

Organic Solidarity in the National Response to COVID-19 in Brunei Darussalam

Hannah Ming Yit Ho¹

English Studies Programme; Professional Communication and the Media Programme. University of Brunei Darussalam, Brunei Darussalam.

Abstract

This paper examines the national solidarity in Brunei Darussalam during the COVID-19 pandemic and its consequential impact on younger generations. Utilising Emile Durkheim's solidarity theories, I examine how young people's social media use builds on state discourse in the pandemic. I contend that a shift towards an organic society is visible through a social cohesion that is based on differentiated roles. I argue that the citizenry plays a vital role in the forward momentum toward Industrial Revolution (IR) 4.0, which illustrates that solidarity cannot be forged as a top-down directive. By prompting economic and creative divisions of labour, the local use of social media in a public health crisis has shown the government a new way to foster solidarity. Significant implications for youth as future leaders of the nation are discussed.

Keywords: *Brunei Darussalam, organic solidarity, state rhetoric, social media, identity*

Introduction

Within the Southeast Asian region, the Bruneian nation stands out for its rigorous management of this pandemic that continues to rage through its neighbouring countries (Cucinotta and Vanelli, 2020). Since its first detected coronavirus case on 9 March 2020, Brunei Darussalam managed to smoothen the curve in under a month (Kon, 2020a). Brunei's success story (Khan, 2020) is attributed to the government's swift and pre-emptive action, which has included their shaping of public discourse of identity through official narratives of national security, social responsibility, and transparent communications. In addition to robust testing and contact

¹ Email: hannah.ho@ubd.edu.bn; dr.hannah.ho@gmail.com ORCID: 0000-0003-3008-5028

tracing,²The public perception of the government in their management of the health crisis has been well navigated. In their daily press conferences, ministers have not just reached out to the public but also taken questions from local media personnel. These communications have gone a long way to forging a collectivist aim for the nation's health, economic, and social outcomes.

Within the nation, the people's reactions to the government's handling of the crisis caused by SARS-COV-2 or COVID-19 have reflected favourably on His Majesty the Sultan's leadership, as he delegates the work of crisis management to ministers. Given that two particular ministers, the Minister of Health (MOH) and the Second Minister of Finance and Economy (MOFE II), have steered public perception of the government's management of COVID-19, solidarity is fostered through their joint efforts. The former is ethnic Malay, and the latter is ethnic Chinese Bruneian. In this perspective, the Bruneian monarch has become a symbolic figure to harness solidarity. Apart from his two public addresses to the nation (PMO, 2020), the Bruneian monarch has delegated the task of COVID-19 management to a Malay Muslim Minister of Health and Chinese Muslim Second Minister of Finance and Economy, both of whom have been pivotal in public health matters and keeping the national economy afloat during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Amid a public sense that the government has commendable control over a health pandemic, the coronavirus has served the nation in unexpectedly positive ways. By reinforcing the nation as a social cohesive unit, the crisis has emerged as a gelling agent instead of a social fracturing tool. In fact, governmental and most public responses have been motivated by a common aim to safeguard a touted pace, which is embodied in the nation's self-named label as 'The Abode of Peace. In contrast to positive cases and escalating deaths in neighbouring nations of Singapore, Indonesia and Malaysia (Yildiz & Atanur, 2020; Sullivan, 2020; Lee, 2020). Brunei's flattened curve ('Brunei Darussalam', 2020) can be attributed to the nation's sense of solidarity. Throughout the first wave of the pandemic, it has maintained a state discourse that appeals to humanity by generating a message of unity that counteracts discrimination based on race and religion. The rhetoric of togetherness is employed in official public briefs, press

² Testing is free for citizens, and migrant workers are randomly selected for tests. In Southeast Asia, Brunei is second to Singapore in tests per 1 million population ('COVID-19 coronavirus,' 2020).

conferences, and social media posts. Furthermore, released official statements do not segregate foreign workers from domestic COVID-19 cases.³

To explore the nation's solidarity, this paper adopts Emile Durkheim's theories of mechanical and organic solidarity. In addition, Louis Althusser's ideological state apparatus (ISA) will be used to illuminate the strategies deployed by the nation in building a sense of collectivity at a time of a health and social crisis in the Bruneian nation. Even as state discourse is a focus of this paper, social discourse engendered on social media platforms is also examined as a response to official discourses. Consequently, state objectives of national cohesion and a young generation's expressions of solidarity through social media during a national crisis posed by COVID-19 are discussed.

This paper argues that COVID-19 serves as a non-traditional tool of social cohesion to suture ethnic and religious divides within the nation. In particular, the young generation's turn to social media signals Brunei's headlong entry into Industrial Revolution (IR) 4.0. Their mobilization via social media illustrates that individualized or organic solidarity is more potent than mechanical solidarity. As Brunei's young generations gravitate to social media platforms, they demonstrate that their solidarity is not from a top-down directive. In this respect, COVID-19 has shown the government a new and more effective way to foster solidarity, as youths cannot be coerced to exhibit their solidarity through official propaganda. Despite identity differences, indigenous (Malay) and non-indigenous (non-Malay) people have come together with shared aims for a COVID-free community. Just as the virus does not discriminate, the pandemic is a good vehicle for bringing together people from various backgrounds as they unite for the collective cause to guard against an equally non-discriminatory virus. Coupled with Malay Islamic Monarchy or MIB (*Melayu Islam Beraja*) as the national identity, state rhetoric aligns with Malay and Muslim dominance in the sultanate. A state philosophy emphasizing likeness or homogeneity through the Malay Muslim identity supports mechanical solidarity, which is delivered as a top-down directive. However, social media highlights young people's solidarity formulated horizontally across their many differences.

³ While Singapore differentiates between community cases and migrant workers living in dormitories, Brunei consolidates the two. See Instagram infographics by the Ministry of Health @MOHBrunei.

To this end, this paper provides a textual analysis of press statements that have shaped state discourse about the COVID-19 situation in Brunei. In addition, I will also deal with the interaction offered in ‘Question and Answer’ sessions during these media conferences. An analysis will further provide insights into the government’s response to this ongoing pandemic. Their motivations and objectives will also be discussed in relation to the nation-state’s maintenance of peace and stability. Significantly, a collective spirit and strong leadership demonstrated across ministries encourage ties between indigenous Malay and minority communities within the nation. While travel bans and restrictions have imposed a state of partial lockdown in Brunei (‘Brunei bars’, 2020), the nation has neither suffered from a claustrophobic backlash of parochialism nor unchecked fear, even though ‘a narrative of fear’ (Mohamad, 2020: 351) has appeared via social media. In Brunei’s tightly controlled society, the solidarity is authentic rather than coerced, such as expected from authoritarian states. In public health matters, it is not surprising to find Bruneians coming together to display their solidarity.

Even as the United Nations define youths by age to refer to those between 15 and 24 years (United Nations, 2020), I employ this term to delineate a young generation who are experiencing a transitional period as they secure permanent jobs for a stable income (Evans, 2008: 1659). Therefore, my definition of youth embraces Skelton’s concept of youth as ‘a transition between childhood and adulthood, marked predominantly by increasing responsibility and independence’ (Skelton, 2002, cited in Evans, 2008: 1664). This paper focuses on official responses by the Ministry of Health (MoH) and Ministry of Finance and Economy (MOFE), who play significant roles in ensuring the safety and security of all people, including youths, within Brunei. Communications to the public are dealt with by the Minister of Health on a daily basis and the Second Minister of Finance and Economy on a regular basis up until 2 July 2020. At these media conferences,⁴ Local media personnel often serve as a vessel to channel public concerns to the ministerial officers. Given Brunei’s high social media penetration rate (Othman, 2020a), it is little surprise that the public has responded to the pandemic via their digital creative content.

