Abstract

Purpose – This is exploratory research on the Bruneian sense of motherhood. The pre-socially established religious definition of motherhood is unformulated where; the analysis is located in the inner context of experience. The Western feminist idea defined motherhood as such reality as the “otherness” whereby its common sense justifies sexuality and feminism. The religious significance gives meaning to its spiritual connection, embodying a foundational knowledge of Bruneian proper personhood – being a good, spiritual and respected person. This relates to the importance of the body as an entity of both culture and symbol that has drawn attention to its sociological significance.

Design/methodology/approach – The argument here is how religious experience influences the meaning of motherhood in Brunei Darussalam, which underwent a transformation scheme to empower women. Participants were interviewed, and the transcribed interviews were analysed using the reflexive methodology to find out the natural phenomena of motherhood.

Findings – The findings indicate that the Bruneian sense of motherhood is regulated through natural norms of femininity, an unformulated knowledge of spirituality, religion and the influence of cultural and religious rituals, such as prayers, consuming pure food, concoction and reciting holy verses from the Quran.

Originality/value – This study reveals to codify and extend the sense of religious obedience through generations. Religion rationalises the spiritual experience and provides the basis of obedience towards a proper development of personhood Bruneian. The idea of motherhood itself recreates a role to empower women, which will initiate opportunities for further studies in Brunei context.

Keywords Motherhood, Religion, Culture, Personhood Bruneian

Introduction

The sense of motherhood or locally translated in Brunei Darussalam as “Rasa indung bini”[1] is ascribed to purity and profane that transcends to humanly impregnate “asih”, “asuh”, “asah” or translated as “care-taker” for love, to protect and to educate. In Bruneian religious and traditional contexts, motherhood is sentimentalised. The mother figure is associated with religious purity and is respected as the carrier of blessings. Brunei’s independence in 1984 offers a different perspective on understanding the sense of motherhood. In 1984, Brunei promoted Muslim religious identity along with the message of economic development and modernisation.

The case studies from my doctoral thesis provided the data for this paper. During the interviews with the cases, a topic pertaining to “the sense of motherhood” that is perceived by Bruneian women had been attached to the checklist. As this is exploratory research, most of the collected information was qualitative in nature. Thirty cases were selected using a...
purposive sampling technique (Ezzy, 2002) and were interviewed in-depth (Gubrium & Holstein, 2001) to understand their thoughts or perceptions regarding motherhood. The target audience chosen was Bruneian women aged 22–72 with a secondary, diploma, and tertiary level degree. Most of the respondents were engaged in formal sectors, and some of them were homemakers and running their online businesses informally. The respondents use different means of expressing Rasa indung bini, namely, sindiran (insinuation), imbasan (glimpse), kiasan (metaphorical) and teguran (exhortation) voiced through elaborated code. In this process three domains were identified: impregnation and its spiritual process, continuing link with the womb legitimised through marriage and influencing agents.

Reviews of relevant literature
Motherhood is the centre of feminist study whereby; the centre of inquiry lies on sexuality and its related birthing capacity that endorsed the female with gendered hierarchical status. In 2006, O’Reilly (2016, p. 313) coined the term “motherhood” to “acknowledge and demarcate this new scholarship on motherhood as a legitimate and autonomous discipline”. Kelly (2009, p. 157) emphasises “motherhood (as) central to feminine identity”. Gillespie (2003, p. 223) calls it an “unquestioned” norm of femininity. Nancy Chodorow (1978) places women’s mothering as central to the sexual division of labour. “...women’s maternal role has a profound effect on women’s lives, on ideology about women, on the reproduction of masculinity and sexual inequality, and the reproduction of patriarchal forms of labour power. Women as mothers are pivotal actors in the sphere of social reproduction.”. Liamputtong (2006, p. 25) uses Goffman’s (1963) theoretical framework of “moral career” in her research to understand women’s career as mothers and coined motherhood as a “moral career”. McMahon (1995, p. 24) describes motherhood as “the expression of women’s natural, social, and moral identity...”. By the term “moral”, McMahon (1995) refers “the experience of the self” whereas Goffman (1963) expressed it as “self-conceptions”.

