020) According to Jin's analysis, when Hume encountered the problem of inconsistency between the conclusion of inductive inference and facts, he did not return to the "assumptions" in the premises of inference to solve the problem. Instead, he resorted to the "habit" to solve the problem. However, the reason as to why Hume replaced the "principle of the uniformity of Nature" with "habit" as the key premise of inductive inference is mainly because Hume, when discussing the "necessary connection," did not distinguish between the theoretical and empirical realms. From a theoretical realm perspective, premises and conclusions are concepts set by the theory using assumptions and hypotheses. Therefore, the "connection" between premises and conclusion is inevitable and necessary because of the theoretical settings. Meanwhile, from an empirical realm perspective, we regard the premises as cause and conclusion as effect. As such, the connection between premises and conclusion can be regarded as the process of cause and effect, which can also be considered in terms of "the flow of time," especially "time with content". Since "time with content" contains various "particular changes" and "movements of all things," the relationship between cause and effect has no necessity, and neither does the relationship between the premises and conclusion of inductive inference. It is because of the uncertainty of the premises and conclusion of inductive inference in the empirical realm that made Hume, an empiricist, reject the "principle of uniformity of Nature" as it lacks empirical content as the premise of inductive inference, instead replacing the principle with "habit," which is derived from experience. With respect to this, Jin mentioned: "If anything characterizes Hume's philosophy, it is that he emphasizes theory, while at the same time not considering his philosophy to be rational. When Hume encountered difficult problems, rather than returning to assumptions as a way of solving the problems, he introduced 'habit', which lacks any theoretical basis." (Jin, 2005)

Jin's idea that Nature contains various "particular changes" and "movements of all things" and as such, the inductive inference of Nature's operation is very often inaccurate is echoed by contemporary Western philosopher Nicholas Rescher. According to Rescher, there are two opposite ontic status: (1) Nature is always

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[1] Some of the ideas expressed here about Yuelin Jin's criticism of Hume's solution to the problem of induction refer to and are paraphrased from the author's previous article. (Chen, 2020)

changing; and (2) Nature is not actively changing, but human explorers are not exploring it thoroughly and thus gradually reveal the full picture in the step-by-step exploration. No matter which status Nature is in, it seems to constrain the development of science, making the situation point to "the imperfection of science" which is believed to come from "human cognitive incompleteness" that can be traced back to "inexhaustibility of Nature". In response to this, Nicholas Rescher commented in his 2000 book, *Nature and Understanding: The Metaphysics and Method of Science*, "A Law of Natural Complexity so operates as to render nature pervasively complex and inexhaustible in its details. And this means that our characterization of the world's make-up and modus operandi can never be carried through to completion. Our attempts at description can never exhaust the realm of natural fact. Nor can we manage to arrive at a final and definitive account of the law structure of the world." (Rescher, 2000)

In Rescher's statement above on the relationship between "(the inquirer's) understanding (of Nature)" and "Nature" is that when our understanding of Nature does not align with the related phenomena that Nature manifests, it would be better to reflect on what Nature, with its infinite possibilities of change, is telling us instead of just blaming it on the inaccuracies of inferential accounts used to understand Nature, in order to further explore what is currently dealt with and what can be revised in terms of inferential accounts of the real case. If "understanding Nature" is interpreted as "understanding Nature with theory", then what is the "dynamic development" of the extremely complex mutual relationship between "theory" and "Nature" that Rescher envisages? In his revised edition book, *The Limits of Science*, in 1999, Rescher described the dynamic development as follows: "Scientific theorizing is an inductive projection from the available data. But data availability is bound to improve with the changing state of the technological art — engendering a dynamism that ongoingly destabilizes the existing state of science so as to engender greater sophistication. The increasing complexity of our world picture is a striking phenomenon throughout this process. It is so marked, in fact, that natural science has in recent years been virtually disintegrating before our very eyes. And this phenomenon characterizes all of science—the human sciences included. Indeed, complexification and its concomitant destabilization are by no means phenomena confined to the domain of science—they pervade the entire range of our knowledge." (Rescher, 1999)

Do continuous interactive dialogue and dynamic dialectical development of theories (or inferential accounts) and Nature mean that a theory (or an inferential account) of Nature can never be judged as appropriate because of the extreme uncertainty of the state of Nature and the inexhaustibility of its changing states? Based on this, Jin suggested that any solution to the Humean problem of induction, or the problem of inductive inference in general, should use ontological thinking. In Jin's ontological magnum opus, *On Dao*, Jin provided an ontological principle for explaining the change of an individual, which in turn can be used to resolve the Humean problem of induction: "In the changes and movements of individuals, regularity is certain, and the situation in process has no necessary point of arrival." (Jin, 1987; Zinda, 2012) According to this principle, Jin points out that "regularity is certain" meaning that there is always a regularity between two relevant objects or two events—let's call it the regularity between cause and effect. The term "regularity in certain" means that no matter what *concrete content* the relation between cause and effect *would happen to* possess, the *abstract* regular relationship of "cause and effect happen one after another" *would necessarily* remain regardless of the situation. What then does Jin mean by "the situation in process has no necessary point of arrival"? For Jin, it is *likely* that while Nature will bring about certain situations in the process of things in operation and change, the situation is *not necessarily* to arrive. Once the situation does arrive, with the help of the situation, it can achieve the generation of a "regularity". What kind of situation in the process can achieve the generation of the "regularity"? A "stable situation or environment" is the guarantee that a "regular relationship," that is a "regularity," can be generated.[2] (Chen, 2015)