⁴ All press conference footage is available from ‘Nasional FM Radio Brunei’ Facebook (FB) account.

Thus, this paper explores Bruneians' collective gravitation towards solidarity through their use of social media. Social engagement and participation are salient responses to MOH's 'Do Your Part Movement' promoted on their official Instagram (IG) account to curtail COVID-19's spread. Even while social cohesion nurtured in press conferences demonstrates mechanical solidarity, there is also a palpable call to organic solidarity, which the local social media community has taken up. Ultimately, this cohesive culture fosters solidarity among people of different cultures, races, religions and languages residing within the nation. Notwithstanding nationalism promoted via MIB ideology, which has existed since 'time immemorial' (Talib, 2002: 141) and was proclaimed upon independence on 1 January 1984, the authorities' coordinated approaches to contain COVID-19 and a young citizenry's communal goals of collective humanity exhibit solidarity across cultural, racial, religious and linguistic divisions.

Brunei: Syariah law, statelessness, and a benevolent monarchy

Brunei is a small nation on the northeastern tip of Borneo in Southeast Asia. With a population of 429 999 people (Department of Economic Planning, 2022) and a land size of 5765 sq. km, the nation's people have concentrated in urban areas away from the forests that cover 81 percent of the total land (Forestry Department, 2015). The economy is driven by the oil and gas sector, which accounts for more than 95 percent of its national exports (Prusark, 2016). Since 2016, it has reported year-on-end budget deficits primarily due to plunging oil and gas prices in the world (Bandial, 2018). A dominant Malay identity is encapsulated by its MIB national philosophy. The Malays in Brunei subsume seven indigenous groups or *puak jati*, which are the Brunei Malay, Dusun, Tutong, Bisaya, Kedayan, Belait, and Murut (Ho, 2019). The ethnic Chinese are the largest minority group (Deterding and Ho, 2021; Ho, 2021a). Other minorities include the Ibans and Penans (Ho, 2020a). Since its political independence in 1984, Brunei has defined itself through MIB ideology. The nation is governed by one of the longest reigning monarchies. Its people enjoy welfare benefits funded by its oil and gas economy, resulting in a 'very high human development index (Human Development Report, 2019).

As an MIB nation, Brunei enacted the Syariah Penal Code Order in 2013. While there has been international criticism of the implementation of Islamic law (Muller, 2016: 415), the promotion of Islamic values, morals

and norms has gone largely uncontested (Lindsey and Steiner, 2016: 553). Nonetheless, ethnic minorities comprising Chinese, Indians, Ibans and Penans who have not converted to Islam may not necessarily identify with the state's Malay Muslim identity. Its legal jurisdictions preside over both citizens and residents too. Contrary to popular conception, syariah law affects both Muslims and non-Muslims. On 22 October 2013, Brunei Darussalam Government Gazette released the Syariah Penal Code Order with clause 3.1 stating, 'Save as otherwise expressly provided therein, this Order shall apply to Muslims and non-Muslims' (SPCO, 2013: 1680). In Brunei, Malay identity does not necessarily entail a Muslim identity, as non-Muslim Malays comprise the Dusun, Tutong, Bisaya, Kedayan, Belait, Murut subjects (Brunei Nationality Act of 1961). Even as British civil law was implemented during the Protectorate era, Islamic criminal law takes precedence as it predates the English common law (Lindsey and Steiner, 2016: 554). On political independence, the Bruneian monarch underscored the process of Islamisation. In his *titah* (royal speech), he called for 'all people of Brunei' to 'honour and practise [...] Islamic principles and values based on the Quran and Hadith as the basis of all activities concerning the racial necessity [sic], language, Malay culture and the monarchy institution as the governing system and administration of Brunei Darussalam' (cited in Black, 2011: 302-303).

In addition to the 'pivotal role of Islam in the state' (Talib, 2002: 145; see also, Schottman, 2006; Haqqi, 2017). Malay racial identity is fundamental to Brunei's MIB tripartite national ideology. With Islam as a religious, ideological state apparatus and Malay as a cultural, ideological state apparatus (Althusser, 1970: 121-76), the state has deployed specific ISA tools of national identity to bind its people together. As Naimah Talib (2002) points out, MIB serves to signify 'the consolidation of the Malay culture as a dominant feature in the state's cultural life' (142). As a result of Malay dominance, discursive and materialist marginalization of non-indigenous cultural groups may exacerbate social fissures that can potentially cause national fragmentation. Coupled with non-indigenous and racial minorities' lacking visibility in state discourses, stateless subjects complicate the process of social integration ('Permanent residents', 2009). Statelessness is often ascribed to Chinese born and bred in Brunei but without citizenship, because they are not subsumed under the 'puak jati' (Hussainmiya, 2010: 69). While some Chinese are granted citizenship, others remain stateless (Ho, 2021b). Not confined to the ethnic Chinese, statelessness may also include non-Chinese people whose parents are

originally from neighbouring Malaysian states of Sabah and Sarawak. Another case-in-point is Ibans, who are not considered puak jati. Non-belonging does not help the cause of national cohesion. However, MIB, which serves 'as a basis for national unity and development' (Talib, 2002: 143; Pehin Aziz, 1992) is promoted to forge mechanical solidarity.

Notwithstanding 'hardline laws' (Agence, 2019) to deter crime,⁵ It can largely be seen that Brunei enjoys a high degree of national security, thus also peace and unity. In fact, the 'Abode of Peace' has lived up to its nomenclature as a sense of communal identity has triumphed in moments of crisis. Amid the coronavirus pandemic, a sense of togetherness has been evident in collective and socially collaborative efforts to curb COVID-19. In this respect, local and foreign commentators (Kon, 2020a; Kon, 2020b; Khan, 2020; Ho, 2020b) have attributed Brunei's success to a coordinated ministerial approach that they characterize as an 'aggressive strategy of proactive measures' (Bodetti, 2020) that has resulted in its flattened curve. As of 7 July 2020, Brunei has gone two months without recording a positive coronavirus case (Othman, 2020b). Even though decisive governmental action via travel restrictions and a partial lockdown has been lauded, much of its success is also attributable to public inclination and compliance with calls to keep their distance from one another by staying and working at home. In fact, the public's obedience and general consensus highlight a strong sense of social collectiveness, which has been tapped and cultivated at a time of a national crisis of a public health threat. Hence, this paper analyses this social cohesion as a way forward to understand the mechanisms of organic solidarity that have taken root in the nation. In spite of people's racial, cultural, linguistic and religious differences, the nation demonstrates a high level of social cohesion that is fostered, rather than weakened, by the pandemic.

Amid well intentions to give credit to Brunei's benevolent monarch for his leadership during COVID-19, there is also a tendency to overlook the citizenry's part in contributing to national cohesion, which feeds into the nation's social harmony. With the monarch as an absolute ruler, he is regarded as a benevolent king in his nearly six decades of rule. On the nation's COVID-19 handling, Asif Khan (2020) notes that 'Brunei has emerged as a shining example of the preparedness, concern and care for

⁵ Erywan Yusof, then minister of foreign affairs, states that Sharia law 'focuses more on prevention than punishment. Its aim is to educate, deter, rehabilitate and nurture rather than to punish' ('Brunei says', 2019).

not only its citizens but all who are present in the country, including foreign nationals and tourists. Although this perspective addresses an all-encompassing and non-discriminatory way in which the Ministry of Health, under the leadership of His Majesty the Sultan, has curtailed COVID-19 cases, it overlooks the readiness of citizens and foreigners to comply with social responsibility. With a monarch who prioritizes the 'welfare of all' (Khan, 2020), reports have underscored that 'Bruneian Sultan Hassanal Bolkiah put[s] himself at the forefront of his country's efforts to combat the coronavirus' (Bodetti, 2020). In pre-coronavirus times, the Sultan is known by his rakyat (people) as a patriarchal leader or fatherly king (Low, 2018). Considering benefits granted to Bruneians, including free education, health services and land/housing entitlements, social cohesion has been promoted via the rakyat's loyalty (*taat dan setia*) towards the generous monarch. While welfare continues during COVID-19, its citizenry has also exhibited organic solidarity.

