

# Who Let the Dog and Cat Out? The Emergence of Stray Animal Care Non-Governmental Organisations in Brunei Darussalam

Nurul Farhanah Alikhan & Meredian Alam 

Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, Universiti Brunei Darussalam, Bandar Seri Begawan, Brunei Darussalam

✉ meredian.alam@ubd.edu.bn

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## Abstract

Until today, the existence of stray animals remains a source of contention between the public and the authorities. Public policy seems to be elusive in regulating this phenomenon, as it presents sociocultural conundrums. While there is a continued unclarity in the government regulations, cultures, and normative values; non-government organisations emerged with autonomous resources to take care of stray animals. The present study examines the efforts of several Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) in Brunei that are committed to the rescue and treatment of stray animals via the rising phenomenon of stray animals. Despite receiving no financial support from the Government, these stray animal care organisations consistently forge informal co-operative networks with members of the public and non-governmental organisations; in order to sustain their resources, maintain daily operations, and manage finances and other stray animal-related health issues.

**Keywords:** Activists; Brunei; Pro-Animal Care Movement; Stray Animals

## INTRODUCTION

Stray animals are ownerless animals, mainly consisting of cats and dogs (Hawes et al., 2018; Jaroš, 2018; Kim & Lee, 2021). This includes unwanted pets whose owners have revoked all



responsibilities as a pet owner (Guenther, 2020), and it then may reproduce and contribute to the growing number of strays (Seid & Terefe, 2019). The number of stray animals is increasing at a rapid rate in Brunei. It is estimated that strays make up around 10 per cent of Brunei's population, which is around 40,000 (Hamit, 2019). This issue will persist if not regulated. Strays are a contentious topic because of their unsanitary living conditions, which could lead to the spread of diseases (Chan, 2016). They are viewed as polluting the environment because they scavenge for food (Palmer, 2003). Stray dogs are also dangerous to society as they can become violent (Srinivasan, 2019), especially if they are starving (Anisimov & Ryzhenkov, 2019).

This investigation of stray animal advocacy is motivated by the '*illusio*' (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 32), referring to a person's belief, that they can take the goal of a game they play daily seriously. This *illusio* provides the intensions about social value in a very real and performative sense (Bourdieu, 1993). To this extent, the *illusio* has been embroiled with authors' biographical identity, as someone born in a family that treated animals with compassion. Seeing how effortlessly and comprehensively animal abuses are exhibited, distresses people who empathize with animals as living beings. On the other hand, it is disheartening for someone, who loves animals to control their act of kindness, such as feeding them around a disapproving society. For someone who favors animals, questions arise as to why people are deemed abusive towards innocent beings? Thinking about how humans can carry out barbaric acts against animals is frightening. In the conceptual view of the authors, allowing stray animals to roam in public spaces without food or assistance or even not getting proper treatment from people around, is a 'normal incident' in Brunei's public space. This kind of phenomenon arises as a result of the normalization allowed by the country. In Bourdieu's perspective, this kind of situation is a '*doxa*', alluding to 'the point of

view of those who dominate by dominating the state; and who have constituted their point of view as universal by constituting the state' (Bourdieu, 1999, p. 57). Because of the cultural and religious values held by the Bruneians, the compassion for stray animals, is more or less non-existent. However, amid the oasis of lack of care for stray animals, a group of individuals dedicate their hearts, minds, attention, energy, and limited resources to caring for stray animals. The study's objective is to describe the social and capital support, that stray animal organisations get from the people, state, and other organisations in Brunei.

### **A Review on Stray Animals Organisation Worldwide**

Many diseases can be contracted through cats and dogs, especially strays, as they are not vaccinated and may take shelter in an unhygienic area. Cats may have Feline Leukemia - Feline Immunodeficiency Virus, Rabies, and Feline Panleukopenia (Akhtardanesh et al., 2010). Dogs can have many skin infections, digestive problems, and Rabies. Rabies is a concern, as it can spread to humans through a bite (Nigg & Walker, 2009). Historically in Istanbul, the role of the animals is for vermin control (Yilmaz et al., 2000). In Turkey, where Muslims are around 98% of the total population, and follows Islam as a religion, teaches respect towards all species. Strays are fed by people or groups of people who dedicate their time looking after local strays (Gündoğdu, 2018). Feeding strays indiscriminately is discouraged in Istanbul (Pearson, 2017). Feeding them without planning to trap them and sterilize them, may also increase the problem that stray bring. The bowls of food and water can be vectors for diseases that are contracted through body fluids. The site can also lead to fights and diseases that can spread among animals, such as Rabies, which can be transmitted to humans through a bite (Cliquet et al., 2014).

The increasing number of abandoned and free-roaming pets, mainly cats and dogs, has become a problem in many countries. The population density of stray depends largely on habitat, culture, and socio-economic conditions (Voslářvá & Passantino, 2020). Previously, the solution was to kill or euthanize these animals in large numbers. Over the last 4 to 5 years, the perception of killing healthy cats and dogs has changed. This leads to the rise of animal care non-governmental organisations (Sandoe et al., 2019). Being part of animal care movements has its own risks and rewards. This includes the emotional intensity of the work as well as level of commitment to activism that impacts the activists' relationship, career, and self-identity. The first organized movement for Animal Advocacy was initiated in England in 1824, when "Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals" was formed. From 1840, Queen Victoria became the patron and attached the prefix "Royal" to the name, hence now it is known as the "Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals" (RSPCA) (Donald, 2019). To add to this, animal activists experience several challenges, such as the stereotypical portrayal of overly emotional and irrational activists (Gorski et al., 2019). The organisations are principally built based on alternative movements, which highlights self-improvement and limited changes to individual beliefs and behaviour.