Jin's conception of the situation in process is echoed by contemporary Western philosopher of science Nancy Cartwright. In her 2021 book, (Cartwright, 2019) Cartwright, like Jin, also believed that the nature of Nature is fickle and capricious, but she maintained that while Nature itself has a changeable character, Nature is also an artful modeler. Cartwright argued that the key to understanding Nature is

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[2] The concept of "a stable situation or environment" is similar with what French sinologist François Jullien called "shi"—a Chinese ontological concept about condition, circumstance, power, and potential. According to Jullien, shi means, on the one hand, the disposition of things—it refers to the condition, position, circumstance, configuration, arrangement, or structure of things. On the other hand, it also means force, power, potential, and the movement of things. It is obvious that, by this characterization, shi carries both static and dynamic connotations.

that Nature itself exhibits stable phenomena which allows us to recognize it. How can Nature manifest these stable phenomena? While Nature encompasses everything, the existence of these phenomena seems to be chaotic and haphazard. Nevertheless, if these phenomena remain in a stable environment, they will develop a stable mutual relationship between them, that is, under a stable environment, the causal relationship between phenomena can be generated. It is through this that Cartwright sees Nature as an artful modeler as Nature is able, with an artisan-like proficiency, to take what it has "within a certain range" and use the "well-shielded" method to arrange things in an ingenious way, thus allowing them to create repetitive phenomena that we perceive to be repeatable and reproducible without the interference of other things. Here, the so-called "a certain range" refers to a certain domain of Nature where certain things are arranged in a clever way in this specially shielded and stable domain. It is obvious that what Cartwright called the stable environment is in fact Jin's stable situation in process.

Regardless of Cartwright or Jin, it seems that as long as we, as limited cognisors, still have access to the operation of Nature, then it is for us to explore the causal structure which is constituted by various relevant things and is stable enough to produce regular causal laws. How can we then proceed with such exploration? We should emulate Nature by making exquisite models that imitate Nature to produce causal phenomena that we can recognize. The objective is to reproduce Nature's causal structures that give birth to stable causal phenomena in these well-made models, after which we can then further test whether these models that are loaded with information about the causal structure can lead to identifiable causal phenomena (or causal laws). If the models lead to identifiable target phenomena, then the models are appropriate, and the related theory that implies the models is also considered appropriate. In short, the way we understand Nature is just as Cartwright advocated: we humans, as limited cognisors, should learn to understand Nature by "modelling Nature artfully", because Nature itself is an artful modeler.

How then are the discussions on Jin's idea about stable causal structure, Rescher's idea about the inexhaustibility of Nature's complexity, and Cartwright's idea about Nature as an artful modeler relevant to Popper's reformulation of the problem of induction? According to Popper, the main content of the reformulated problem of induction is the issue of testing whether an explanatory universal theory with a

theoretical statement of the phenomenon in question is true or false in the face of an empirical evidence phrased into a test statement. The theoretical statement of a theory is generally, as maintained by Jin, derived from a well-contrived theoretical model that mimics the causal structure of a specific part of the world from which the phenomenon in question is from. If the result is that the theoretical statement is congruent with the test statement, then the explanatory universal theory is tentatively accepted. Conversely, if the result is that the theoretical statement is incongruent with the test statement, the theory is falsified. In the former case of theory-acceptance, the causal structure specified in the theoretical model can be regarded as truly capturing the genuine causal structure in question, then the theory containing such a causal structure is accepted. In the latter case of theory-falsification, the causal structure specified in the theoretical model does not capture the genuine causal structure and the theory containing such a causal structure is thus rejected. In both cases, it all shows that Popper's deductive account can do justice to a theory by referring to empirical evidence. However, as maintained by Rescher, Nature is always changing or is too complicated to be comprehended all at once. Therefore, our attempts at describing it never exhausts the realm of natural fact. What we can do is, as was indicated by Popper, to then keep on using the method of trial and error to conduct a series of piecemeal tests to try identifying the underlying causal structure of a phenomenon in question. And, yes, as maintained by Cartwright, if we are lucky enough, we will be able to hit the targeted causal structure from which we learn how to model Nature artfully.

