Meeting The Needs of The Muslim Communication Community During The Pandemic

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ABSTRACT
This paper serves as an analysis and a review based on an exploratory two sharing session amongst Muslim teachers in Singapore. The objectives of this paper are to highlight how different layers of the population adapt and grapple with the challenges faced during the pandemic and individual positive responses can assist to strengthen the community, specifically the Muslim communication community in Singapore. This paper seeks to dismantle the multifaceted effects of the Covid-19 pandemic, there by allowing room to explore and analyse how different layers of the Singaporean population grapple with these unprecedented challenges, specifically within the Muslim population. This paper used qualitative method by reviewing and exploring various government policies and measuring that were taken to ring fence these issues, thereby adding to the current literature that are in tandem to assist countries with better preparedness in future. Professional sharing sessions were conducted in 2021 with 60 members of the Muslim teaching community in Singapore. It explored how much they know of the services and resources rendered by the national and community they could tap on so that they can share and support the Muslim community. The result of this study is providing some valuable insights on how individual especially Muslim teachers can choose to positively respond and adopt self-care to nurture their holistic well-being in a cosmopolitan city of Singapore.
Keywords: **Covid-19 Pandemic; Mental Health; Muslim Teachers**

INTRODUCTION

As the world weathers through yet another wave of the coronavirus pandemic, the SARS-CoV-2 virus is seemingly unrelenting and unwavering in its course. As of time of writing, it has gripped 471 million people and claimed over 6 million deaths worldwide. Not only has it been an arduous discourse, it has resurfaced negatively-suppressed emotions and highlighted jarring disparities between communities. Governments and legislation had to constantly think on their feet and take quick strategic action to curtail not only the spread of the virus, but also its repercussions on the community, and the world, as a whole.

People are cut off from the physical environment around them as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, which has raised alarm throughout the world. Countries have raced to halt the virus' quick spread. Governments have enacted a variety of lockdowns, quarantines, and isolation policies, as well as the closure of facilities, travel restrictions, and the cancellation of social events. Cities all across the world are now desolate, with residents forced to remain indoors due to government regulations or personal preference, leaving severe social, economic,

and political ramifications. According to (Lacalle, 2021), there is a severe worldwide catastrophe that will have a significant impact on the planet. Social cohesion, a sense of belonging, teamwork, and mutual support have emerged as potent drivers of resilience and adaptation to the exceptional stresses and risks in one of the largest viral epidemics in recent memory.

Making sure a communication channel is effective, reliable, and timely during pandemics is one of the largest difficulties to developing resilience to the shocks these crises generate (Huang et al., 2020). Social computing has made it possible to study and take use of the potential for collaborative work during disasters and catastrophes thanks to the rapid expansion of social media. Due to social media's extensive use and ongoing development of new uses, there has been a striking change in both individual and societal social behaviors. The process of digital transformation has seen extraordinary growth as COVID-19 continues to have an impact on everyone's lives and consumer behaviors. This growth may not stop even after the epidemic has gone (Kim & Walker, 2020). New platforms have been introduced by social media.

(Boyd & Martin, 2022) reaffirmed the fact that COVID-19 introduces individuals to cutting-edge ideas on a feeling of civic duty during a crisis. Social media's innovative tools provide the best channels for huge audiences to interact, work together, and show togetherness, especially during times of crisis (Gui et al., 2017), (Abdulhamid et al., 2021). By fostering connections between individuals and groups, these platforms have built crowdsourcing communities that transcend an individual's sense of self. Social media has played an unusual role in the COVID-19 situation. Due to the pandemic's initial global scope and the strong sense of community that all residents shared, risk perceptions and communication intensity both increased. As stated by (Lev-On, 2012).

(Martin & Boyd, 2020) claim that COVID-19 has demonstrated the need of a strong feeling of community in minimizing the effects of pandemics. People who feel part of a community have the impression that they are not the only ones going through a crisis and that other people are going through similar struggles. Although there are many reasons why people participate in social media crowdsourcing, it has been clear after previous crises that the main motivator is a sense of community. As a result, a key result of crowdsourcing is the unleashing of the wisdom of the multitude. The main advantage of crowdsourcing, according to (Sethi, 2017), is the knowledge of the crowd. Social media's collaborative nature enables groups with a variety of knowledge to produce and share.