Turkey initiated, Animal Protection Law in 2004 and state policy to release Trap-Neuter-Return (TNR) or find a home for the strays. TNR improves the colonies of Feral cats. On the campus of Texas A&M, a study was conducted on 123 stray cats for the TNR program; the next year, there was no new litter around the campus. TNR is the most humane way of dealing with the overpopulation of strays (Loyd & Miller, 2010). One other method is called the "Catch and Kill", which not only is inhumane, but has also been found to be more expensive and ineffective (Nadal, 2019). Adoption is also found to be ineffective,

as millions of strays are unable to be adopted. This is because, adoption is a time-consuming process. Another method is relocation; the animals may be evacuated to a remote area with fewer humans, which stresses the animals and makes them suffer. In Istanbul, cat sanctuaries situated in the urban spaces are created to provide food and shelter for strays; however, this does not solve the problem of overpopulation ([Mattson et al., 2015](#)). Denmark has a requirement of all dogs to be registered before the age of 8 weeks, and the people comply with this ([Sandøe et al., 2019](#)). Moreover, the dogs must be kept behind fences in gardens or on a leash when walking. Some Danish owners, when no longer able to take care of their cats and dogs, can either sell them, give them away, euthanize them, or can take them to a shelter, where sometimes they have to pay the handling fees ([Thuesen et al., 2022](#)). All the shelters in Denmark are owned by NGOs or private individuals. There are no stray dogs in Denmark, wandering around freely. All stray dogs are picked up by the Police or Emergency Private Service and are placed in custody. The dog is then promoted through advertisements, with the hope the owner will claim back the dog. Of course, there are some costs that the owner needs to pay. If no one is claiming, the dog will be taken to a shelter ([Sandøe et al., 2019](#)).

### **Brunei as the Setting of the Scene**

Brunei Darussalam is a country, and has a land area of 5,765 km<sup>2</sup>. It is located on the northern coast of Borneo, between the South China Sea and Sarawak, Malaysia. Brunei-Muara, Tutong, Belait, and Temburong are the four districts of Brunei Darussalam. Bandar Seri Begawan, Brunei's capital and biggest city, is situated in the Brunei-Muara region. Brunei's population is approximately 400,000. Brunei's population is expected to reach 453,600 by 2020 ([Ministry of Finance and Economy, 2020](#)). The Department of Economic Planning and Statistics estimates that of the 453,600 Bruneians, 298,400 are Malay,

46,400 are Chinese, and 108,800 are 'Others' ([Ministry of Finance and Economy, 2020](#)). In Brunei, Islam is the official religion, and the majority of the population is Muslim. The Islamic community dominate Brunei (78.8%), and 8.7% of the population is identified as Christians, 7.8% as Buddhists, and 4.7 per cent as other religious views ([Public Service Department, 2020](#)). While other faiths are not prohibited in private, they are restricted and regulated in public according to Islamic beliefs. Many second or third-generation Bruneian Chinese are "stateless" ([Loo, 2009](#)). The only option for "stateless" Bruneian Chinese citizens, to engage in national life is to assimilate into the designated MIB identity, which subsequently comes with it the benefits of Malayness ([Loo, 2009](#)). In comparison to the majority of Malays, Chinese Bruneians are a minority ([Talib, 2002: 145](#)). No major policy changes have been made to boost national participation. Government efforts successfully restrict Bruneian Chinese presence and broader influence is seen as a threat to MIB ideology and hence the monarchy's legitimacy.

Brunei is actually a culturally diverse state. In the South China Sea, Brunei was historically a key trading hub between Malaysia, China, the Philippines, and Indonesia. In the light of the vernacular culture, [Haji-Othman \(2005\)](#) invented that Brunei's ethnic diversity includes Chinese, Brunei Malays, Belait, Kedayan, Dusun, Bisaya, Murut, Sama-Baiiau, and Indians. Following [Fanselow \(2014\)](#), an anthropologist who pursued his years of an ethnographic study on the locality of Bruneians, the Belait People, mostly Muslim natives, who live in the Belait district are recognized as *Bumiputera* (the locals) by the Brunei Constitution. This group has assimilated Malay culture and language, making them look like Malays. Concerning Brunei's Chinese ethnic's historical trajectory, [Loo's investigation \(2009\)](#) revealed that ethnic Chinese in Brunei are people with full or partial Chinese ancestry, particularly Han Chinese, who are citizens or

residents of Brunei. In addition to these findings, Tolman (2016) uncovered that many ethnic Chinese Bruneians have been in the country for generations. The majority of dog owners in Brunei are non-Muslim locals. Dogs are kept in homes and yards to provide security and to deter thieves. Pet dogs are kept in the fenced yard of the house, to avoid disturbance to pedestrians, people, or neighbors.

In many cases, dogs that have reached adulthood and have bred or are no longer wanted by their owners, are immediately dumped in the forest in secluded locations far from settlements, so that they are not seen by people or authorities. Since it is expensive to neuter a dog, not all owners do so. This incident has resulted in a relatively uncontrollable population of stray animals in Brunei. Meanwhile, the majority of the cats are kept by Bruneians, both Muslims and Non-Muslims. Cats are considered The Prophet Muhammad's (PBUH) favorite animal by Muslim residents. This animal is thought to bring blessings into the home. Cats have a similar fate to dogs. If the owner no longer wants it, it will be abandoned in a remote location, such as a forest or a field. Unfortunately, the growing number of stray cats is uncontrollable as a result of this situation. Stray animals have long been a public concern in urban Brunei. Still, there are no clear efforts from authorities or related positions to conduct rescue efforts. Indeed, Bruneians have a high level of trust in authorities, when it comes to dealing with a variety of public issues (Idris, 2021), including stray animals. However, in Brunei, the bureaucratic process for dealing with public problems is notoriously slow and unresponsive (Müller, 2018). As a result, the public is ambivalent about the existence of stray animals and leaves their fate to qualified non-state parties, such as the five organisations mentioned in this article. Slow bureaucratization in Brunei can be held responsible to be one of the causes towards the public's perception of the authorities' slow treatment of stray animals.