5. Conclusion

Referring to Jin's criticism of Hume's solution to the problem of induction, the key point is that Hume did not distinguish between the theoretical and empirical realms of his discussion when he discussed about why there is no necessity between the premises and conclusion of inductive inference. Due to this negligence, Hume could only resort to the "habit" to solve the problem of induction, which is exactly the reason that triggered Popper to proceed with his reformulation engineering to replace inductive inference with deductive inference in scientific reasoning. However, the reality is that we develop our theories by inductive inference, and we justify them by deductive inference. As such, we need both inferences in the construction of our theories. When we are in the empirical realm, it means that we face the chaotic Nature and thus need to apply inductive inference to *conjecture*

what Nature's causal structure is. Conversely, when we are in the theoretical realm, it means that we are fortunate enough to mimic Nature's exact causal structure so as to smoothly derive the causal relation from the structure to *justify* whether the derived relation is the right conclusion. In any scientific or everyday endeavour, we make progress through *conjecture*, which is characterized by the process of hypothesis, observation, experiment, and confirmation. We *refute* mistaken conjecture via the process of falsification. Our system of knowledge is established through the interaction between induction and deduction, which are, once again, to borrow Popper's words, conjecture and refutation.

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Exploring the Perception of Parents on the Participation of Learners with Special Educational Needs in a Virtual Talent Show

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ABSTRACT

There is a paucity of research that focuses on understanding the perception of parents in supporting the talent development of their children with Special Educational Needs (SEN). Considering the gap in the literature, participants in this study are purposely sampled from the parents whose children with SEN participated in a virtual talent show (VTS) organised by National Association of Special Education, Malaysia (NASE) during the pandemic lockdown. A total of six parents responded to the survey questionnaires and participated in the semi-structured interviews which were transcribed verbatim. The thematic data analysis revealed three categories: 1)Parents as partners, 2)Roles of NGOs and 3)Resources. This study contributes to the literature from parents' perception on how they provided exposure in VTS that impacts the development of their children. The findings also provide new insight into what drives the parents into enrolling their children in VTS and revealed how parents agreed that participation in VTS provided positive impact and progress for their children. In addition, the result from this study highlights the positive perception of parents regarding the participation of learners with SEN in VTS. It underscores the importance of NGOs in providing opportunities for their children's involvement and emphasises the need to address the barriers and challenges that exist. Additionally, the study demonstrates that parents strongly desire more NGOs to offer opportunities for their children with SEN to be involved in talent show performances. Despite the barriers and challenges faced, parents recognise the value and potential impact of such experiences on their children's overall

development. The findings contribute to the existing knowledge and call for further research to promote inclusivity and support the talent development of learners with SEN. It also demonstrated that parents want more NGOs to provide the opportunity for their learners with SEN to be involved in more talent shows performances, despite the barriers and challenges that arise. Future study could explore strategies to address the identified barriers and challenges and evaluate the long-term effects of participation on the well-being and self-esteem of learners with SEN. The suggestions for future studies aim to inform the development of more inclusive practices and policies that support the talent development and empowerment of learners with SEN in talent show settings.

Keywords: parents' perceptions, learners with SEN, virtual talent show, pandemic

1. Introduction

The outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic across the world has profoundly impacted many aspects of life, including the opportunity for talent show performances and learners with Special Educational Needs (SEN) in Malaysia is not an exception to the impact. Previous studies have demonstrated how sedentary lifestyles during the lockdown can lead to negative consequences, more particularly on the quality of life (QoL) of learners with SEN. Furthermore, according to Yarimkaya and Esenturk (2020), being locked down at home for a long period of time may result in distress and anxiety for learners with SEN which can also cause more severe mental health issues. A study by Esentürk (2020) also stated how parents of learners with SEN perceived the duration of the quarantine process as a factor of their increased anxiety levels. Hence, according to the European WHO, implementation of activities are highly recommended as an effort to protect any individuals with or without disabilities from possible risks of mental health and to improve their QoL due to sedentary life during the lockdown (EWHO 2020). Moreover, Healy et al., (2018) stated that participation in activities are beneficial and advantageous both physically and mentally for learners with SEN. Furthermore, according to Singleton and Darcy (2013), the United Nations Conventions of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

(United Nations, 2006) has built the foundations for the implementation of inclusion that includes other aspects of life, namely culture and leisure. Meanwhile, one of the major tasks of Malaysia Ministry of Education (MOE) in an effort to increase the quality of learners with SEN, is to ensure the objectives in the Malaysia Education Blueprint 2013-2025 (MEB 2013- 2025) are achieved. However, Rosmalily and Woollard (2019) stated that the effort in improving the QoL for learners with SEN in Malaysia is a continuous and ongoing journey for the Ministry of Education (MoE). That being said, not many platforms and opportunities were given for them to showcase their talents, particularly during the lockdown.

Nevertheless, despite the lockdown, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in Australia and New Zealand, for instance, have each organised their own virtual talent show (VTS) for their communities. According to Newsdesk of Australia (2021, October 6) the VTS organised had lifted up the spirit of the residents there despite no prizes being offered. Additionally, as for Te Ao- Maori News, (2022, November 21), the VTS organised was specifically for people who do not have the confidence as it provides platforms for them "to put their best foot forward". As a result, it is found that both efforts carried out by the countries have provided joy as well as opportunities for talent enhancement in their respective communities. However, learners with SEN, do not have the same opportunity to maximise their talents and develop to their full potential due to low expectations and a lack of consideration for or understanding of children's rights (MacKenzie et al., 2020). Further affecting the problem is a disregard for their rights as individuals, which prevents them from enjoying the same chances and benefits as their peers who are not disabled.These difficulties have significant effects for learners with SEN. They are unable to completely explore and develop their talents without equal opportunities, which can cause them to feel excluded, frustrated, and unappreciated. Their entire wellbeing and sense of self-worth may suffer due to the society's and the educational system's poor understanding and support (Healy et al., 2018).