There is a dearth of empirical study on the part of social media crowdsourcing during pandemics, according to a review of the literature. It also shows that, when it comes to crises and catastrophes, collaborative knowledge generation through social media has received very little attention. The wisdom of the crowd, a crucial result of crowdsourcing in emergency and crisis situations, has received little attention in the studies. Scholarly studies on the potential influence of sense of community on group knowledge generation, the wisdom of the crowd, and the perceived utility of social media in general and during pandemics like COVID-19 in particular are lacking. While the effect of community awareness on cooperative engagement is obvious, further.

The objectives of this paper are to highlight how different layers of the population adapt and grapple with the challenges faced during the pandemic, and how local government policies and individual positive responses can assist to strengthen the community, specifically the Muslim community in Singapore. This paper also serves to introduce novel and existing strategies for Muslim community practitioners at large to understand the different challenges faced by different groups in the community, largely focusing on the psycho-social as well as religious and economic repercussions of the pandemic. By doing so, relevant resources and national initiatives can be unveiled and explored further in order to support the different groups in the community better, as each group would have its own specific, individualised needs.

This research used qualitative methodology. The collected data using interview and observation. Professional sharing sessions were conducted in 2021 with 60 members of the Muslim teaching community in Singapore. The purpose was to surface, discuss and share the social and psychological impact of pandemic on the community. They are also to identify the challenges faced by the community and how they responded being madrasah teachers. We explored how much they know of the services and resources rendered by the national and community they could tap on so that they can share and support the Muslim community. The results of this sharing among the researchers and attendees will be presented in subsequent sections of the paper.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION
The Psychological Repercussions

One of the more tangible outcomes of the pandemic is the mental health condition of the community. About 13 per cent of over 1,000 participants in a study in Singapore reported symptoms of having anxiety or depression during the Covid-19 pandemic, but a heartening 81.8 per cent said they would be willing to seek professional help for mental health issues relating to the virus.

These were some of the preliminary findings from a study by the Institute of Mental Health (IMH) that were announced at the Singapore Mental Health Conference in August 2021. The top three sources of stress identified by participants were the risk of family members or friends getting infected by Covid-19, financial loss, such as losing work opportunities or having to take unpaid leave, and unemployment(Ministry of Health, n.d.).

Mental health has held a long legacy of being taboo in most communities and societies, along with the Malay/Muslim community as well. However, this topic has amplified and taken center-stage during the pandemic. It has to be said that though the pandemic has indeed advanced the numerous efforts to improve awareness, recognition and support for mental health, more can and should be done.

Workplaces are reforming to improve work-life balance, as more people work from home and this continues to remain the norm for the most part in the last 2 years. These national findings reflected by the local new agencies concur with the sharing done by our Muslims madrasah teachers.

End of Mental Health Conundrum

It has been recognised that an overarching strategy to resolve the negative repercussions of mental health facing the community was needed. The Government adopted a comprehensive, multi-pronged approach towards mental health promotion and suicide prevention. The key strategies are (a) building mental resilience, (b) encouraging help seeking and early identification, (c) supporting at-risk groups, and (d) providing crisis support. Government efforts thus far are widespread across all ethnic and religious groups, and do not favour one over another. The measures below are overarching in nature, and involve the Singapore population in its entirety, including the Muslim community. Where specific measures have targeted the Muslim community, these will be highlighted(Luthar & Cicchetti, 2000).

The Agency for Integrated Care (AIC) has been working with Social Service Agencies (SSA) to provide persons at risk of mental health conditions with related information and basic emotional support, and link them to community resources and social assistance, where required. Persons with mental health needs can access mental health services with their readily-accessible primary care physicians, or seek support from 24-hour hotlines by the Institute of Mental Health (IMH) and the Samaritans of Singapore (SOS).