In Brunei, as the population is mainly Muslim, holding or keeping dogs as a pet is considered forbidden. Therefore, animal cruelty, especially towards stray dogs is considered 'normal'. Animal abuse is taken less seriously, even though, there are laws that protect animals. The solution that Bruneian always come up with is poisoning them. Definitely, poisoning animals is not the solution towards increasing number of strays, but it is also inhumane as the animals suffer tremendously for few hours before they are finally dead. The body is then left to decompose openly. This cycle of violence will persist in coming generations too, as it is normalized. Ascione (1993) deemed animal cruelty as socially unacceptable, whereby unnecessary pain or distress is executed towards animals. This excludes the killing of farm animals humanely, hunting, the study of animals in research, and unintentional actions that cause harm.

Several Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) in Brunei, including Sejahtera Community, Paws Up TV, Felipcookiesbymira, Meeting for Paws, and several others are carrying out Trap, Neuter, and Release (TNR) in an attempt to reduce the number of strays. Trap, Neuter, and Release (TNR) entail that the stray animals are trapped, spayed or neutered, and returned to their original place, provided the place is safe. They are mainly funded by donations from public. In tackling the issue of stray animals, the root of the problem should be addressed, namely the responsibility of a person in having pets, which is massive. Brunei is an Islamic country where society is religiously conservative and holding the belief that dogs are impure (*najis*), and it is forbidden to touch a dog unnecessarily, according to *Mazhab Syafie'* (Kassim, 2014).

### **Bricolage as Theoretical Framework**

Bricolage is a way of being creative and flexible, of making do with what you have. It implies a structural split between ongoing processes and intermediate results (Desa & Basu, 2013). Since



bricolage can use things in different ways (Garud & Karnøe, 2003), it stands to reason that the resource's validity can also be employed in different ways (Phillips & Tracey, 2007). In the process of reusing and remaking resources, the bricoleur or actors can intentionally (or unintentionally) set off neural association by learning organizational forms that have already been legitimized or even unjustified (Phillips & Tracey, 2007). By augmenting resources, bricolage allows a social venture to recombine three processes of legitimacy – moral, cognitive, and pragmatic – in order to survive a conflict with the institutional environment (Baker & Nelson, 2005). This process of change through bricolage can make institutional transformation seem normal as the repurposed resource combo itself becomes accepted. Bricolage is a suitable approach to this research, as the findings confirm that stray animal non-government organizations in Brunei developed the stray animal rescuing initiative, initially, with existing resources, and social support from likeminded people who were empathetic and sympathetic to the well-being of stray animals. Bricolage is a way of solving problems and taking advantage of chances by using undervalued, unused, or rejected resources that are often free or cheap (Deruelle, 2016).

The institution or organization may have to use bricolage because they cannot afford to pay for more normal tools (Baker et al., 2003). This process, on the other hand, can sometimes lead to new ways of doing things that were not planned. Also, the institutions may see things differently when it comes to the value of cheap resources that are thrown away and how they can be used in new ways to create value. So, bricolage could be used as a design philosophy, where the respective institutions purposely use things that have been thrown away to make new products and ideas (Kickul, et al., 2018). This means that bricolage allows institutions to be based on the recognition of imagined benefits and not on necessity (Guo et al., 2016). So,

bricolage is often a way for social ventures to deal with a lack of resources (Crupi et al., 2022), but it can also be a way for social ventures to find new ways to expand their operations and/or their goal (Sarkar, 2018).

What is interesting about bricolage is not just that it starts with little. What is captivating are the transformational processes that can happen when businesses with few resources use and mix cheap or free resources that are sitting on a back shelf (Yang, 2018). Bricolage is a way for social projects to put together resources (Yang, 2018), but it can also be part of a process of actor-led societal change (Welter et al., 2016). Material bricolage, labor bricolage, and skills bricolage are the three parts that make up the resource activation through bricolage combined variable (Yu & Wang, 2021) Materials, labor, and skills are all different types of resources that new businesses need. Individual acts of bricolage cover a wide range of things, such as collecting and storing actual inputs, the origin and range of skills used by staff, not following legal standards, industry practices, or legal rules, and the nature of their social network (Fisher, 2012). Overall, bricolage lets the institution get real use out of resources and recombines symbolic principles, resources, and practices to change institutions.

## **METHOD**

This study involved several activities, such as determining research interests, reviewing preliminary literature, establishing research objectives and questions, creating interview protocols, and analysing of the data (Patton, 2014). The present study employed qualitative data collection with semi-structured interviews. The qualitative method was verified to be more effective in collecting data on sensitive information. The key questions for semi-structured interview were 1) the cultural and social problems of stray animal that motivate you to establish this organization, 2) how the organisation

secures financial and non-financial supports (e.g manpower) from public to sustain the daily operations, 3) what strategies the organisation employ to publicize problems of the stray animal, and 4) what the key challenges in everyday's management.

Drawn upon fieldwork, with the advancement of technology, these stray animal care organisations utilize social media to reach society to collectively care for stray animals (Buddle et al., 2018). An organisation was contacted through its main social media page, on Facebook or Instagram. In all, 5 (five) well-known animal care movement organisations in Brunei were participating in this study and they are the only recognised non-government organisations working on this matter in the country. They are : 1) Izamarina Harun Taylor Brunei-Petstaycation, 2) Basma Bassam Bishawi, 3) Felipcookiesbymira, 4) Pawsuptv, and 5) Sejahtera Community Brunei. The interviewees participating in this original study were the director or chairperson of each organisation working on stray animal livelihood.