Figure 1 demonstrates the integration of two influential models, the Social Cognitive Theory (SCT) and the Ecological Systems Model, in understanding the factors that shape the participation of learners with SEN in a VTS organised by National Association of Special Education (NASE), Malaysia from the perspectives of parents. The figure depicts the interconnectedness of these models, highlighting the complex

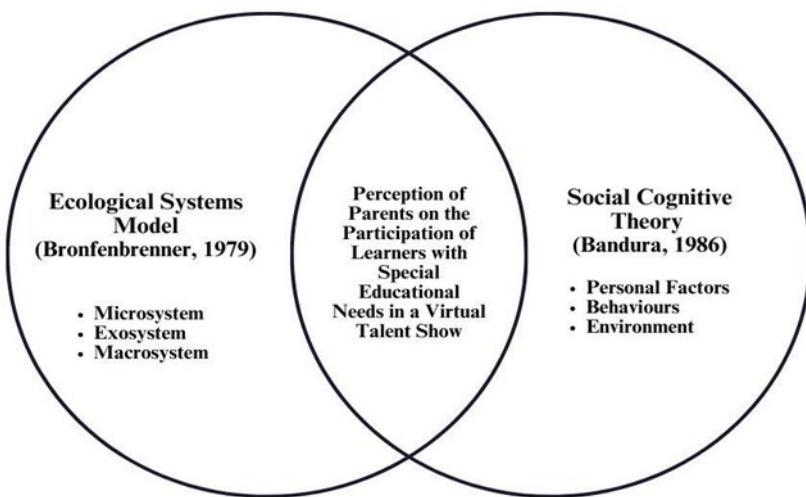interplay between personal factors, behaviours, and the environmental context.

Figure 1: Ecological Perspective on the Participation of Learners with SEN in VTS

The Social Cognitive Theory, as proposed by Bandura (1986), emphasises the interaction between personal factors, behaviours, and the environment. In the context of the VTS organised by NASE, personal factors play a significant role as perceived by parents in influencing their children's participation. These personal factors encompass the beliefs, attitudes, self-efficacy, motivation, and cognitive processes of both the learners and their parents. They shape how parents perceive their children's abilities, interests, and potential contributions to the talent show. Additionally, the behaviours exhibited by the learners, as observed by parents, impact their active involvement and engagement in the VTS.

The Ecological Systems Model, developed by Bronfenbrenner (1979), expands the understanding of the learners' participation by examining the broader ecological context, including the parents' perspectives. The environment encompasses various systems, including the microsystem, exosystem and macrosystem as experienced and influenced by parents. The microsystem represents the immediate environment

directly influencing the learners, such as their family, school, peers, and community. The exosystem involves external influences that indirectly affect the learners, such as policies, media, and the role of NASE, the NGO organising the talent show. The macrosystem encompasses the broader cultural, societal, and political values and beliefs that shape the talent show's context. By integrating the Social Cognitive Theory and the Ecological Systems Model, this figure provides a comprehensive framework to understand the personal factors, behaviours, and ecological context influencing the participation of learners with SEN in a VTS organised by NASE, as seen through the perspectives of parents. It underscores the importance of considering both individual characteristics and the broader environmental influences, as perceived by parents, in promoting their children's active engagement and empowerment within this inclusive setting.

With reference to Norqobilova (2022), social talent becomes an excellent platform in the development of relationships with others in addition to it becoming a necessary circumstance towards the accomplishment and the development of other social skills. Besides, according to Jarosewich and Stocking (2003), participation in a talent search offers the opportunity to learn about one's own abilities, while Horowitz (2017) highlighted that the developmental opportunities and potential of children, with or without disabilities in social domain can be achieved through arts as it provides the mechanism for their creative expression of ideas and feelings. In a study involving groups of diverse children by Amabile and Kramer (2012), it is found that people are more creative when they are highly encouraged by interest and enjoyment, while Gruber (1982), stated that the development of any talent requires considerable amount of attention and nurturing.

Compared to the school-based programs, previous studies have provided indications on how outside-of-school setting and learning through parental enhancement plays a more essential role in the talent development of children (Olszewski-Kubilius et al., 2004). Parenting is one of the most prominent factors, particularly during the early years of childhood, as it contributes directly to the talent performance, development of children and QoL (Freeman, 2001) while Olszewski-Kubilius (2021) confirmed that family plays pivotal roles in influencing the talent development of their children. Hence, it is significant to make parents understand the roles they play in their children's development that critically affect the fruition of talent. Similarly, the

positive effect of parental support for achievement through enrichment in the home has also been discussed in literature on talent development (Subotnik and Steiner, 1994).