SOS also has a text-based service to provide an alternative help-seeking platform for youths in crisis. The IMH Mental Health Helpline saw 50% more callers in 2020 compared to the same period in 2019, with a peak seen in April 2020 which coincided with the start of the Circuit Breaker in Singapore. Community organisations also play an important role in bolstering mental health support for the community. For example, the Singapore Muslim Women's Associatio n (PPIS), a non-profit organisation focused on working with and empowering Muslim women in their various roles, set up the SYM Academy to provide mental health support to Muslim women in Singapore.

Many Malay/Muslim organisations also joined hands in 2020 to form the SGTeguhBersatu ('Resilient in Unity') Taskforce, to provide a psycho-social resilience framework and an e-info toolkit to help individuals and families cope with stress and challenges during this pandemic.

(O'sullivan et al., 2020) Essential rural primary healthcare (PHC) teams and the populations they serve are in grave danger in pandemic conditions. However, the definition of pandemic policy development for rural contexts is still vague. The three themes of risk, resilience, and reaction are the focus of this paper, which draws on observations of the rural PHC response to the COVID-19 epidemic. With increased population requirements, socioeconomic disadvantage, and access and infrastructure issues, rural communities face complex dangers due to their mobility and interaction patterns. This calls for a focused risk assessment and communication that takes the local context into account. In order to support streams of pandemic-related healthcare alongside regular primary healthcare, pandemic resilience depends on competent and reliable PHC teams using flexible responses and resources. This depends on exploiting networks and problem-solving with limited resources.

Education and Schooling System

To combat the surmounting pressure faced by parents to support their children's home-based learning, on top of tending to their other commitments, the Ministry of Education (MOE), was firm on their stance to continue to keep schools as safe as possible, so that it can continue to remain open. Although it is recognised that extra-curricular activities are important for the holistic development of students, a graded, sequential approach had to be adopted when managing public expectations. Madrasah system in Singapore complied with the instruction and procedure stipulated by the government.

For our children and youth, MOE has enhanced mental health education through the revised Character and Citizenship Education curriculum in schools, and mental resilience and well-being programmes in Institutes of Higher Learning (IHLs). Teachers would also conduct check-ins to monitor students 'well-being and using classroom time to teach students how to cope with the pandemic. Within madrasahs, community partners like Club HEAL, which offers professional counselling support, partner with national programmes to support the well-being of madrasah students.

Teachers and academic staff were equipped and trained to identify students experiencing distress, provide timely support and refer students to counsellors or mental health professionals for further interventions when necessary. In addition, all schools including madrasahs will have a peer support structure in place by 2022.

Some of the community measures were directed to youths as well, as they had the highest prevalence of poor mental health, among adults those aged 18 to 29 years (21.5%). Meanwhile the prevalence for other age groups were much lower, ranging from 9.4% in the 60 to 74 years age group to 12.6% in the 30 to 39 years age group.

To combat this rise, 'The Smart Local 'was initiated to raise awareness on mental well-being and support avenues that youths can turn to. They have also partnered with Calm Collective Asia on dialogues to provide youths with the opportunities to speak openly about mental health, and to share self-care tips such as stress management strategies. A sister organisation, Friendzone, runs online community events where youths can meet up with their neighbours to talk about issues that concern them, thus allowing them to maintain social interactions.

On Youthopia, a portal providing information and content, youths can find resources on mental well-being and ways to navigate the online space safely, including how to respond to cyberbullying and deal with cyberwellness issues. National Youth Council's Youth Conversations in 2019 have also helped madrasah students gain awareness and engage other youths on issues such as equality, mental health, and jobs and the economy.

The elderly population in Singapore warrants some attention in the spotlight as well, given the increasingly ageing population of Singapore, as of June 2021. With the pandemic, being isolated and living on their own can adversely pave the way towards negative emotions. Respondents from a local study assessing the attitudes, behaviours and well-being of older Singaporeans during COVID-19, reported a stark increase in feelings of isolation as the Circuit Breaker began in April 2020, with larger increases for those living alone, as compared to a year

ago. However, data on the number of Malay/Muslim households could not be derived further for this study.