Three of the in-depth semi-structured interviews were conducted face-to-face. While the other two were conducted using *WhatsApp* Video Call Service, with the reason being, one was in the midst of wedding preparations; and the other is currently in his hometown, Jordan. The interview process took one month to complete and was conducted during the month of February 2023. All face-to-face interviews were conducted at Cafes and Restaurants situated in Bandar Seri Begawan. The duration of interviews ranged from 50 minutes to 150 minutes. Following which, the data were transcribed, reviewed, and thematically coded.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **Bricolage 1: The Rise of Stray Animal Advocacy Organisations**

Social media platforms are effectively used as social spaces for spreading information and engaging the public virtually. For example, these organisations hold online discussions about the importance of stray animal feeding, network with the larger community and private company stakeholders, and inform the public about donation as well as adoption opportunities. Each of the stray animal advocacy organisations interviewed, was founded at a different time as they had to plan about manpower and financial resources as well as public support and outreach models.

Brunei Darussalam is the Southeast Asian country with the highest social media use. In Brunei's resides most Instagram users in the world in terms of population ratio, that is 319,900 users or 89 per cent audiences (by eligible audiences over the age of 13), while the Sultanate ranks 17<sup>th</sup> in the World in terms of Facebook users, with 83 per cent of eligible audiences (298,600 users) (Othman, 2022). Aside from office use, most internet users in Brunei use fast connections to access social media (Coram et al., 2021). The availability of the internet and the prevalence of social media use in Brunei were seized as opportunities for these stray animal advocacy organisations, to reach out to the public via various social networking sites including Facebook and Instagram.

Izamarina Harun Taylor Brunei-Petstaycation was the first pet care organisation to be officially established in Brunei in 2012. Previously, the founder of this organisation began feeding stray animals in 2006 and began collaborating with Brunei social organisations in 2008. Basma Bassam Bishawi is a pro-stray animal organisation founded in November of 2017. Felipcookiesbymira developed the advocacy action and public outreach through Instagram accounts two years later, in September 2019. Pawsuptv

began its rescue action in September 2020, with Instagram used to popularize and update the public on every feeding of stray animals in Bandar Seri Begawan. Sejahtera Community Brunei, the most recently established organisation, began social activities for stray animals in May 2020 and conducted public outreach program via Instagram and Facebook. This indicates that these stray animal advocacy groups have adapted well to Brunei's widespread social media access. The following sections elaborate on several detailed fundamentals, including their operations and discourses on stray animal care.

## **Bricolage 2: Development of the Organisations**

The major rationale is the observable mistreatment of animals in Brunei. All of the founders of the organisations portray empathy toward the animals (Camilleri et al., 2020). For instance, all five organisations are built on the idea of helping stray animals that suffer from hunger, abuse, and abandonment. One of the organisations started with a viral picture in the year 2018, showing a puppy tied inside a trapping cage and kept near a river, in the hope of catching a crocodile that allegedly swallowed a child (Basma Bassam Bishawi, founder, interview December 2020). The live puppy was used as bait to find another animal that had taken a life. This phenomenon alludes to the notion of animal abuse. Humans developed multiple ways to abuse power against other groups of humans and other animals. This domination can only be challenged, when the oppressed have the power to subordinate the oppressors. Animals are often powerless. Thus, this domination can proceed easily. Moreover, according to Hall (1996), human identities are fragmented and not fixed. This implies that human identity may change in different settings. Mead (1934) argued that one develops their self; through interaction with others. Hall (1996) further elaborated that people identify, with some by excluding others. Thus, identification as a human is regarded through

similarities, such as human language use. This asserted that animals are excluded from meaningful interaction.

The life journey of the founders greatly impacted the idea of starting the organisation. This includes the emotional intensity in their work and how being committed to activism impacted their relationships, careers, and self-identity (Gammage, 2020). One of the founders had a rough upbringing, living in an abandoned garage made up of zinc, and spent most days without food. Despite their economic difficulties, their parents taught them to feed birds, cats, and dogs. Moreover, three of the founders were raised outside Brunei, and stated that other countries have shelters and rescue centers. And thus, observing how Brunei has no proper rescue centers, led to the determination to start helping the animals. The other facts like in Brunei, pest control is used to tackle the issue of disturbing stray animals (Mankad et al., 2019), as separation of puppies from their mother while being dump in a jungle; the tragic incidents seen by the parents, considerably contributed towards starting a stray animal advocacy organisations. The data proved how the founder's upbringing influenced them to help the animals. Animal rights activists believe that being associated with compassion limits opportunities; thus, they try to find a "rational" manner to be emotional about animals, such as talking about their emotions. While researching a book on the matter (Groves, 2001). Egomorphism, a concept introduced by Milton (2005), indicated that people understand others' (human and animal) gestures, which they can relate to their own experiences. The presence of animals in human life configures the social life between humans (Sanders, 2003). Additionally, human personalities are shaped by interaction with other humans and animals (Milton, 2005).