A study by Akoto et al., (2022) indicated that the synergy between learners with SEN and their immediate environment can give a prediction of what would happen in the future. Therefore, according to Stanley and Kuo (2022), by applying the Bronfenbrenner's socio-ecological systems theory, stakeholders understanding can be obtained specifically on how the internal and external factors can be impactful towards a learners' overall performance as well as in raising the awareness of families and communities on their roles. More particularly, the microsystem which is the first system, where the child and their immediate environments, namely the families and communities are focused and further elaborated on. In this study the Brofenbrenner's theory was applied in portraying the significance of the involvement of NGOs in bridging the gap between learners with SEN and their participation in talent show performances. A study by Low et al., (2020) has found that, in order to assist learners' social and psychological development, partnership between parents, schools, and communities which include NGOs must be established.

NGOs are playing an increasingly significant role in raising greater awareness, initiating, and facilitating social change processes which emphasise equity and inclusive human development (Yan, Lin and Clarke, 2018). NASE is an NGO which firmly believes in equal access for all, including learners with SEN through its effort in organising conferences, workshops, dissemination of published materials, and social events (NASE President's Message, n.d.) Since regular talent show performances were interrupted during lockdown, virtual talent shows (VTS) were first launched by NASE in 2020, followed by another one in 2021. Through VTS, talent videos submitted were shared on the social media platform of NASE as well as to the organisers of International Special Education Exhibition (iSEE) of 2020 and 2021. According to Patel (2017), media plays an important role in the dissemination of information, knowledge, imparting education and creating awareness among the masses, hence in its opening statement, the President of NASE highlighted, through the implementation of VTS, the talent of learners with SEN are acknowledged, recognised and celebrated globally, without barriers or limitation of physical and local interferences. Although VTS was organised virtually, the impact it had on the

global audience was tremendous with a great amount of support and encouragement. On top of that, the number of participants in 2021 has increased with participants from other Southeast Asia countries, namely the Philippines as more parents become more aware of the significance of their child's involvement, the exposure as well as the influence NASE has towards the community of SEN. Table 1 demonstrates the differences of VTS videos submitted, categories of participants and talent showcased in VTS organised in 2020 and 2021.

Table 1: Differences of Participation in VTS between 2020 and 2021

Year	VTS Videos Submitted	Categories of Disabilities	Talent Showcased	Total (*f*)
2020	30	3 (autism, down syndrome, learning disabilities)	10 (singing, dancing, role playing, playing musical instruments, poetry recitation, magic show, martial art performance, baking, Quran memorisation, motivational speech)	
2021	34 (including international participation)	5 (autism, down syndrome, learning disabilities, deaf and visual impairment)	11 (singing, dancing, cooking, role playing, painting, playing musical instruments, gymnastic performance, performing balloon sculpture, storytelling, pantomime, expressive dancing)	
		Increased of VTS videos submitted (2020-2021)		4
		Increased of categories of disabilities (2020-2021)		2
		Increased of categories of talent showcased (2020-2021)		1

1.1. Research Questions

These are the research questions that guided the study:

1. How do parents perceive their children's involvement in the NASE VTS?
2. What are parents' perspectives on the involvement of the community in encouraging the talent development for learners with SEN?
3. What are the challenges and issues faced by the parents in the participation of their children with SEN in VTS?

2. Procedures

The researcher emailed the intended letter to the President and Secretary of NASE to request for their permission to obtain contact details of the participants of VTS organised by NASE. Once ethical approval from NASE was obtained, the researcher contacted the parents and emailed them the questionnaires via Google Form. With their consent, consequently, dates and times were set for online interview sessions with each of them individually.

2.1. Participants

The participants in this case study consisted of six parents of children with SEN who participated in the Virtual Talent Show (VTS) organised by NASE in categories namely singing, dancing, and playing musical instruments. The participants breakdown as two fathers and four mothers. In terms of educational background, five parents have a degree and one parent holds a PhD. All of the parents are working in the government sector, with one parent each from Pahang, Sabah, Pulau Pinang, Perak, Kedah and Kuala Lumpur. Participants answered survey questions on their perceptions towards talent shows in general as well as their children's participation in the VTS organised by NASE specifically. The survey questions were also used to address the parents' decision to enroll their children in the talent show organised by NASE. The interview questionnaires used in the study, as demonstrated in Table 2, were semi-structured.

2.2. Data Collection

This study employs qualitative design with a case study method. Semi structured interviews with parents were conducted online with approximately 60 minutes individually for each session. In order to overcome the language barriers, the

interview sessions were conducted in Malay language. In the study, the data obtained from the participants was analysed using the thematic analysis method. The interview text was transcribed verbatim and then translated into English. Interview data were triangulated with member checking and follow-up conversations. Additionally, in order to eliminate biases, this study included data that was obtained without judgments and participants were also given the opportunity to review the results from the data collected. For data triangulation, content analysis method was used to analyse the talent videos obtained from the participants of VTS.