To address this, some of the government initiatives include 'SG Cares Volunteer Centres, which have been working closely with the partners in the SG Cares Community Networks to channel support towards community mental wellness initiatives in respective towns. Some of these centres have run 'Neighbour Cares', a community befriending programme aimed at reducing the risk of social isolation amongst seniors living in those towns. In partnership with AIC, SG Cares Volunteer Centres have also channeled volunteers to call seniors to check on their well-being. As part of the Alliance for Action (AfA) for Emerging Needs and Volunteerism, they also lead efforts to equip volunteers with skills and knowledge on mental wellness to reach out to residents in the Yuhua community who require support. The SG Cares SG Cares Volunteer Centres have also partnered with Youth Corps Singapore where youth volunteers reached out to low-income families and isolated seniors in the community.

With safe distancing measures in place, working from home became the standard norm for the past 2 years. When the pandemic was rife, parents became even more bogged down with the onslaught of home-based learning. Not only did the lines between personal and professional space blurred, parents had to take on an additional role as an educator as well. While some households in Singapore managed to accommodate the extra space required for both parents and children to be 'working', not everyone could afford such luxury. Living quarters that were cramped to begin with, proved a challenge to provide a conducive environment for children to focus on their studies.

These households may also not have Internet connections or have limited devices to be shared among multiple children, further complicating matters. Being in such a confined space can take a toll on mental health and cause stress, anxiety and anger. This may be due to lack of personal space, increased inactivity, and even fear about one's health or of infecting loved ones due to close proximity. This unfortunately created a significant impact on the Muslim community, whom a large proportion of the Malay population identify as.

As part of a task force initiative, Mendaki, a self-help Malay/Muslim organisation, has loaned out laptops to students who are awaiting approval for new ones under the NEU-PC Plus Programme. This is an initiative set up in 2006 by the Infocomm Media Development Authority to offer affordable computers to students from low-income households.

It is also heartening and noteworthy that despite the rise in mental health cases, 81.8% of respondents said they would seek professional help if they were to develop any emotional or psychological problems related to Covid-19, which again translates positively from the steps that have been taken to address and counter this pressing issue.

The Social Repercussions

A flurry of initiatives has been underway and launched in a calibrated manner, in a bid to curb the detrimental psycho-social effects of the pandemic. One of them included Uplift, an inter-agency task force which was set up in 2018 to aid this launch. Mendaki is its key community partner, with mentoring programmes to provide good role models that students can

aspire to, academic support programmes to help level up those who have fallen behind, and bursaries and scholarships to encourage students to do well.

In addition, 'Row Plus' was introduced by PPIS in the same year to help 200 affected families as well as ITE students who follow through their ITE programs such as 'Frenz' and 'Gems' as well as youth programs, Youth Edge as well as their families who are also affected by the outbreak. The funds raised helped to tide them through Ramadan but also in the following months to come. This joint collaboration with Singapore Malay Chamber of Commerce and Industry (SMCCI) undertakes an effort to mobilize energy to help our Muslim community in need.

The pandemic has also inadvertently rekindled spent, built-up emotions in the society, resulting in a spike in hate incidents worldwide. Singapore is no exception. More than 60 per cent of those polled in an Institute of Policy Studies study were concerned over increased suspicion between people of different social backgrounds as a result of COVID-19. This figure is based on 22 waves of online polls. Such sentiments were earlier directed at Chinese nationals in January 2020 after the virus spread from Wuhan, China.

Similar sentiments were directed at Muslims in Singapore, after an outbreak occurred in Malaysia following a large-scale religious gathering around that period. South Asian migrant workers living in dorms were also targeted when xenophobic rhetoric made its way into social circles, further widening the divide. Given the melting pot of ethnicities and religions in Singapore, it is ever more crucial that we learn to respect each other's differences and not let that be the divide between.

Singapore's approach to maintaining our common space has created room for every community to enjoy our diverse cultural heritage, without expecting any specific segment of the community to give up its rich inheritance, culture and heritage. Over time, our community's counterpoise continues to remain respectful and inclusive, and this has allowed us to live together in peace for more than half a century. This approach remains fundamental to tackling discrimination of all sorts, and strengthening racial and religious harmony in Singapore(Houhing, n.d.).