### **Bricolage 3: In the Pursuit of Self-Sustenance**

In managing the organisations, support is needed to sustain the organisation (Sanders, 2009). Social and capital aid necessitated the management of stray animals. Four of five organisations stated that, contributions from society and other organisations helped them to care for stray animals (Desa & Basu, 2013). One of the founders initiated the idea of selling cookies and all the proceeds went towards helping stray animals. For instance, these proceeds were used to buy food for feeding the animals and for vet expenses. The people around the founders, mainly donated rice, kibbles, and other pet foods. Their family and friends supported them financially, physically, and mentally. Besides, a founder stated that in handling stray animals, one has to sacrifice time and finances, which requires moral and physical support (Taylor, 2010). Not everyone is passionate enough to sacrifice their life for the sake of the voiceless animals (Glick, 2013). Thus, society descends on giving donations to help the animals.

Social media plays a crucial role in the modern age. Four of five organisations utilized social media to share their rescues and daily activities. They deployed social media, mainly Instagram and Facebook, to spread awareness about reducing the number of stray animals and being a responsible pet owner. Moreover, in cases where donations were needed; financial assistance appeals were posted. This is one of the good example about society playing its role in contributing to the animals in need. Sejahtera Community Brunei is progressive in updating its deeds on social media by regularly posting about granted support from companies like Golden Chicks Corporation, SC Tubular Solutions, and so forth. The companies contributed financially and donated frozen meats routinely.

There is no social or monetary assistance from the state. Due to Brunei's centrally managed bureaucracy and the monarch's emphasis on sustaining people's wellbeing, animal protection policy is not



included in the state's welfare policy. This development strategy, which is not yet pro-animal welfare, dates all the way back to 1954 when Brunei was still administered by the British, and the tractate agreement excludes non-human creatures, such as species conservation, from natural resource management policies (Horton, 1986). Although Brunei is both a plant and animal species-rich nation, decision-making on biodiversity concerns stays with the monarch, who is, incidentally, controlled by a king who defends the kingdom's peace and growth. The leadership paradigm known as “paternalistic-patriarchal governance” (Low, 2012, p. 255) refers to the leader making choices about all elements of the state's welfare and prosperity, requiring citizens to propose numerous solutions to the state issues and to the state leaders. While Brunei is being confronted with an expanding number of stray animals year after year (Sharifah et al., 2020), residents anticipate that the government would enact legislation governing reporting methods (hotline services, contact centers, and animal breeding facilities), but this has not occurred so far. This precisely demonstrates minimal community involvement in stray animal removal in Brunei. As a result, stray animals advocacy organisations in Brunei are launched by local groups led by persons with a strong affinity for animals.

However, only one organisation is not willing to disclose its name stated that the government does contribute, but only with a piece of land. This indicated that the organisation personally requested a place, such as an abandoned building with a reasonable size of land, to shelter stray dogs (Snook et al., 2018). That is the only help they got from the state; in which all other expenses are of the organisation's efforts. Adopters are crucial in sustaining the organisations. Izamarina Harun Taylor and Petstaycation Brunei claimed that the Dusun community especially, helped a lot in adopting puppies from their organisation. The founder affirmed that

most of the dogs are trained to guard farms. The argument also uncovers that taking care of stray animals is associated with certain ethnic groups' low-class jobs. With the Dusun community declared to have helped the organisations through adopting manifold puppies to guard farms, one explanation might be that, the Dusun ethnic group are traditionally rice farmers (Kumpoh, 2016). To ensure the cases of an increasing number of stray animals do not occur again, adopters are screened as well as house visits are conducted repeatedly, to ensure the adopters are responsible pet owners.

#### **Bricolage 4: Daily Operations**

Keeping pets such as cats and dogs is currently not prohibited in Brunei (Nijman, 2021). Non-Muslim Bruneians own dogs in general, and they are commonly kept inside or in gated yards, to ensure that they do not bother or harm neighbors or the community. Presently, the rules are followed for animal importation (Chua et al., 2021), under which animals entering Brunei by air must undergo a 180-day quarantine, must have been neutralized and disinfected, and must have animal ownership. Dogs and cats must have a necklace containing the owner's name, the location of the owner's house, and reported to the government for population data collection. However, when pets such as dogs and cats reach an unproductive age, or the number of kittens and dogs in the house is too large, the owners have no interest in keeping them, anymore. And the owners will dispose them in specific locations such as forest, vacant land or parks in the hope that they will be picked up by passersby. This kind of behavior is the core cause of Brunei's ever-increasing stray animal population.

However, the call to rescue stray animals persisted throughout all the organisations along with occasionally attending calls to rescue those posted on social media but have not been rescued, yet. The founders of each organisation had different reasons that provoked the emergence of their stray animal care group. Taking into consideration,

that the data on measures conducted by the government to tackle the stray animal issues are not easily obtainable, the society in Brunei made their efforts to handle the increasing number of stray animals. Everyday activities include rescuing abandoned pets and injured animals, feeding stray animals, and Trap-Neuter-Return (TNR). Moreover, all of the organisations resorted to using their home to shelter stray cats and dogs, especially those that needed special care, such as those who are sick. Extra hygienic care is utmost important to be maintained while rescuing stray animals. The importance of vaccination is highlighted by all organisations, because with no vaccinations, their rescue is wasted. The organisations spend time by regular cleaning of stray animals shelter spaces, be it at their home or the dedicated private shelter. Moreover, rescued dogs need to be trained to prevent them from barking and causing discomfort for the people around them. All organisations fed stray cats and dogs on daily basis. For example, to feed 47 stray dogs and 15 stray cats every day, the organisation cooked and mixed approximately 10 kilograms of rice, 3 kilograms of vegetables, 5 kilograms of chicken, 3 kilograms of chicken liver and 3 kilograms of kibbles (Izamaruna Harun Taylor and Petstaycation Brunei, founder, interview December 2019). Feeding stray animals is essential in developing relationships with them (Davey et al., 2020). This way, whenever the stray animals are sick or to be neutered and spayed, it can easily be managed; in terms of trapping them and taking care of their recovery phase from the surgery. Three of the five organisations are consistently conducting Trap-Neuter-Return (TNR). The focus area is their feeding area. All organisations interviewed, are doing one to two spaying of dogs per week.