Situating Brunei in the international context

Since its first detected case, Brunei has been effective in keeping COVID-19 in check. Daily press conferences organized by MOH ran daily from 9 March until 1 July 2020 upon Brunei recording fifty-four consecutive days with zero cases. At the time of writing, only 3 covid-related deaths have been announced. Its testing capability and numbers are also high, with a new virology lab built in a timely manner to facilitate more testing (Wasil, 2020). Operational Readiness Level 4 commenced on 27 July 2020, marking the penultimate stage before the nation prepares to revert to its new normal. Despite their success in curtailing the spread of coronavirus, there is an uneasiness amongst Bruneians as they observe escalating cases in regional counterparts of Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand and the Philippines that have struggled to keep numbers down while reopening their economies after national lockdowns (Nupus, 2020). As Brunei learns from the handling of COVID-19 in the West, cautionary lessons from Italy and USA, with their strained health care systems, have been drawn too (Horowitz, 2020; 'COVID-19 puts', 2020).

The uneasiness caused by the novel coronavirus extends not only to COVID-19 being a biological threat against humanity. Significantly, it also exacerbates inequalities and social fractions that are already in place within a nation. For instance, the politicization of the virus in America has exposed power disparities along the lines of socioeconomic class and racial

identities, with disadvantaged non-white working-class people gravely affected by COVID-19 (Walker, 2020). The U.S. Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has also released research data highlighting racial disparities during this pandemic (Stokes et al., 2020). In Singapore, the government has received criticism for differentiating between community cases of COVID-19 and cases amongst migrant workers living in dormitories (Khalik, 2020). Against this trend, Brunei seems to have forged a strong sense of togetherness amid an international and national crisis.

Analysis: State rhetoric and public responses on social media
Towards an organic solidarity

Brunei's MIB ideology asserts a mechanically organized society in that 'a religiously-based common culture that reproduces in each person the same ways of thinking, feeling and acting' (Hornsby, 2007: 1) affirms a collective consciousness or 'collective type' (Durkheim, 2010: 25) of identity in the nation. This kind of solidarity that is based on likeness is thoroughly instilled by ideological state apparatuses, most notably that of the nation as an imagined MIB community where a collective personality prevails over individual personalities. However, with social modernization causing a division of labour, organic solidarity based on differentiation has gradually emerged. In this vein, it is during COVID-19—a time of national crisis where different specializations and differentiated identities are evident—when organic solidarity arises. Consequently, a 'harmonious cooperation' is forged by advocating a 'greater justice by diminishing those external inequalities that are the source of our [society's] ills' (Durkheim, 2010: 28). Herein, organic solidarity highlights unity in diversity, even as state rhetoric may assert mechanical solidarity in MIB identity.

Although nationalist narratives continue prescribing 'ideas and tendencies common to all members of the society [that] are greater in number and intensity than those which pertain personally to each member' (Durkheim, 1964: 129), it can be seen that individuals are making their mark in different ways while also gravitating towards a form of interdependence. Rather than forging independence away from a social unit within the nation, I argue that Durkheim's concept of organic solidarity helps us understand a display of social cohesion beyond the state dictates of a unifying MIB ideology. With threats posed to humanity in the COVID-19 pandemic, the Bruneian nation is focused on achieving 'a distinctive internal, interdependent

functioning of modern, “organized” industrial society marked by increasing differentiation’ (Lukes, 2013: xxviii), while it remains equally interested in framing this health threat within an Islamic context that attends to the state narrative of collective consciousness in the MIB identity. With MIB identity assigned by the state as ‘the basis for national unity and development’ encompassing ‘the substance as well as the spirit of traditional Brunei’ (Talib, 2002: 143), individuals have initiated social cohesion to ‘progress towards greater equality in the external conditions of struggle’ (Durkheim, 2014: 329) in COVID-19 times.

The following sections discuss the rhetoric of press conferences, *titahs* (royal speeches), and candid interactions between government ministers and local media representatives from various ethnic and religious backgrounds. The analysis also focuses on the social media use of Bruneians and their social organizing around the collective cause of national unity at a time of uncertainty. Herein, it is not my intention to propose that the Bruneian society is moving towards a fully organic society, nor should they be aiming to do so. Rather, there is a combination of mechanical and organic at the same time, as the organic organization of people becomes more overt and exists alongside its mechanical counterpart. Consequently, a strong sense of social cohesion demonstrated in COVID-19 times suggests a gradual shift toward interdependence, where integration as ‘an organic whole is due to ‘the recognition of the value of otherness’ (Thijssen, 2012: 456). In this respect, media use is scrutinized as these IR 4.0 platforms attest to a complex division of labour that forges, not inhibits, solidarity.

Organic Solidarity: Emile Durkheim’s Discourse of Social Advancement

First conceived during the first industrial revolution, organic solidarity affirms a sense of community through an interdependence between different social components (Durkheim, 2014). In industrialized societies, there is a risk of decreased social solidarity via different roles, assignments, and occupations of people. Rather than being undermined by such differences, organic society negates this risk and builds on social solidarity predicated on differences. Thus, social advancement via organic society departs from a cohesion formed in the homogeneity of individuals in their work, education, and religious beliefs.

In this paper, the term organic solidarity is usefully adopted to evaluate the Bruneian community as they encounter various challenges of an Industrial Revolution 4.0 accelerated by the pandemic. Instead of accentuating a disparity, unity is forged from within the differences of a people. Identity roles become multiple, not singular. Rather than gravitating toward fixed identity categories, the Bruneian community demonstrates their embracing of an identity in flux that navigates global and national demands. The ability to recognize different identity roles and assume different economic and social roles are leveraged by different ethnic groups to forge social cohesion within the nation.

State discourse and local media

Employing a firm and calm tone when calling for collectivity, the Ministry of Health (MOH) and Ministry of Finance and Economy (MOFE) in Brunei have consistently issued press statements demonstrating their combined interest in protecting public health and ensuring welfare.⁶ Ullah et al. state that ‘in Brunei, [there is] quite a relaxed mood because of the assurances provided by the respective government’ (Ullah et al., 2020). The government’s role in promoting solidarity during this pandemic has been crucial to the nation’s success in containing the spread of the novel coronavirus, for which there is no known and effective vaccine (WHO, 2020). Effective cooperation across the ministries is positively correlated to the nation’s containment of the virus.

In this section, an examination of state rhetoric will show that information dissemination is deeply ensconced within the MIB national identity, which serves as an ideological state apparatus in Louis Althusser’s sense of the term (1970: 121–76). A close analysis further reveals that the ministers tend to employ tones of transparency to gain the trust of their audience, comprising Bruneians and non-Bruneians. Likewise, they can be seen adopting an image of themselves as responsible stewards or guardians who offer direction and pastoral care to the nation’s people. In keeping with the MIB national philosophy, press statements have been delivered in the official language of Malay, even as local journalists may tend to use English during the Question and Answer session with the ministers. Significantly, an Islamic discourse frames these media conferences, as they always commence and close with a *doa selamat* (prayer). His Majesty the

⁶ Besides MOH and MOFE, several other ministries also attend press conferences.