2.3. Instrument

A survey, consisting of 15 questions, was disseminated to the parents of the participants of NASE. The first section comprises ten demographic questions, such as parent ethnicity and educational background, while the second section of the survey comprises five questions on the parents' perspectives towards their children's talent performances. Participants viewed VTS opportunities as a beneficial concept to be consistently promoted and implemented. The illustrated excerpts are cited from individual interviews with each of them. Table 2 demonstrates the interview questions asked to the participants.

Table 2: Sample Interview Questions

Sample Interview Questions

1. What do you think are the importance of VTS and the importance of VTS for your child?
2. How many hours a day would you and your child spend on talent performance before the lockdown? How many hours during the lockdown? How has the participation in VTS during the lockdown affected your child?
3. What are the challenges faced in your effort for your child's participation in VTS during the lockdown?
4. What kind of support do you need to ensure your child continues to participate in VTS or conventional talent shows post pandemic?
5. Would you encourage other parents to also enrol their child in VTS? How would you go about encouraging them? How will you ensure that their child will be impacted positively from their participation in VTS?

3. Findings

Firstly, this study explores how participation in the NASE's VTS has impacted the parents and the activities of their children with SEN during lockdown. Secondly, this study explores the parents' perspectives on the involvement of the community in encouraging more talent development for learners with SEN. Finally, this study explores the challenges and issues faced by parents in the participation of their children with SEN in VTS. From the survey conducted, all of the respondents mentioned that VTS has impacted their children positively with 40% of them spending 1-2 hours per day for their child's talent development, while 45% of them spend between 3-4 hours per day and the rest of the 15% of the parents spend between 5-6 hours per day with their children in terms of training and practising. 85% of the respondents stated that talent development is not just merely the responsibilities of teachers in school, parents themselves play an important role too in enhancing their skills and talent at home.

On the other hand, 85% of the respondents agree that there should be more VTS organised by NGOs for learners with SEN, while 15% stated that face-to-face talent shows would be more impactful. 85% of the respondents also agree to the fact that talent show should not just be limited to dancing, singing, role playing and playing musical instruments, as more categories of talent should be opened and accepted for VTS as learners with SEN are unique and have their very own talent to highlight. 40% of the respondents agree to the suggestion that participation in VTS should be rewarded with prizes in order to motivate the participants involved, however the rest of 60% of the parents stated that with or without prizes, being awarded with exposure, certification and acknowledgement are sufficient for the participants in VTS. Lastly, when asked if they would recommend VTS to other parents of learners with SEN, all of the parents answered yes.

This next section presents the emerging key findings from the interviews. The themes derived from the interview session were both common and highly relevant. With reference to the research questions, results from this study were divided into three sections: 1) Parents' perceptions on the importance of their roles in the involvement of their children's participation in VTS, 2) Roles of the NGOs in inculcating and providing more opportunities in the talent development of learners with SEN, and 3)The responses to what are the issues and challenges parents dealt

with in their effort for their children's participation in VTS.

3.1. Answer to RQ1: How Do Parents Perceive Their Children's Involvement in VTS?

Parents as Partners

The findings of the interviews which were conducted with the parents revealed that involving their children with SEN in VTS is significant within the home settings. The parents indicated that talent development is not merely a school agenda and only done by the teachers. They see that their roles and the parent-teacher partnership can contribute and influence the development of their children with SEN impactfully.

When parents are interviewed, most of them emphasise on their significant roles in becoming proactive towards their children's activities, most particularly during the lockdown. They believed that, apart from their usual responsibilities, they need to have a mindset of becoming a partner to their children so that the children will not feel the barriers with their parents. This was mentioned as follows:

"Who else will support and guide them if not us the parents? That's why parents must think of themselves as partners and become responsible for their children's talent development". (P2)

"At school, the teacher will help assist my son with her talent, but I believe that it all started from home where my husband and I helped shape the development of my child. Maybe at school they have the platform but at home, we have more time and us parents give them moral support and confidence." (P3)

Additionally, it was also elaborated in the statement below:

"At home, we have a karaoke set and since we spend a lot of time together during the lockdown, my daughter and I sing and dance a lot together. That actually brought us closer together, so we not just as parents, but also as somewhat of a friend - someone who she can have fun with". (P5)

Furthermore, with reference to the talent videos submitted by the participants, as demonstrated in Table 3.1 for the theme Parents as Partners, 3 sub themes emerged namely, 1) Moral support, 2) Provide space and home-based facilities 3) Provide talent training. It is found that the majority of the parents of the participants

involved provided significant support, space, home based facilities and training for their children prior to their enrolment in VTS. Nevertheless, 1 parent of the participants involved relied on the child to train on their own at home by referring to other videos on Youtube.

<div align="center">

Table 3: Video Analysis on Parents as Partners

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Theme	Sub-themes	Participants	*f*
Parents as Partners	Moral support	P1,P2,P3,P4,P5,P6	6
	Provide space and home-based facilities	P1,P2,P3,P4,P5,P6	6
	Provide talent training	P1,P2,P3,P5,P6	5

3.2. Answer to RQ2: How do parents perceive the role of schools and the community in encouraging more talent development for learners with SEN?