Subsequently, these organisations also independently pursue their research in counting the number of dogs in several areas. They would then communicate with the feeders, and together they

accomplish Trap-Neuter-Return (TNR) through concentrating on areas with more stray animal populations. Two of the five organisations, Pawsuptv and Felicookiesbymira, rely on collaboration with other organisations as they do not have enough capital to carry out TNR. In any case, the dogs have to be released in a place deemed safe, specifically where the people do not mind the presence of stray dogs. This phenomenon refers to the notion that “speciesism” implies the interest of one species; overrides the greatest interests of members of other species (Singer, 2009; Ryder, 1983).

### **Bricolage 5: The Advocacies’ Sustainability in Brunei**

Sustainability of the organisation is a big concern for all the organisations are Non-Governmental Organisations (DeMello, 2012). These organisations face several obstacles to sustain themselves such as lack of funding, volunteers and support from the community toughens the journey of handling stray animals. People of Brunei are dependent on these organisations, to rescue stray animals (Rivera et al., 2021), especially in handling stray dogs. Calls and messages are received daily by the organisations. Typically, the people are dependent solely on the organisations and do not make any efforts to rescue the animals themselves. This causes overload in rescuing, and thus, some calls cannot be attained or have to be attained at a later time. Oftentimes, the animals are dead by the time they reach for rescue. Following Sejahtera Community Brunei, it is observed that the one who made the call, could have saved the animal at that time, but instead, they waited for the organisations solely and indirectly ended a life (Sejahtera Community Brunei, founder, interview December 2020). This phenomenon alludes to the fact that, people are not being able to reverse the social inequality in relation to the human and animal presence (Taylor, 2010).

Social and cultural self-identification is another extent that renders stray animal advocacy in Brunei suffer from stagnation.

Evacuating a stray animal on the roadside or any abandoned pets on public properties can be viewed as a disgusting act. To some extent, this kind of act is classified as a working-class group's identification, which does not suit the general good lifestyle of Bruneians in the country. Jobs related to farming and cleaning manure or caring for animals are considered by most to be incompatible and contradictory with the Bruneian lifestyle which looks luxurious, elegant, and classy. Most times, the reason towards not rescuing the animals is being Muslims. In fact most of the rescuers are Muslims too. Additionally, one of the founders who was raised in several countries, before coming back to Brunei, stated that from a social perspective "comparing with a few other countries", Brunei is not paying attention to treating stray animals, because it considers "saving abandoned animals is resembles a low-class act" (Izamarina Harun Taylor and Petstaycation Brunei, founder, interview December 2020). Furthermore, members of these Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO) do have jobs apart from rescuing animals. Despite they pick up rescue calls from the people; however, people many a times become demanding and demeaning to the organisations. For example, people expected the organisations to pay for everything, "I thought it is your job to pay!" said one of the person who needed help in rescuing injured stray dogs, the injury was caused by fights with other dogs. Beck (1975) claimed that the view of animals not only varies between owners and non-owners but also between cultures. Culture established attitudes toward animals (Stafford, 2006; Lord et al, 2016). Douglas (1966, p. 4 & 53) uncovered in the book *Purity and Danger* indicating the human cultural system in maintaining symbolic boundaries. The avoidance of forbidden animals mainly consisting of dogs and pigs, indicated "purity" with God (Douglas, 1966, p. 57). This notion is implemented by society through cultural norms.

The root of the problems, as stated by all of the founders, is irresponsible pet owners. Thus, the main difficulty faced by organisations is caused by irresponsible pet owners. The lack of awareness of the responsibility of having a pet, causes people to take in as many pets as they want. Despite the society of Brunei being hesitant in spaying and neutering their pets, the increasing number of pets they owned causes difficulty to them, be it financially, mentally, and socially. Some resorted to dumping their pets in a 'safe' area. 'Safe' areas for them are places which provide the animals with food, such as an eating area, commercial premises, or dumping area. Irresponsible pet owners include those who are not concerned with their pets' well-being, such as keeping them in a small cage, dirty enclosure, and more of the same. Also lack of interested personnel working for caring of these animals is another prominent issue. The organisations are continuously searching for volunteers. Volunteers are essential in helping clean, rescue, and foster animal conservation and sustenance (Reese et al., 2021). Another difficulty faced is financial problems. Vet bills, food supply, water, and electricity bills are always pending. One of the organisations, the most active of all five in rescuing, stated that the vet bills would go up to 6,000 Brunei dollars, unpaid. As they shelter almost 200 dogs, food alone is 2 to 3,000 dollars per month. Thus, they have to actively search for donations.

There are not enough adopters, especially for dogs. People are choosy. For instance, most people prefer male puppies. Moreover, with the closure of the Brunei government pet clinic, most people cannot afford to handle the vet bills. One of the founders stated, that this is a good thing, as before having a pet, people should first think properly about it. With expensive vet bills, people began to ask for donations on social media. Two of five of the organisations stated, that race groups do affect them in rescuing stray animals. For instance, three of the founders stated that the Chinese generally are intrusive,