Sultan is the exemplar with his substantive act of closing his *titah* on 21 March 2020 with an extended prayer to request for divine protection over the entire nation. Upon announcing Brunei's three COVID-19 fatalities, the Minister of Health Dr Hj Mohd Isham Hj Jaafar, also led special Islamic prayers dedicated to each of the deceased on behalf of the MIB nation. Even as both he and the Second Minister of Finance and Economy Dr Hj Mohd Amin Liew Abdullah code-switch between Malay and English in their responses to the local media's questions, their accommodation of *dwibahasa* illustrates the official status of Malay while also recognizing that English is widely spoken in the nation. Code-switching is also a manner of speech that connects with the younger generations who tend to be bilingual.

Thus, it is observed that these leaders straddle trust, leadership, and care while using MIB-compliant rhetoric. Their main approach has been characterized by their equitable approach to residents and citizens. There is an acknowledgement of organic solidarity based on difference, even while reflecting a mechanically organized nation that partakes in likeness based on a national MIB identity. For solidarity's sake, trust is built through transparent statistics offered daily to the public. MOH's comprehensive statistics include the number of tested, total accumulated tests to date, number of quarantined, total quarantined to date, number of recovery cases, number of positive cases, and the death count due to COVID-19. Furthermore, strong leadership is balanced with intimate expressions of concern. For instance, MOFE II took considerable time to explain to the public Brunei's unique economic structure when comparisons were being made with Singapore's generous financial stimulus packages (Azahari, 2020). On 30 March 2020, speaking unscripted and entirely in English prior to his official Malay press statement, he pointed out that the government monies spent in the fight against COVID-19 would inevitably reduce the sum of financial assistance available to younger generations. Coupled with flagging oil prices, coronavirus challenges the limited resources within national reserves. Herein, MOFE II was seen to invite public support and understanding. Rehashing the adage of 'ask not what the country can do for you, but what you can do for it' (MOFE, 2020), he simultaneously issued news of a BND\$450 million stimulus package. Collectively, both ministries are attuned to public anxiety during a time of uncertainty, as their leaders focus on the impact to young generations.

While stay-at-home advice and social distancing calls are presented routinely,⁷ A resounding message against discrimination has also been sounded through these press conferences. The English translated version of MOH's press statement delivered on 10 March 2020 states that '[W]e must stand together in solidarity in facing COVID-19 outbreak and not to discriminate anyone. Insyah Allah, with prayers and faith to Allah, we will succeed in controlling the spread of this outbreak' (MOH, 2020a). The Minister of Health also reiterated this message in the Q and A session. To substantiate MOH's active stance against non-discrimination, he further announced free random testing for migrant workers in the country. On 6 April 2020, the Minister of Health elaborated,

25 out of 135 [COVID-19 positive] cases detected (18.5%) were foreigners. This includes some of the foreign workers who are working in the country. Therefore, the Ministry of Health will monitor the spread of COVID-19 in the country, especially among migrant workers; in collaboration with the Ministry of Home Affairs, the Ministry of Health will conduct laboratory tests at random among migrant workers working in this country. (MOH, 2020c)

While early detection amongst foreign workers helps to curb the spread of the coronavirus in the nation, such an initiative taken by His Majesty the Sultan's government signals an important act of solidarity fostered beyond the limits of MIB likeness. The markers of ethnic, religious and linguistic differences signalled by foreign workers, for whom the Bruneian government cares, are comparable to locals who are marked by their non-Malay and non-Muslim status. MOH can thus be seen to acknowledge organic solidarity that is further promoted and generated through the use of social media.

The interaction between local journalists and ministers has also been encouraging, as both parties have been attentive in straddling differences in culture and ethnicity. Humour that is employed in responses to questions about economic strategies, such as journalists' questions about the feasibility of 'drive-through wedding receptions', during a media conference on 5 June 2020, builds rapport between the public and the

⁷ MOH's Media Statement, March 19, 2020. 'The Ministry of Health would once again like to seek cooperation from the public in practicing social distancing in order to contain the spread of COVID-19 that has befallen the nation at this time' (MOH, 2020b).

government. In addition, a local Chinese reporter from the national English newspaper *Borneo Bulletin*, James Kon, has been seminal in bridging ties between the government and the public by eliciting humanistic responses to the situation. Even as social media users have criticized this reporter for asking questions in English, his use of English over Malay is increasingly accepted. He has also attempted to placate his national audience by using Malay on some occasions. On 28 April 2020, when responding to his question on public barbeques, MOH pointed out the commencement of the fasting month (Ramadhan) as a reminder of the Islamic socio-cultural context of the nation. Such interactions between Malay Muslim ministers and a non-Muslim Chinese journalist reflect intercultural and interethnic channels of communication to forge, rather than undercut, solidarity.

Social media: Building organic solidarity

Brunei's high social media penetration rate, which ranks fourth globally with a 94 percent standing in January 2020, means that social media use in the nation is thoroughly elevated. Along this line, social media has gained traction in the fight against COVID-19 as it accentuates individuals' distinct but collective roles. In addition to MOH Brunei's media campaigns such as 'Do Your Part', the public has picked on MOH's lead to *tarannah di rumah* ('stay at home') and build a collective spirit ('together we can') to foster positive connections while being attentive to the central issue of humanity. There has been public compliance with COVID-19 restrictions, which has been demonstrated via social media posts, such as the IG account 'thenewnormal.bn' that is 'a platform dedicated to capturing moments during the current global pandemic' spawning a stream of hashtags (#copingwithcovidbn, #thecovidexperiencebn, #bruneivscovid and #quarantinelifebn) to mobilize a sense of solidarity during the pandemic within the nation.

In her article 'Creative Production of 'COVID-19 Social Distancing' Narratives on Social Media,' Mohamad (2020) states that a "narrative of responsibility" is apparent within social media 'content that call for the community to play their role as responsible citizen[s] and community members to flatten the curve' (5). Even as her study positions social media users' appropriation of the MOH's 'Don't Push It' cautionary remark as a narrative of responsibility, I argue that this public responsibility reflects the nation's organic solidarity. If responsibility is generated via social media

responses to official statements, then I contend that solidarity is characterized by its organic form.

Social media movements have been patronized by a host of local netizens, ranging from social media personalities to avid digital creators and individual members of the public. ‘The Covid Experience Art Competition’ in 2020 has attracted not just visually artistic pieces but also individual creations of poetry. All winning entries of this competition are posted on @thenewnormal.bn, with each winner tagged with their creative contributions. Significantly, the winners represent a diverse range, comprising ethnic Chinese and Malays. While several Chinese won for their digital art installations, there were a few Malay winning entries for poetry. The competition was divided into three themes: ‘human nature/balance’, ‘self-care / health and hygiene’ and ‘stay at home / social distancing’. Aligning with a narrative of responsibility, the overarching objective is an attempt to instil a sense of harmony and coherence within an otherwise discordant situation catechized by COVID-19. For instance, Muhd Hamizan Nor Iman’s poem addresses ‘Two perspectives of the coronavirus’ as stay-at-home measures result in ‘income disappearing’, ‘pause to suffer’, and a switch to ‘online school’ that leads to grievances about ‘the internet price [being] painful’. Another entry by Armuba deals with ‘this time of isolation and feelings of ‘devastat[ion] at being alone. Finally, Mohd Khairul Aziman Hj Zamady’s poetic piece invites the nation to ‘grow together’ by ‘tak[ing] time to seek / *yourself*’.