Roles of NGOs

The findings also revealed that parents who signed up their learners with SEN in VTS indicated that talent development can be enhanced, developed and organised by more NGOs in Malaysia. They see that NGOs can proactively provide more opportunities and platforms for more learners with SEN to participate in.

During the interview, most of the participants also spoke about the roles and responsibilities of other NGOs towards learners with SEN, most particularly during the lockdown. They believed that, apart from their children's schools, more NGOs should promote more online activities and programmes for learners with SEN which could contribute to the enhancement of communication and social interaction:

> *"It is hard for parents when teachers in schools only teach a limited amount of subjects and conduct limited online activities. Can't blame them! They also have more important matters for education! That's why NGOs must play their roles in encouraging more activities like this". (P1)*

"I don't come across other fun activities for my son. He loves to play drums, but the teacher in his school does not really highlight his talent. Good thing NASE organised this program, even though online, it is a good start and more NGOs also should do that for all learners with SEN." (P2)

In the extract, it is obvious that the participants acknowledged the efforts made by NASE and it was considered a unique event for an NGO in Malaysia to amplify the talent of learners with SEN. Another participant stated:

"I am truly thankful that my daughter was able to showcase her talent and participate in the talent show... It is a very rare opportunity too. It is a very good effort from NASE and I hope more NGOs will provide that kind of opportunity for learners with SEN too". (P4)

NGOs can make a significant impact on the cultural climate for learners with SEN by expanding opportunities and platforms for talent development. The involvement of more NGOs will enable parents to engage their children in more social activities within the community, which will positively impact their development. This was further elaborated as follows:

"During lockdown, my children and I were happy that NASE organised this event. We wanted to send more videos (laughs). So far I only know that NASE organised VTS, and other NGOs need to organise too. That will be more beneficial for the children (of SEN)" (P6)

In addition, when the talent videos were analysed, it was evident that the NGO played an important role in providing the platform needed for the participation of learners with SEN in VTS. Table 3.2 demonstrates the significant sub-themes that emerged, namely 1) Platform provider, 2) Guidelines and online assistance and 3) Communication.

Table 4: Video Analysis on Roles of NGOs

Theme	Sub-themes	Participants	f
Roles of NGOs	Platform provider	P1,P2,P3,P4,P5,P6	6
	Support through guidelines and online assistance	P1,P2,P3,P4,P5,P6	6
	Communication	P1,P2,P3,P4,P5,P6	6

3.3. Answer to RQ3: What are the challenges and issues that parents face when their children with SEN participate in VTS?

Resources

Finally, the findings also revealed that parents who sign their children up for VTS faced some challenges and issues, namely resources. As parents who have experienced the lockdown and quarantine process with their children, it is important to take their experience and the issues they faced into consideration.

From the interview conducted, parents stated that having a good internet connection is crucial as the videos need to be uploaded and submitted to the organiser. Additionally, they also considered the quality of cameras and mobile phones to be an important source of help and support in ensuring that the videos taken are of high quality. It was noted that most parents had access to good cameras via their own mobile phones. On the other hand, parents expressed their concern about the internet connection since all of them had to rely on WIFI or mobile data which can sometimes be "slow". Parents' responsed as follows:

> *"A lot of times the internet connection in my area is not so good. Maybe because a lot of people are locked down at home so everyone uses the internet (laughs). So when I want to upload videos, sometimes it takes a very very long time." (P2)*
>
> *"But for me, wifi is good, only that during lockdown, the usage is higher so I have to pay more than usual (laughs)" (P1)*

Additionally, it was also elaborated in the statements below:

"In my area, the internet is good. I need them because if there is no internet, then no access to watch Youtube or Facebook. Want to upload videos also difficult." (P5)

"It will be good if we have free internet access all the time during lockdown. There is nothing much we can do, the only way to entertain ourselves is all in the internet." (P4)

When the talent video content as demonstrated in Table 3.3 below was analysed, it was evident that accessibility to efficient internet connection is essential to the participation of VTS, especially when most of the participants were in locked down at their respective homes during the pandemic. However, 2 of the participants had to rely on the WIFI connection outside their homes due to poor connection, hence the talent videos were shot outside of their homes.

Table 5: Video Content Analysis on Resources

Theme	Sub-themes	Participants	*f*
Resources	Home internet connection (mobile data, wifi)	P1,P2,P3,P6	4

3.4. Summary on Talent Video Content Analysis

With reference to the content analysis of the talent videos submitted by the participants, it was evident that each of the learners with SEN involved demonstrated unique talents calmly and confidently throughout their respective performances. From singing and dancing to playing musical instruments, their talents were clearly shown in each of their talent videos. Throughout each of their talent performances, they also managed to prove that they were able to maintain eye contact with the camera. Additionally, different aspects of skills and routines displaying their talent development, which was undertaken as part of their activities with their parents during lockdown, were also depicted in the videos. The experiential display of their talents in the videos allowed the researcher to explore the coordination of movements and it was evident that they had mastered the area

of their talents, namely singing, dancing and musical instruments over a long period of time.