when it comes to rescuing and feed of stray animals. Moreover, four of the five organisations stated that the older age group residents are intolerant about the existence of stray animals around them. The notion of strays is feral and dirty. As four of the five organisations consisted of all Muslim members, where three out of four are Malays, the society discriminated against them in rescuing 'haram' animals. One organisation's founder highlighted the distinction between religious prohibition and contamination caused by the dirt of the animal. It was said that "there is a difference between *haram* (forbidden) and *najis berat* (a heavy form of pollutants) (Sejahtera Community Brunei, founder, interview Dec 2020). Even though Brunei's people are thought to be heartfully caring for these abandoned animals, they cannot adopt them. One founder's disgruntlement can be understood through the argument that "society empathizes with stray animals, but they have the wrong conception about such *haram* and *najis* (Pawsuptv, founder, interview December 2020). Despite receiving support from society, the factor of religion often is raised, hindering them from proceeding with their daily activities with the stray animals. Owning a dog as a pet for Muslims is an uncommon practice, which is often criticised as the influence of the Western World (Foltz, 2006). In the Islamic view, there is a strong aversion to dogs as they are being comprehended as "unclean" whereby, one has to achieve a state of purity before praying, whenever one gets in contact with the dog's saliva and the dog itself (Horsfall, 2014). This further explains why society judges Muslim members who handle stray dogs. Moreover, the findings indicated a difference in the treatment of stray cats and dogs in Brunei, in which the mistreatments of cats are less discussed. This portrays the role of religion in determining the actions of society (Ammerman, 2020).

With all their efforts in handling the number of stray animals, it often gets wasted, as society poisons or kills the animals brutally. The



normalization of killing lives should be stopped before it gets worse. It cannot be recognized that the next generation will become killers and all sorts of behavior that show no empathy (Sejahtera Community Brunei, founder, interview December 2020). This refers to the issue of age in the treatment of animals. Changes in time might be the reason; for instance, the increasing number of environmentalist and animal rights discourses started in the late 1960s (Franklin, 1999). This led to the inception of academic work to reconsider animal consciousness and the human-animal relationship in the 1970s (Franklin, 1999). Liolios (2017) discovered that the relationship between humans and animals is improving with the new generations, which exhibit more affection. However, one study conducted in Massachusetts found that 27% of the animal abusers were teenagers, with 56% under the age of 30 (Luke & Arluke, 1997). This further indicated that the classification of animals is not static; rather, it varies across time and space. The main contribution of literature for the present research is within the field of humanity.

The notion about animals within sociology provided perspectives of animals being oppressed, the cruciality of animals, and the positive and negative aspects of the human-animal relationship. Within anthropology, the variance of human societies and cultures demonstrated the dissimilar treatment of animals. The problems associated with stray animals are explored, whereby society takes measures to resolve or minimize the issues. One of the measures, is the establishment of animal care movements. The contrasting views about stray animals, resulted in the emergence of animal care movements in the community. Max Weber stated that animals could play a role in sociological analysis. It is theoretically possible to develop a sociology of the relations between humans and animals, be it domestic or wild. Hence, certain animals recognize hostility, love, and commands and react to them purely instinctively, based on their

experience (Weber, 1947). This Weber's notion is cogent with Marxian perspective on animal's affective associations with human. Karl Marx stated that the animal may demonstrate specific social life activity, relating it with everyday experiences experienced by humans (Marx, 1959). With this lived experience, human-animal's cultural relationship is consolidated through social interactions. George Herbert Mead ideated that human's thoughts and self-consciousness about the animals, being emerged through social interaction, calls for distinctive contextualized language in communication between them (Mead, 1934). How this language for human-animal interaction is maintained, is dependent upon the socio-cultural as well as political contexts within which the animal lives, is the case in the present research paper. Our findings point out, the way Bruneian Muslims treat the animals in the public space, is obviously mediated by well-entrenched Islamic Ideology. For instance, Muslims in the country believed that cat is the utmost loved species of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), whereas the dog is much less cared, as the saliva is believed as 'haram' (filthy). Therefore, the stray dogs are much ignored as compared to the cats. Until now, presence of these animals fosters sort of ambivalence in the Brunei's stray animal policy.

Sociological theory includes three fundamental perspectives: Functionalist, Conflict, and Symbolic Interactionist. Non-human animal rights activists seek an end to speciesism, which is the oppression of sentient beings based on their species (Wrenn, 2013). From a functionalist view, speciesism is influential to society as it provides food, labor, companionship, entertainment, and scientific advancement, which is crucial for the economic system. The non-human animal rights movement has divided its aim into two approaches, namely, welfarism and abolitionists. Welfarism aims to reform non-human animal use, whereas the latter aims to end non-human animal use. Conflict theorists recognized that non-humans are

reduced to resources and benefit for the sake of society. This inequality is reinforced by differences in power and privileges. Symbolic interactionists acknowledged species as a social construct, whereas some animals are portrayed as morally rightful, for certain groups requiring humanitarian aids and the rest are merely viewed as worth-abandoning (Wrenn, 2013). This Wrenn's (2013) argument is reflected in our findings: "while Brunei's Government seems to be less attentive to stray dogs and cats living in the public spaces, the NGOs working towards animal care perceive that; lives of stray animals is equal to human lives, requiring love and necessary help to survive.

One of the moral standpoint in present paper is to re-engage the animal care with sociology knowledge. Arluke & Sanders (1996) reminds us that sociology has ignored human-animal interaction, including human violence against other animals. During 1960s to 1970s, abusers were viewed as mentally ill or sick. It overlooks other factors such as gender, age, social position, and societal attitudes and norms regarding animals and how they are treated (Rigdon & Tapia, 1977). Baldry (2003) connected the link between experiencing family violence and children's animal abuse. Youth who have abused animals are more likely to have parents who have been violent towards animals. Flynn (2000) asserted that animal abuse is a social phenomenon with insufficient individual-level explanations. Social structural factors which include social institutions and norms, might play a role about, how animals are treated in society.