Ranging from students to working professionals in myriad industries, the contributors exemplify what Maria Grace Koh @eamusic articulates in her song dedicated to the nation’s efforts in curbing COVID-19 as ‘com[ing] together’. Reflecting organic solidarity, its lyrics are attentive to Brunei’s young and diverse population. Teaming with Malay local Malay artiste Zed Peace, Koh produces a song that serves as an anthem for overcoming identity differences in the fight against coronavirus. With a music video that includes overt images of a church and temple situated in Brunei’s capital of Bandar Seri Begawan, its attendant lyrics resonate with a theme of inclusivity to build solidarity: ‘It don’t matter who you are / your colour and religion, if you’re near or far.’ Here, race and religion are explicitly mentioned as potential sources of division but can be overridden by a sense of organic solidarity. State media has also chosen to give this collaborative song airtime, by playing it on the national radio station ‘RTB Pilihan FM’. Moreover, with the lines ‘Come together, all you daughters and sons’, the

song articulates solidarity based on love for a communality within the family of the nation. Koh's collaborative song is augmented by a group of young students' lyrical compositions about staying strong in the pandemic, such as those offered by Seri Mulia Sarjana International School (SMSIS).

Local IG account holders also often frame their volunteering efforts as a display of their solidarity with COVID-19 front-liners. For instance, @jeeradoesfashion whose day job is as a 'Stylist and Creative Director' includes several posts that show her dedicating time to lend a hand at local quarantine centres. Paediatric ophthalmologist @islandeyedoc, whose efforts during COVID-19 has been acknowledged through the award of the Commonwealth Point of Light for leading the design of child-friendly masks, is also active in encouraging a collective spirit through her motivational IG posts. In addition, she worked as a front-liner at national COVID-19 test centers. Even as these two local IG personalities hold day jobs, they join in the collective movement to articulate and commit to a sense of unity targeted at their young followers. While marking out differentiated identities, they also lend support to social media movements and have been involved in voluntary work to combat COVID-19 to serve as role models to the nation's youth.

In the early days, comparisons between COVID-19 and the seasonal flu pointed to the former's potential to be more lethal than the latter (Higgins-Dunn and Berkeley, 2020). However, scientific reports are gradually emerging, such as from the team of Timothy Russell, a mathematical epidemiologist at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, that indicates COVID-19's infection fatality rate (IFR) may be as low as 0.6 percent (Mallapaty, 2020). As such, lockdowns are beginning to be viewed as overreactions at the expense of a nation's economy, education and other health services. The draconian measure of shutting down national borders has had devastating effects on employment, schooling, mental health and cancer treatments, where full lockdowns have been momentarily implemented (Triggle, 2020; Arnold & Valentina, 2020; AFP 2020). Although short of a complete lockdown, travel bans and restrictions that limit flights into and out of Brunei have resulted in declining revenues of the national airline carrier, Royal Brunei, thus inevitably dampening local tourism (Bandial, 2020). The subsequent redirecting of resources and manpower to COVID-19 testing sites, isolation centres, quarantine venues, and running of a special health advice line 148 inevitably result in some downscaling of other health services. Even as rates for mental health

illnesses during a nationwide stay-at-home period have not yet been published,⁸ The national Hope Line 145 continues to receive calls, and mental health campaigns remain prominent on MOH Brunei's official IG page, including a public broadcasting service posted on 24 June 2020. With school closures from mid-March until 4 July 2020,⁹ online learning has been promoted but at the expense of those without pecuniary means to internet access. Home-based online learning also places a responsibility on parents to guide their children. Hence, economic and domestic strains due to stay-at-home measures during the coronavirus outbreak could potentially deepen, rather than suture, fault lines.

In this perspective, the national cohesion that has been forged through organic solidarity threatens to implode upon itself as people continue to suffer from economic strains, domestic demands, and stress to provide for their families during COVID-19. Blandau states, 'half of the country depends on welfare to survive' (2017). Those less financially stable with lower incomes thus cannot afford hired domestic helpers to help with children's home-schooling. Thus, economic disparities between households are visibly broadening and threatening national solidarity during the COVID-19 crisis. Those advised to bring forward the following year's annual leave to cover their compulsory leave and suffer pay cuts would tend to break away from the cohesive bonds that are promoted during this time (Bandial, 2020). In this way, the organic organization of society may be undermined. Given that a division of labour creates and is created by lacking opportunities for minorities, one study shows that 'South Asians run most barber shops in Brunei, especially Indians' (Ullah & Kumpoh, 2018: 11), thus emphasizing a racial division of labour. With COVID-19 shuttering businesses and causing furlough schemes, further disadvantages to the tourism, food, beverage, and service industries are also experienced. Within the local Bruneian demographic, an existing gap between poor (unemployed) and rich (employed) is exacerbated by stay-at-home measures supported during COVID-19. As Mohamad (2020) argues, a 'narrative of resistance' has also emerged, albeit 'less prominent in Brunei's context' (353). Part of the discontent with authority's directive with stay-at-home measures and social distancing is its impact on jobs. According to the Labour Force Survey 2017, Brunei's youth

⁸ All other non-COVID administrative work has been postponed. Annual medical performances are usually reported at the start of each calendar year.

⁹ The Ministry of Education closed down private and government schools from 12 March 2020 and began partially reopening on June 2, 2020.

unemployment rate was already on an upward trend, rising to 9.3 percent, which tops ASEAN (Bakar, 2019; Ullah et al., 2020). Locals are also increasingly driven into jobs that ethnic minorities or foreign workers conventionally fill. While the national infrastructure for food, health, and education remains robust, poverty-stricken households are most affected. The Community Development Department (JAPEM) and Brunei Islamic Religious Council (MUIB) have supported the poor comprising 5.04 percent of the Brunei population (Blandau, 2017). On 22 June 2020, MOFE announced the implementation of a National Welfare Scheme (SKN) to alleviate those financially afflicted ('Sistem Kebajikan Negara', 2020). It is apparent that COVID-19 exposes job and educational inequalities threatening to widen socioeconomic fault lines if left unchecked by the government.

Implications

Strategies against COVID-19 have ranged from those undertaken within health, education and travel industries that span the public and private sectors. While many nations in the West are now ruminating and, indeed, providing national reports and gathering official statistics to illustrate the once inconceivable argument that 'the cure [lockdown] is worse than the disease', Brunei has been unique in that full lockdown was never necessary as heavy social restrictions were implemented as early as a few days after reports of its first positive case. With Brunei's success in containing the novel coronavirus that has made international headlines (Bodetti 2020), it must be noted that this accomplishment is difficult to model elsewhere. Firstly, Brunei's economy is overseen by an absolute monarch that offers a 'comprehensive system of social welfare programmes unique to the region', (Talib, 2002: 135) which contributes to the national solidarity that already existed in the nation prior to COVID-19 pandemic. Secondly, even as national statistics and annual reports from various health departments have not yet been published, 'collateral damage from delays to healthcare and the effects of recession' (Knapton, 2020) looks to be minimal as Brunei has been quick to revert to a semblance of normality. Children went back to school under the advice of the Ministry of Education from 6 July 2020. Civil servants were also instructed to cease work from home in favour of resuming travel to their offices, as stipulated by the public service commission.