Indirectly, this puts the natural phenomena of motherhood into an agency of power. The layperson differs in expressing the sense of motherhood and the intensity of reaction towards the experience, together with maintaining its spiritual connection, whereby lies a symbolic meaning of motherhood that often contradicts existing ideology. Bernard (1974) explains the metaphorical representation of motherhood and its basis of social and cultural archetypes. About motherhood, Ross (1995, p. 413) explains the need to “...claim civil spaces, resources, and recognition...”. Mukherjee (2020, pp. 13–14) describes the sense of motherhood as a “moral transformation” of a woman to become “an autonomous individual” without losing her selfhood and passes her spirit to her children.

The research on the motherhood experience is one of the four latest themes in the discipline of motherhood (refer to O’Reilly, 21st Century motherhood). Taksiva (2018, p. 180) advocates the inclusion of motherhood studies into women and gender studies agendas by highlighting its development in the context of third-wave feminism. This latest idea involves the inclusion of maternal subjectivity and experience as “…one of the voluntary identity categories...” in the variants of choices. In the Bruneian context of motherhood, the material idea of impregnation is not simply understood as carrying a foetus. Instead, it is intricately associated with a religious bonding with the belief system. Hence, its corresponding values with mothers, mothering, and birthing remain interwoven with women’s identity. The pre-social defined sense of motherhood as an inner religious experience, and the transference of meaning in its social and political course caught the interest of feminist ideas and interest. Adrienne Rich (1976) re-examines motherhood as an “institution” and “experience”, an analysis of the idea of mother and the work of mothering. Nancy Chodorow (1978) explains mothering as produced between the social organisation and individual subjectivity whose development depends on monitoring the social body called family.
Women are given the responsibility by society to raise their children as soon as they are born. Women do not start their roles as mothers when the child is born, but rather before to make sure their child is staying safe in the womb. The action of birthing and social action, raising their kids, is not only because of the unique bond between the individual and the child but also because of a social institution called “motherhood”. The mediation between the biological aspect of procreation and the historic institutionalisation is why motherhood provides a unique site for building boundaries between nature and culture (Maroney 1985, pp. 40–46).

Religious experience: Rasa indung bini in Southeast Asian perspective
The sense of motherhood in Southeast Asia is very much associated with religious values. Southeast Asian mothers possess profound views about their roles and responsibilities toward children. Vietnamese (Buddhist) perceived motherhood as a “social responsibility” and observe it as a spiritual role (Liamputtong, 2006). In Laos (Buddhist) motherhood is viewed “as a position of high responsibility as well as of respectability” (Kariyawasam), as Buddhism valued motherhood with the utmost regard and affection (Dissanayake). Islam is the predominant religion in Indonesia, Malaysia, and Brunei. Islam always gives preference to obeying parents specifically at first to mothers. There are several verses from the holy scripture, the Quran, and also from Hadiths (the speech of Prophet Muhammad) that convey unconditional respect to mother. Christianity is popular in Philippines and East Timor. Among the Philippines, mothers are referred to as “ilaw ng tahanan” or “the light of the house”.

The term religious experience of Rasa indung bini distinguishes between subjective and objective elements of religious belief. With the religious experience of Rasa indung bini, the social actor pursues ambition and exultation, mobilises the self beyond the ordinary, and finds power that puts the self in a divine state. The sensibilities of Rasa indung bini are complete in the spiritual journey in itself beyond, and the surrounding actors with the known wisdom feel the tangibility. This is embodied in Weber’s notion of charisma (Weber, Gerth & Mills, 1946: pp. 245-248). In understanding modern motherhood, for instance, spirituality transcends into ultimate aspiration that draws the line between desire and interest and moves it from the insignificant state of natural feminine identity to define modern childless motherhood voluntarily. The previous stigma of a single mother as the underlying social problem has now gained influence and support from some dominant discourses. The spiritual journey through modernity now found its expression in the emergence of nationalism, where the latter is accepted as sacred.