The Ministry of Culture, Community and Youth (MCCY) also works with other Government agencies and community partners to provide opportunities for Singaporeans from diverse backgrounds to have meaningful interactions with one another. In a world that is increasingly polarised, we must be committed to growing the common space in which all Singaporeans can live, work and play together, and share in the experiences that bind us (Tai, 2020).

An interfaith initiative organised in conjunction with the national body promoting racial harmony, OnePeople.sg held a dialogue session, which covered topics on xenophobia and racism manifested during a crisis and how they can be tackled. For instance, abroad, Singaporean Chinese were beaten up in the UK and Australia because of racist sentiments over the origin of the virus (Tai, n.d.).

The pattern is clear: With a spike in COVID-19 cases, negative sentiments of the xenophobic and racist variety increase. A forum letter implicated poor hygiene culture among
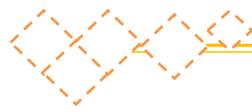
migrant workers, clouded by a microscopic view, failed to acknowledge the imperfect, cramped living conditions in migrant worker dormitories which did not permit for much infection control. This in turn exponentially rose case numbers to epic proportions. While xenophobic comments online may not necessarily translate to bigoted offline engagement, individuals fueled by such comments online may act in a socially irresponsible manner.

The Inter-Religious Organisation regularly works directly with faith groups to strengthen their digital presence and promote inter-religious knowledge. It also launched a digital initiative in 2019 called 'We the People of Singapore 'that provides a platform for Singaporeans to talk about each other's religion to gain a deeper understanding[6]. This organisation comprises of religious leaders and members from the Hindu, Jewish, Zoroastrian, Buddhist, Taoist, Jain, Christian, Muslim, Sikh and Baha'i faith communities in Singapore (Dissanayake et al., 2019).

With such measures in place, it comes as no surprise that majority of respondents in a local study by the Singapore Muslim Women's Association (PPIS) last year, reported no change in their career or work aspirations, as well as personal aspirations, at 43.5% and 51.9% respectively. Singaporean Muslim Women also believed that it is essential to integrate and grow in tandem with the modern progressive society, and "a willingness to embrace a multicultural society and not harbour judgment against the non-Muslim community". This study however is only limited to Singaporean Muslim women and is reflective only of this population subset.

The Religious Repercussions

The Islamic Religious Council of Singapore (MUIS) takes reference from the medical advisory considered by the Multi-Ministry Taskforce on capacity limits for worship services and safe management measures to be implemented for religious activities. As we navigate the waters of an endemic COVID-19, more religious activities in the mosques can be held and congregants are able to attend the mosques once again, with extended opening hours for prayers. More worshippers are also able to walk-in to the mosques now to perform their individual and congregational daily prayers. Friday prayer spaces have since increased by about 60%, coupled with corresponding increases in capacity for other religious activities at mosques, allowing a total of about 100,000 congregants to perform their religious obligations and participate in religious activities every week (Juhari, 2020).

However, close community cooperation along with a cautious approach remains underlined in order to ensure safety of its staff and congregants. Muslims are still encouraged to pray at home where possible.

The Economic Repercussions

While Malays currently make up more than 13 per cent of the Singapore population, only 6 per cent are in the Professionals, Managers, Executives and Technicians (PMET) category. Thus, a significant portion of the Malay community are working in subjacent vocations which may render them vulnerable to the threat of unemployment. For instance, Malays make up 17 per cent of the rank and file in the sales and services industry, one of the most affected by the Covid-19 outbreak(Selvarajah et al., 2013).

Malay households continued to have larger households on average (3.7 persons) as compared to Chinese households (3.1 persons) and Indian households (3.4 persons)[4]. Over the last decade from 2010 to 2020, even though Malays had registered a higher median household income from work per household member ($1,594 in 2020), compared with $2,603 for the Chinese and $2,521 for Indians, this was still lower in terms of total median household income (Justin Ong, n.d.).