In all this, implications of an emerging organic society to the economy, education, and health sectors include a reorganization of resources that have prompted the adage of what one can do for the country, rather than what the nation can do for its people—thus, focusing on the theme of (social) responsibility of the *rakyat*. As much as physical or social distancing and keeping hands clean are the main thrusts of 'social responsibility during COVID-19, a call for people from all walks of life to pick up different jobs (from that they normally attend to) and innovate ways to earn a living is its further connotation. To achieve this, ethnic, racial and religious distinctions tend to blur into insignificance as the focus lies in jointly overcoming the challenges of COVID-19. On the social front, an increased use of social media serves not only to lend support to the government's decisions on COVID-19 related matters, but also to inspire creative divisions of labour that help to unite the nation. As the nation enters headlong into Industrial Revolution 4.0, internet connectivity via personal devices has also meant that society is adeptly changing to reflect a new reality of 'online learning' done from home (MOE, 2020). Acting collectively to mitigate the economic downturn has also meant that locals are taking up jobs that were previously off-limits due to their own self-limiting beliefs. For instance, local runner app services such as 'GoMamam' and 'Dart' have arguably set up a new division of labour as locals join foreign workers as part of the national delivery workforce too.

Conclusion

At a time when many countries around the world are struggling to contain coronavirus that has ravaged the economy, health system and public welfare, the cohesive responses elicited from the Brunei Government and its citizenry have been evident. While social cohesion has been a fundamental component of life prior to COVID-19's arrival, it may be argued that the pandemic crisis has brought the Brunei community closer together. This may be seen in the shifts towards organic solidarity, which reflects a unified identity that is forged between different segments of society. As Durkheim (2010) explains, 'The individuality of the whole grows at the same time as its parts' (27). Through social media, individual expressions of solidarity with the government's directives, advice and leadership have fostered a stronger community with a positive attitude of 'together we can', which is MOH's nationwide slogan. In multiple poems, songs and videos, the public has supported various campaigns spearheaded by MOH, such as the 'Do Your Part Movement'. Local communities lent

their support by staying at home, especially in the second quarter of 2020 when COVID-19 cases were rising and school, mosque, and restaurant closures were among its restrictive measures (Bowie, 2020). Consequently, there was a palpable sense of people coming together to push through the pandemic during uncertain times. With the virus under control in the third quarter of 2020, there has been a lifting of social restriction measures. However, international travel bans for both citizens and residents have remained in place (Bakar, 2020). Social cohesion has been the foundation of Brunei's success, and the nation stands to benefit further from a collectivity forged amongst individual members of its society.

Even as an organic society arguably existed at a time before COVID-19, its iterations evident on the social platform have been apparent throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. For instance, state television and ministries have used Facebook and Instagram to disseminate video footage of media conferences. Considering these shifts towards a visibly organic society, a balance between a mechanical society based on likeness in MIB and an organic society based on diversity offers a positive alignment with processes of modernization that the government has pursued as part of its aspirations for a people skilled in Industry 4.0. In the dual areas of national economy and health, a modernized division of labour alleviates pressure on the government to provide local employment as the rakyat is encouraged to be proactive in their job searches. There will also be less demand for heavily subsidized public health services with increasing openings of private clinics. This kind of diversity strengthens, rather than undermines, solidarity in the Bruneian nation.

Crucially, the issue remains whether organic solidarity fostered by IR 4.0 can be maintained once the pandemic transpires. This is a pertinent question for Brunei's younger generations as they will lead the nation further into the new millennium, a time of challenges following nationalism and globalization (Ullah and Ho, 2020). Considering Brunei's population's multiethnic and socioeconomic composition, organic solidarity based on individualized differences supplements the mechanical solidarity achieved via MIB national philosophy. Although contrasted against mechanical solidarity, organic solidarity is increasingly forged in times of a pandemic. The challenges of sustaining an organically structured society lie in the population's responses to the government and the maintenance of dialogues across communities facilitated by social media. In fact, IR 4.0 has shown the government that solidarity cannot be shaped via top-down directives.

Instead, it is harnessed through a young generation's affinities to social media as a mode of communication. Hence, this paper has been attentive to collective activities of mobilization through an engagement with social media, which the government should utilize to forge social cohesion within the nation. Significantly, a new and effective way of bringing people together through grassroots activities signals future directions for younger generations as they establish their collective presence in the nation.

References

- AFP. (2020). 'COVID-19: US Unemployment rises to 42 million,' *New Straits Times*, June 5, <https://www.nst.com.my/world/world/2020/06/598041/covid-19-us-unemployment-rises-42-million>
- Agence France-Presse. (2019). 'Brunei Sultan seeks conservative support with hardline Sharia laws,' *The Jakarta Post*, April 2, <https://www.thejakartapost.com/seasia/2019/04/02/brunei-sultan-seeks-conservative-support-with-hardline-sharia-laws.html>
- Althusser, Louis. (1970). 'Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses'. In *Lenin and Philosophy and other Essays*, translated by Ben Brewster, 121–176. Monthly Review Press.
- Arnold, M. & Valentina, R. (2020). 'Unemployment rises in Europe as coronavirus ends labour market recovery,' *Financial Times*, June 3, <https://www.ft.com/content/b26beabf-fd2f-4712-8f0a-633df335672b>.
- Azahari, Izah. (2020). 'Minister explains why Brunei's COVID-19 financial aid packages are different,' *Borneo Bulletin*, March 31, <https://borneobulletin.com.bn/minister-explains-why-brunei-covid-19-financial-aid-packages-are-different/>
- Bakar, Rasidah. (2019). 'Unemployment in Brunei rises to 9.3%, higher among men,' *The Scoop*, January 2, <https://thescoop.co/2019/01/02/unemployment-in-brunei-rises-to-9-3-higher-among-men/>
- Bakar, Rasidah. (2020). 'No plans to reopen Brunei borders in August,' *The Scoop*, July 18, <https://thescoop.co/2020/07/18/no-plans-to-reopen-brunei-borders-in-august/>
- Bandial, Ain. (2018). 'As deficit falls by 40%, gov't proposes \$5.3B budget for 2018,' *The Scoop*, March 7, <https://thescoop.co/2018/03/07/fiscal-deficit-falls-40-govt-proposes-5-3b-budget-2018/>
- Bandial, Ain. (2020). 'RB in dire straits with 95% of flight cuts, staff out on compulsory leave,' *The Scoop*, April 1, <https://thescoop.co/2020/04/01/rb-in-dire-straits-with-95-of-flights-cut-staff-put-on-compulsory-leave/>