On the other hand, Serpell (1986) iterated that the growth of pet keeping is associated with social change. He argued that the advancement in the twentieth century has increased the mobility of humans, resulting in disruption of traditional family and community structures. Moreover, Serpell (1986) stated that some groups keep pets as one of their leisure activities. Thus, the need for other sources of emotional support and companionship has also increased. Several

anthropologists have argued that cultures categorize the natural world, which then defines themselves based on what is tabooed and permitted, especially with the use of animals (Horsfall, 2014). Animals are established as symbols portraying the identity of a group, and also simultaneously marking the difference when compared with the “other” groups (Horsfall, 2014).

Lévi-Strauss, with the structuralist approach exemplifies how human culture examines, constructs, and orders nature. This is illustrated in the term totemism, where the individual or cultural identity is associated with a particular animal or other sense of nature (Lévi-Strauss, 1973). Additionally, Levi-Strauss indicated that human cultures do not solely adopt a totemic identity to identify with it, rather differentiates their group from other groups (Kniazeva & Belk, 2007). To illustrate, the consumption of pork has been historically used in distinguishing Christians, Jews, and Muslims, whereby pork is a taboo among the latter two groups. The differential treatment serves to mark the differences among groups (Veltmeyer, 1974).

In lieu with arguments above, Bryant (1979) expresses that the study of animals is central to the study of society. This is because animals have important roles in human societies. For instance, humans eat animals and use their skin and hair for clothing. With their higher-level cognitive capacities, humans justified the use of animals or abused the lower-level animals to satisfy human needs (Fennell, 2014). Moreover, studies on animal-related human behavior might add valuable understanding of the interactional process, social motivation, influence of value systems on perception, socialization and personality development, human violence, and its sublimation (Bryant, 1979). For example, urban and rural areas have different requirements for stray dogs in Thailand (Kongkaew et al., 2004) and Bolivia (Suzuki et al., 2008). Dogs are deemed companions in urban areas, while they are kept to guard farms, homes, and livestock in rural

areas. Concerning the cultural treatment of the animals, Lord et al. (2012) pointed out that countries in the 'Global North' considered pets as family members. Whereas, Kachani & Health (2014) coined that other cultures in Islamic countries normalize keeping dogs outdoors. With contradicting views on whether dogs should stay on the street or at home, Steeves (2005) questions whether, free-roaming dogs being cared for by the neighborhood can also be called home. It is argued that free-roaming dogs have more freedom, which highlights that most dogs in developed countries are trapped in the house, with no freedom to wander around other animals and humans (Rehn & Keeling, 2011). In the Western World, dogs are considered man's best friend. Ferguson (2004) iterated that dogs are closer to humans than most animals, and thus they hold a semi-sacred positioning. Moreover, several scholars asserted that dogs are Western "sacred cow" (Beck, 1973, p. 51; Bustad, 1991; Lawrence, 1987). The way different cultures treat dogs has created inter-group tension, for instance, eating dogs in South Korea (Tosa, 2010) or the way Western World's view towards the negative treatment of stray dogs in the Middle East (Ibrahim, 2012). Consequently, Muslim scholars criticize the Western World's dog-owning practices (Associated Press, 2006; Crethu Plethi, 2011).

Saniotis (2012) argued that some Islamic Hadiths consider divine punishment for animal cruelty, while kindness to animals shall be rewarded. Dogs that are kept for a purpose that includes hunting, guarding cattle or crops are exempted as being forbidden pets (Al-Qardawi, 1997). In short, keeping dogs is permitted in certain situations. Noting that there will always be different opinions, Abou El Fadl, an Islamic legal scholar, stated that there is no rational reason for dogs to be considered not clean, except as religious prescriptions (Abou El Fadl, 2005).

## **CONCLUSION**

This study aims to elaborate social and financial supports from the people, state, and other organisations' in Brunei. An examination of the findings above reveals that bricolage is a critical component in understanding the dynamics of the formation of the stray animals non-organisation in Brunei, which is founded on uncertainty, lack of support, restrictive religious ideology, and public ambivalence towards stray animals. Through the bricolage lens, the findings discover that these stray animals do not obtain any government supports and are relied on private funds, which are donations, pet food suppliers, and individuals. Even though the stray animals are so much prevalent in Brunei, there is not much attention paid by the government or public sectors as this case is not classified under development priorities for urban planning. The supports stray animal organisations get are fluctuative and unsteady. So, the activists must constantly engage in any events and promote the problems on social media platforms to garner attention from the public. These non-government organisations, however, experiences prominent issues that are not resolved yet.

This research offers preliminary debates on several concepts of stray animal care. Brunei's society is heavily affected by its religious, cultural, and social identity values. The advent of animal care groups signaled the requirement of a new kind of standard in the treatment of animals. The organisations frame their issues in accordance with the society's commonly held values, beliefs, and commonsense attitudes, based on the evidence availed through various methods deployed by the organisations, to meet the society's requirements.

### **Author Contributions**

Conceptualization: N.F.A. & M.A.; Data curation: N.F.A. & M.A.; Formal analysis: N.F.A. & M.A.; Funding acquisition: N.F.A. & M.A.; Investigation: N.F.A. & M.A.; Methodology: N.F.A. & M.A.; Project administration: N.F.A. &

M.A.; Resources: N.F.A. & M.A.; Software: N.F.A. & M.A.; Supervision: N.F.A. & M.A.; Validation: N.F.A. & M.A.; Visualization: N.F.A. & M.A.; Writing – original draft: N.F.A. & M.A.; Writing – review & editing: N.F.A. & M.A. All the authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

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## **Informed Consent Statement**

Informed consent was obtained before the interview with respondents.

## **Data Availability Statement**

The data presented in this study are available upon request from the corresponding author.

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## **Conflicts of Interest**

The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

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