In a poll conducted by the National Youth Council in the latter half of 2020, youths perceive mental well-being to be a key challenge, and are particularly anxious about their future and finances. Feeling anxious over future uncertainty (53%), stress over finances (41%) and worries over academic or work performance (39%) were youths 'top mental health stressors.

To address the economic challenges and uncertainties with employment, a few measures were put in place. ComCare forms a key component of Singapore's social safety net, which provides eligible low-income families who are unable to meet their basic living needs with a comprehensive package of assistance.

The Covid-19 pandemic has also affected our womenfolk, whether they are working or housewives. Womenfolk are likened to the glue that binds the family together, and some grapple with caregiver responsibilities to their families, on top of assuming other roles in society. PPIS therefore has set up the WIN Fund for women in need which aims to assist, support and empower them during these trying times. This is in collaboration with DEWI, the women's subsidiary of SMCCI.

The Covid-19 Muis Support Fund (CMSF) was also launched in August 2020 to provide one-off financial assistance to eligible Muslim households who were economically impacted by the pandemic. Households that had a per-capita-income (PCI) of between $400 and $1000 and were not receiving assistance under the Zakat Financial Assistance (FA) or ComCare schemes were eligible to apply[6]. There were 5,547 successful applications for the one-off financial assistance under CMSF. Those who qualified were also encouraged to apply for the Zakat FA. Currently, about 370 of these households continue to be supported with monthly Zakat FA. Muis also directs Zakat FA beneficiaries who are eligible for further ComCare support to the Social Service Offices (SSOs).

Another initiative by Mendaki is their Mendaki Sense's Program Bijak Belanja, which engages young and low-income families to empower them with financial literacy skills, illustrated from a practical management of daily household expenses. Other topics that are covered include home ownership, basic investment and management of inheritance. Over the last two and a half years, more than 600 participants have benefitted from Mendaki Sense's Program Bijak Belanja.

Recognising that youths are our future, various jobs and development opportunities under SGUnited Jobs and Skills Package have been set up to aid job-seekers and curtail the unemployment rate. As of end-April 2021, more than 110,000 locals, including graduates and working youths, have been placed accordingly. Additional revenue to support more traineeships and placements have been channeled as of early 2022. MCCY and the National Youth Council

(NYC) are also working hand-in-hand and complementing these efforts through initiatives such as our YouthTech Programme and our Youth Corps Internship Scheme.

To further support the abovementioned initiatives and provide direct assistance, Singapore has made the COVID-19 Support Grant, Temporary Relief Fund, and Recovery Grant accessible to youths in lower-to-middle-income households who have lost their mode of income, or had to go on no pay leave due to the pandemic. This is similar to the abovementioned WIN fund, but is made available to more members of the public.

Pointers to Promote Physical and Mental Well-Being

With all the above-mentioned government measures and fiscal assistance, at the individual level, one should also resolve to look after oneself better as we navigate these new norms. To curtail the widespread psycho-social and medical consequences of the pandemic, the individual has been, time and time again, bombarded with a smorgasbord of health information and ways to prevent the transmission and infection of the specific coronavirus, fact or fiction cast aside. A good way to ensure a holistic health and well-being is to look at all aspects of our lives and aim for better. This not only includes physical activity, dietary and stress reduction, but also in much overlooked aspects such as sleep, gratefulness, and positive social connections.

With physical activity, our bodies produce a feel-good hormone called endorphins when we start engaging. When our muscles contract, similar hormones called myokines are also propelled into the bloodstream, which produces a positive effect on the rest of our organs. These hormones are addictive in nature, which explains why one may feel a 'runner's high 'when we engage in physical activity. These hormones are kickstarted even after a few short minutes as well. The poverty of the word 'exercise 'here cannot be stressed enough, that one does not need to engage in exercises just to feel better from these natural hormones. A simple walk or even stretching in between breaks at work, can lead to positive effects on our mental and physical well-being [15]. Ideally, one should aim for at least 10,000 steps a day as recommended, and engage in moderate-intensity exercises for at least 30 minutes on most days of the week. Finding an activity to do with the rest of the family can not only help our wellbeing but our families 'as well, and this can also reinvigorate that positive social connection between one another.