- Black, E. Ann. (2011). 'Brunei Darussalam'. In *Law and Legal Institutions of Asia: Traditions, Adaptations and Innovations*, edited by E. Ann Black & G. F. Bell. Cambridge University Press.
- Blandau, Rachael. (2017). 'Poverty in Brunei: Development and forward thinking,' *The Borgen Project*. March 11, <https://borgenproject.org/tag/poverty-in-brunei/>
- Bodetti, Austin. (2020). 'How Brunei beat COVID-19,' *The Diplomat*, June 22, <https://thediplomat.com/2020/06/how-brunei-beat-covid-19/>
- Bowie, Nile. (2020). 'Devout at a distance in contagion hit Brunei'. *Asia Times*, April 3, <https://asiatimes.com/2020/04/devout-at-a-distance-in-contagion-hit-brunei/>
- 'Brunei Darussalam'. (2020). Worldometer. July 21, <https://www.worldometers.info/coronavirus/country/brunei-darussalam/>
- 'Brunei bars residents from leaving the country as COVID-19 reach 50'. (2020). *Channel News Asia*, 15 March, <https://www.channelnewsasia.com/news/asia/coronavirus-brunei-bars-residents-from-leaving-covid-19-12540260>
- Brunei Nationality Act. (2016). Attorney General Chambers. Bandar Seri Begawan. http://www.agc.gov.bn/AGC%20Images/LAWS/ACT_PDF/cap015.pdf
- 'Brunei says controversial Sharia law aimed at "prevention"'. (2019). *BBC News*, April 12., <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-47906070>
- 'COVID-19 coronavirus pandemic'. (2020). Worldometer. 21 July. Retrieved from https://www.worldometers.info/coronavirus/?utm_campaign=homeAdUOA?Si
- 'COVID-19 puts unprecedented strain on US health system'. (2020). Health Care Dive. March 17, <https://www.healthcaredive.com/news/covid-19-puts-unprecedented-strain-on-us-health-system/574275/>
- Cucinotta, Domenico & Vanelli, Maurizio. (2020). 'WHO declares COVID-19 a Pandemic'. *Acta Biomed*, 91(1): 157-160.
- Department of Economic Planning and Statistics. (2022). Bandar Seri Begawan. <http://www.deps.gov.bn/SitePages/Population.aspx>
- Deterding, David & Ho, Hannah M. Y. (2021). An overview of the language, literature and culture of Brunei Darussalam. In *Engaging Modern Brunei: Research on Language, Literature and Culture*, edited by Hannah Ming Yit Ho & David Deterding, 1-17. Singapore: Springer.
- Durkheim, Emile. (1964 [1893]) *The division of labor in society*, translated by G. Simpson. New York: Free Press.
- Durkheim, Emile. (2010). 'From mechanical to organic'. In *Sociology: An Introductory Reader*, edited by A. Giddens & P. W. Sutton, 25-29. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Durkheim, Emile. (2014). *Durkheim: The division of labour in society*, edited by S. Lukes. Macmillan International Higher Education.

- Evans, Bethan. (2008). Geographies of Youth/Young People. *Geography Compass*, 2(5): 1659–1680.
- Forestry Department. (2015). 'Fifth national report to the convention on biological diversity. The Government of Brunei Darussalam'. <https://www.cbd.int/doc/world/bn/bn-nr-05-en.pdf>
- Haqqi, A. R. A. (2017). Islamic Law in State Life in Brunei Darussalam. *Journal of Malay Islamic Studies*, 1(2): 81-82.
- Higgins-Dunn, Noah & Berkeley, Lovelace Jr. (2020). 'Top US health official says the coronavirus is 10 times "more lethal" than the seasonal flu,' *CNBC News*, March 11, <https://www.cnn.com/2020/03/11/top-federal-health-official-says-coronavirus-outbreak-is-going-to-get-worse-in-the-us.html>
- Ho, Hannah M. Y. (2019). Women doing Malayness in Brunei Darussalam. *Southeast Asian Review of English*, 56(2): 147-165.
- Ho, Hannah M. Y. (2020a). The Violence of Othering and (non-)Indigenous Revival: Aamnton Alias' The Last Bastion of Ingei: Imminent as Postcolonial Speculative Fiction of Brunei Darussalam. *Southeast Asian Review of English*, 57(1): 55-79.
- Ho, Hannah M. Y. (2020b). Home is where the heart is: The Bruneian context". *Quarantined Across Borders*. June 23, <https://oaktrust.library.tamu.edu/handle/1969.1/188219>
- Ho, Hannah M. Y. (2021a). 'Localisation of Malay Muslim identity in Brunei Darussalam: A Modern Nation's Cultural and Economic Goals'. In *Engaging Modern Brunei: Research on Language, Literature and Culture*, edited by Hannah Ming Yit Ho & David Deterding, 127-143. Singapore: Springer.
- Ho, Hannah M. Y. (2021b). Chinese Bruneian Identity: Negotiating Individual, Familial and Transnational Selves in Anglophone Bruneian Literature. *The Wenshan Review of Literature and Culture*, 14(2): 1-34.
- Hornsby, Anne M. (2007). 'Solidarity, Mechanical and Organic'. In *The Blackwell Encyclopaedia of Sociology*, edited by George Ritzer. John Wiley & Sons.
- Horowitz, Jason. (2020). 'Italy's health care system groans under coronavirus – a warning to the world,' *The New York Times*. March 12, <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/03/12/world/europe/12italy-coronavirus-health-care.html>
- Human Development Report. (2019). 'Brunei Darussalam'. United Nations. http://www.hdr.undp.org/sites/all/themes/hdr_theme/country-notes/BRN.pdf.
- Hussainmiya, Bacha A. (2010). The Malay identity in Brunei Darussalam and Sri Lanka. *Southeast Asia: A Multidisciplinary Journal*, 10: 65-78.

- Khalik, Salma. (2020). 'Singapore facing two separate outbreaks: In the community and in foreign worker dormitories,' *The Straits Times*, April 21, <https://www.straitstimes.com/singapore/health/singapore-facing-two-separate-outbreaks-in-the-community-and-in-foreign-worker>
- Khan, Asif U. (2020). 'Brunei's youth facing unemployment,' *The ASEAN Post*, April 4, <https://theaseanpost.com/article/bruneis-youth-facing-unemployment>
- Knapton, Sarah. (2020). 'Lockdown may cost 200,000 lives, government report shows,' *The Daily Telegraph*, July 19, <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2020/07/19/lockdown-may-cost-200k-lives-government-report-shows/>
- Kon, James. (2020a). 'Brunei has a smooth curve,' *Borneo Bulletin*, April 2, <https://borneobulletin.com.bn/2020/04/brunei-has-a-smooth-curve/>
- Kon, James. (2020b). 'Brunei maintains flattened curve,' *Borneo Bulletin*, June 27, <https://borneobulletin.com.bn/2020/06/brunei-maintains-flattened-curve-against-covid-19/>
- Lee, Yen Nee. (2020). 'Southeast Asia could be the next coronavirus hot spot – These charts show why,' *CNBC*, April 20, <https://www.cnbc.com/2020/04/20/southeast-asia-could-be-the-next-coronavirus-hot-spot-these-charts-show-why.html>
- Lindsey, Tim & Steiner, Kerstin. (2016). Islam, the Monarchy and Criminal Law in Brunei: The Syariah Penal Code Order, 2013. *Griffith Law Review*, 25(4): 552–580.
- Low, Patrick K. C. (2018). Father leadership in Negara Brunei Darussalam. In Low, P. K. C. (Ed.), *Leading Successfully in Asia* (pp. 269-290). Singapore: Springer. https://www.researchgate.net/deref/http%3A%2F%2Fdx.doi.org%2F10.1007%2F978-3-319-71347-2_10?_sg%5B0%5D=h9jA9gDbBZNxbHCFawD_dYzv7LWchB_hjxhSeePHUZwwgSZsu0891toAyximB_4n9w6wPsdPAkUtkw16dcJzJlcyBYw.-QZVDxp-6DVtnDi7U6PMaHLi5nMJUXq11PO_vMHYx06TfB6QAfbtRjppqx4vgnNPvgLkZ_vpMgg3oqKCEXU31g
- Lukes, Steven. (Ed.) (2013). Preface. *Durkheim: The Division of Labor in Society*, translated by George Simpson, vii-x. Macmillan International Higher Education.
- Mallapaty, Smriti. (2020). How deadly is the coronavirus? *Nature*, 582: 467-468.
- MOE, Ministry of Education. (2020). 'How to support teaching and learning from home during COVID-19,' July 21. <http://www.moe.gov.bn/Pages/covid19support.aspx>
- MOFE, Ministry of Finance and Economy. Media Statement. (2020). March 30, <https://www.mofe.gov.bn/Press%20Room/Press%20Release%2030.03.2>