4. Discussion

This study observed that when more NGOs are proactive in organising and creating opportunities, then the larger the capacity building for learners with SEN. According to UNESCO (2009), NGOs are no longer filling up the vacuum left by governments as they have developed into powerful voices of society. It is also found that all the parents involved were aware of the beneficial contributions of VTS to the development of their children with SEN. Furthermore, parents involved play the more pro-active role, particularly in encouraging and effective communication, which highly encourages the engagement between them and their children with SEN. Parents also expressed that in addition to being engaged with their children's participation in VTS, there is also the need to ensure that the aspects of self-confidence and mental health are also taken into consideration. Parents in these circumstances are persistent and supportive of their children's skill development because they are fully aware and understand their duties and responsibilities in fostering their children's sense of self-worth and mental wellness. However, this does not necessarily imply that parents are not concerned with their children's education or that they are pressuring them to participate. The reason these parents encourage their children to get involved in VTS is due to the child's favourite pastime, which has been manifested in the development of their talents namely singing, dancing and playing musical instruments .

Many previous studies have also highlighted that active participation, specifically for nurturing talents, have immensely benefitted learners with SEN as it is engaging and interactive, thus providing meaningful experiences. Despite encountering challenges during lockdown, they found ways to overcome them. The majority of parents believe that they have an effective role in helping their children in early talent development. This is in line with a study by Olszewski-Kubilius (2018), which stated that family dynamics provide support for the development of high creativity. It was suggested that parents can set a perfect example for their children by tapping on their children's potential and encouraging their children to identify their interests and passion because "parents are always in the center of their children's training" (Hosseinpour et al., 2015). Olszewski-Kubilius (2021) also stated that family

plays a pivotal role in influencing the talent development of their children. On the other hand, the study also proposed that parenting skills, namely in supporting and assisting the ideal talent development of their children, can be fostered through schools via workshops for parents as part of their activities.

5. Implications of Findings

The foremost are the core values of parents on the significance of talent development of their children with SEN. Parents themselves are responsible in engaging their children for the sake of their development that would consequently benefit them. Through inclusiveness, more NGOs would be able to embark on the journey to enhance the talent development of learners with SEN and provide equal opportunities for them, both socially and culturally. This study highlights some implications that may have been overlooked by many NGOs, namely creating opportunities for online social participation for learners with SEN, including VTS which plays an important role in the success of their talent development. The foremost aspect highlighted in this study are the core values held by parents when it comes to the talent development of their children with SEN. Parents play a vital role in encouraging their children to participate in talent-development activities as they understand the long-term advantages it has for their children's general development and wellbeing. This highlights how crucial parental support and involvement are in developing children's talents.

This study also emphasises the need for more NGOs to actively foster talent development of learners with SEN. By embracing inclusivity, these organisations have the ability to create equal opportunities for learners with SEN, both socially and culturally. The findings suggest that NGOs should consider incorporating online platforms, such as VTS, as a means of fostering social participation for learners with SEN. VTS provides an accessible and inclusive avenue for learners with diverse abilities to showcase their talents, which is crucial for their talent development. The implications derived from this study highlight the importance of parental involvement and the role of NGOs in promoting talent development for learners with SEN. The results also highlight the need for close collaboration between parents and NGOs to create a welcoming atmosphere that supports and fosters the skills of learners with SEN.

The study also highlights the opportunity for additional investigation in this area of study. Further investigations could examine deeper into the specific ways in which parental involvement and NGO initiatives impact the talent development of learners with SEN. Moreover, exploring the experiences and perspectives of learners with SEN themselves can provide valuable insights into their own participation in talent development activities and the effectiveness of such programs. Overall, this study brings attention to the significance of parental involvement, the role of NGOs, and the implications for fostering talent development opportunities for learners with SEN. It sheds light on the importance of creating inclusive platforms, such as VTS, and opens up avenues for further research and collaboration in this field.

6. Conclusion

In this study, parents also mentioned that if they had more time, knowledge, skills and resources, they would be able to provide more opportunities to develop the talents of their children with SEN. Parents' perceptions of VTS also depend on the specific interest of their child. Participants who took part in the VTS mostly belong to supportive families with parents who are committed to the talent development of their children. In addition, parents mentioned that they were, at times, not given important updates and information, or lack capabilities in terms of time and effort, to support and provide more opportunities for their children to participate in talent shows. Despite increased time and workload when it comes to their children, coupled with their own responsibilities during lockdown, parents felt that they should make their child's talent development a priority.

Nevertheless, notwithstanding the limitations, the results indicate a notable awareness from parents on their children's involvement in VTS. This appears to be equally evident across all levels of parental education, ethnicity and gender participants. The findings reflect a general shift in parents' perceptions towards online participation, following the increase in online engagement during lockdown. To conclude, while parents of learners with SEN should provide the most ideal family environment, motivate them to reach their optimal potential, support them by providing the best opportunities for their personal growth and development, the ultimate goal for all parents, particularly that of learners with SEN, is to provide them with a memorable childhood.

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