Hippocrates once said, 'Let food be thy medicine, and medicine be thy food'. This saying has been one of the pillars of lifestyle medicine, which is supported by a large database of scientific evidence purporting immense cardiovascular and immunity benefits from a whole food, predominantly plant-based diet[15]. Eating a rainbow is one such example, and the ripple effects it has on our mood and physical well-being has not been refuted. Other types of food that spawn positivity include salmon, berries, nuts and spinach. In 2021, during the holy month of fasting, Ramadan, Singapore's Health Promotion Board (HPB) collaborated with various Malay/ Muslim organisations, such as Mendaki, Malay Activity Executive Committees (MAEC) and the mosques to create awareness of a more wholesome diet and encourage smart eating habits by distributing food packs containing healthier items to more than 24,500 foreign families. This year, a similar approach has been slated to recur.
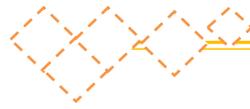
It has also been shown that our gut microbiome can affect our mental health and cognition, by way of the vagal nerve axis, which connects our brain to our intestines. This would explain the phenomenon 'butterflies in our stomach 'when one feels anxious or nervous. Another simple way to boost our cognition and mental wellbeing is to ensure we are adequately hydrated, that we meet our optimal intake of at least 8-10 glasses of water a day. Plain water is best, and one may add cut fruits for a more flavourful drink.

Aside some of the individualistic approaches to nurture our health holistically, we can look towards employing and cherishing positive social connections. This can be in the form of a person we feel a sense of warmth and closeness to, a support group, or even a gym class. The threatening and uncomfortable ambiguity hinders a person from feeling in control, which causes maladaptive psychological reactions like anxiety. In the COVID-19 pandemic as a worldwide catastrophe and stressor, (Özmete & Pak, 2020) sought to define the relationship between the state/trait anxiety levels and perceived social support. Our key prediction was that anxiety levels would be negatively impacted by perceived social support. The relational screening concept was utilized in a cross-sectional community-based investigation. Between March 20 and April 15, 2020, 630 people completed an online survey to acquire the data. During the epidemic, people's anxiety levels were high, especially state anxiety. For several variable categories, the levels of perceived social support and state/trait anxiety were also examined. When anxiety levels were reduced considerably.

There have been many government initiatives and legislation alike set up by the Singapore government in a bid to support its citizens weather through the pandemic. However, data on the assistance and support garnered for the local Muslim population remains limited and more studies should be done to ascertain if different ways of reaching out are needed in light of the pandemic and different social issues this local population face. More data to assess if majority of their needs have been met should also be undertaken as part of an expansive initiative. Data on the local Muslim population themselves would be an effective way to review these initiatives and if a different calibrated response tailored to specific groups within the Muslim population should be undertaken.

(Hashim, 2020) has taken a giant societal leap forward to churn out a study based on the Singapore Muslim Women, their needs and roles in society, and avenues to nurture themselves holistically, spiritually and economically, which is very much welcomed[8]. This study however is only limited to Singaporean Muslim women and is reflective only of this population subset. More of such data is welcomed, especially if it extends to the broader local Muslim population, as a large part of our resilience and strength as Muslims hinges on our faith and direct relationship to God.

CONCLUSION

There has been a plethora of incentives, initiatives and large organisations rallying together to aid Singaporeans tide through the challenges and uncertainties throughout this pandemic. A more coordinated effort focusing on effective social delivery and ensuring prudent fiscal expenditures can be enhanced. At the same time, Singaporeans including the Malay
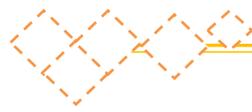
Muslims are encouraged to take ownership of their health and tap on the national resources made readily available. Though the path forward may be laced with uncertainty, a light awaits at the end of this tunnel, and we should instill hope that the community, and the world, will prevail against this pandemic, each by doing our part.

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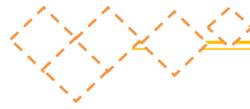
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