- [019%20\[English\]%20-%20Interim%20Measures%20to%20Assist%20all%20the%20Business%20Sectors%20During%20COVID-19.pdf](#)
- MOH, Ministry of Health. Media Statement. (2020a). March 10, [http://www.moh.gov.bn/Shared%20Documents/2019%20ncov/press%20releases/FINAL%20PRESS%20STATEMENT%20COVID-19%20INFECTION%2010%20MARCH%202020%20\(ENG\).pdf](http://www.moh.gov.bn/Shared%20Documents/2019%20ncov/press%20releases/FINAL%20PRESS%20STATEMENT%20COVID-19%20INFECTION%2010%20MARCH%202020%20(ENG).pdf)
- MOH, Ministry of Health. Media Statement. (2020b). March 19, <http://www.moh.gov.bn/Shared%20Documents/2019%20ncov/press%20releases/MEDIA%20STATEMENT%20ON%20THE%20CURRENT%20SITUATION%20OF%20THE%20COVID-19%20IN%20BRUNEI%20DARUSSALAM%20-%202019.03.2020.pdf>
- MOH, Ministry of Health. Media Statement. (2020c). April 6, [http://www.moh.gov.bn/Shared%20Documents/2019%20ncov/press%20releases/Media%20statement%20on%20the%20current%20situation%20of%20COVID-19%20in%20Brunei%20Darussalam%20\(06.04.2020\).pdf](http://www.moh.gov.bn/Shared%20Documents/2019%20ncov/press%20releases/Media%20statement%20on%20the%20current%20situation%20of%20COVID-19%20in%20Brunei%20Darussalam%20(06.04.2020).pdf)
- Mohamad, Siti Mazidah. (2020). Creative production of ‘COVID-19 social distancing’ narratives on social media. *Tijdschrift voor Economische en Sociale Geografie*, 111(3): 347-359.
- Muller, Dominik M. (2016). Paradoxical normativities in Brunei Darussalam and Malaysia: Islamic law and the ASEAN human rights declaration. *Asian Survey*, 56(3): 415-441.
- Nupus, Hayati. (2020). ‘Infections rise in Southeast Asia, Philippines Top 5,400,’ *Anadolu Agency*, April 15, <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/asia-pacific/infections-rise-in-se-asia-philippines-top-5-400/1806139>
- Othman, Azlan. (2020a). ‘Bruneians rank high in social media usage,’ *Borneo Bulletin*, February 10, <https://borneobulletin.com.bn/bruneians-rank-high-social-media-usage/>
- Othman, Azlan. (2020b). ‘Brunei marks two months without new COVID-19 cases,’ *Borneo Bulletin*, July 7, <https://borneobulletin.com.bn/2020/07/brunei-marks-two-months-without-new-covid-19-cases/>
- Pehin Aziz bin Begawan Pehin Udana.Hj Awang Umar. (1992). Melayu Islam Beraja sebagai falsafah Negara Brunei Darussalam. In *Sumbangsih UBD: Esei-esei mengenai Negara Brunei Darussala*, edited by A. B. Apong. Brunei: Universiti Brunei Darussalam.
- ‘Permanent residents (PRs) should be given same citizen rights as citizens.’ (2009). Embassy of the People’s Republic of China in Brunei Darussalam. March 23, <http://bn.china-embassy.org/eng/wlxw/t553198.htm>
- PMO, Prime Minister’s Office. (2020). His Majesty’s Titah. Brunei Darussalam. <http://pmo.gov.bn/PMO%20Pages/Titah-View.aspx>

- Prusark, Matthew. (2016). 'Brunei's economy running on empty,' *The Diplomat*, February 17, <https://thediplomat.com/2016/02/bruneis-economy-running-on-empty/>
- Schottmann, S. A. (2006). Melayu Islam Beraja: The Politics of Legitimation in a Malay Islamic Monarchy. *RIMA: Review of Indonesian and Malaysian Affairs*, 40(2): 111-139.
- 'Sistem Kebajikan Negara.' (2020). Ministry of Finance and Economy. Bandar Seri Begawan. <https://www.mofe.gov.bn/Lists/News/NewDispForm.aspx?ID=139>
- Skelton, T. (2002). 'Research on youth transitions: some critical interventions.' In *Young people in risk society: the restructuring of youth identities and transitions in later modernity*, edited by M. Cieslik, M. & G. Pollock, G., 100-116. Aldershot, UK: Ashgate.
- SPCO, Syariah Penal Criminal Code. (2013). Bandar Seri Begawan: Attorney General Chambers. http://www.agc.gov.bn/AGC%20Images/LAWS/Gazette_PDF/2013/EN/S069.pdf
- Stokes, E. K., Zambrano, L. D. and Anderson, K. N. (2020). 'Coronavirus disease 2019 case surveillance — United States, January 22–May 30, 2020.' *Morb Mortal Weekly Report*, 69: 759–765. <http://dx.doi.org/10.15585/>
- Sullivan, Michael. (2020). 'Singapore sees surge in COVID-19 cases, now has the highest number in Southeast Asia.' *National Public Radio*, April 20, <https://www.npr.org/sections/coronavirus-live-updates/2020/04/20/838324209/singapore-sees-surge-in-covid-19-cases-now-has-highest-number-in-southeast-asia>
<https://www.npr.org/sections/coronavirus-live-updates/2020/04/20/838324209/singapore-sees-surge-in-covid-19-cases-now-has-highest-number-in-southeast-asia>
- Talib, Naimah. (2002). A Resilient Monarchy: The Sultanate of Brunei and Regime Legitimacy in an Era of Democratic Nation-States. *New Zealand Journal of Asian Studies*, 4(2): 134-147.
- Thijssen, Peter. (2012). From Mechanical to Organic Solidarity, and Back: With Honneth beyond Durkheim. *European Journal of Social Theory*, 15(4): 454-470.
- Triggle, Nick. (2020). 'Coronavirus: Major disruption of cancer care revealed,' *BBC News*. June 11, <https://www.bbc.com/news/health-52985446>
- Ullah, A. K. M. A. & Ho, Hannah M. Y. (2020). Globalisation and Cultures in Southeast Asia: Demise, Fragmentation, Transformation. *Global Society*, 35(2): 191–206.
- Ullah, A. K. M. A. & Kumpoh, A. A. A. (2018). Diaspora community in Brunei: Culture, ethnicity and integration. *Diaspora Studies*, 12(1): 14-33. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09739572.2018.1538686>

- Ullah, A. K. M. A., Nawaz, F. & Chatteraj, Diotima. (2020). Locked Up Under Lockdown: The COVID-19 Pandemic and the Migrant Population. *Social Sciences and Humanities Open*.
<http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3631707>
- United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA). (2020). Definition of Youth. United Nations.
<https://www.un.org/esa/socdev/documents/youth/fact-sheets/youth-definition.pdf>
- Walker, Christian. (2020). 'Systemic racism makes COVID-19 much more deadly for African-Americans,' *Forbes*. June 18.
<https://www.forbes.com/sites/christianweller/2020/06/18/systemic-racism-makes-covid-19-much-more-deadly-for-african-americans/#53c0ebdb7feb>
- Wasil, Wardi. (2020). 'Health minister officiates new virology lab,' *The Bruneian News*, March 30, <https://www.thebruneian.news/health-minister-officiates-new-virology-laboratory/>
- WHO, World Health Organization. (2020). Accelerating a safe and effective COVID-19 vaccine. <https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/global-research-on-novel-coronavirus-2019-ncov/accelerating-a-safe-and-effective-covid-19-vaccine>
- Yildiz, Omer F. & Atanur, Mahmut. (2020). 'Coronavirus infections rise across Southeast Asia,' *Anadolu Agency*, April 11, <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/asia-pacific/coronavirus-infections-rise-across-southeast-asia/1801200>