Understanding motherhood in the sense of religious experience also resonates with magic. Tambiah (1990, p. 2) explains that magic, together with religion, science, and the scope of rationality, are four domains that are linked with modes of thought and mentality that can be found in all types of society in their contents, boundaries, rationality and development stages. In Anthropology, structural analysis of Malay Magic is “...belief and ritual activities involving the manipulation of the material world through spiritual means...”. The existence of both religious and spiritual frameworks explains the empirical development of Bruneian Rasa indung bini (sense of motherhood) and its argument for a demarcated idea between motherhood and religion. In daily interaction, the notion of Rasa indung bini involves understanding its deliberate impact and representation of social phenomena and religious and esoteric knowledge with the spiritual use of supernatural influences and power. The ability to radiate blessings or barakah gives a minimal definition of religious perspective. The belief in its religious taboo and framework embedded with its spirituality and magic have caught my research interest.

Explaining Rasa indung bini from a sociological viewpoint
The approach of sociological meaning to motherhood varies. In recent studies, Foucauldian analysis of understanding motherhood focuses on its development as a socially
constructed analysis. It involves a regulated power relation that surrounds modern mothers and motherhood (Garwood, 2014). However, taking Rasa indung bini into this explanation shows a contradiction with feminist theory. The appreciation for Rasa indung bini remains not only in the biological imperative of motherhood but also extends to the forefront of religious perspective. Such a form of appreciation remains the rule of daily action. This forms one of the aspects of inquiry on motherhood.

With this image of perception, this research is focusing on how Bruneian perspective incorporates modernisation with the natural female state of Rasa indung bini. The divine Rasa indung bini dedicates to the call for spiritual obedience. It allows the mothers and mothering to describe their own experience, which the feminist theory should take into account of its continuity and intersection. The Bruneian mothers perceived this to qualify women’s empowerment regardless of their status. This remains outside the dominant discipline of feminism and gender studies. This contradicts Gimenez (1982, pp. 287–314) statement that motherhood as “taken-for-granted dimension of women’s normal adult role” so that it becomes “some of the key sources of women’s oppression”. The experience of Rasa indung bini is not seen as inimical to the establishment of female subjectivity for Bruneian women that are closely immersed in religion and human subjects such as emotional and relational dependence. Hence, to view the pure activity of Rasa indung bini needs to be regarded as mothering practices and maternal subject position within a complex set of social activity and relational influences. Takševa (2018, p. 182) describes mothers’ experience of love, pleasure, and empowerment through mothering as “…a blind spot…” that funded the motherhood studies. Similarly understood, Rasa indung kitani uncovers the attitude of appreciation for values and respect that altogether continues to form women’s empowerment. Takševa (2018, p. 186) quotes Ferguson and Jonasdottir in the feminist study of love as “…as significant creative, social and biomaterial power capable of changing and shaping, social and political forces, and a key element in ethics and epistemology”.

The encounter: Rasa indung bini
The experience of motherhood naturally comes from the natural meaning of a mother as a person who earns gratification for her “unconditional” love. The encounter with Bruneian sense of motherhood started with a sense of curiosity that challenged the consciousness of the mind. Regardless of the categorisation and class of the participants, the language of Rasa indung bini expresses an abstract of sovereignty. It began when the notion of motherhood has conversed in an unnatural symbol that involves understanding the religious sense within. Daily interaction with mothers is bounded by the religious sense that raises a form of appreciation for the taste of life. For Bruneian sense of motherhood, producing life is understood as creating people, the Brunei personhood, nation, future and development. Daily life challenges revolve around believing in the blessings of Rasa indung bini bonded with a primordial order of supra-sense. Everyday matters in connection with Rasa indung bini is a process of immersion with spiritual communion within the spiritual realm. The sense of curiosity further revolved into understanding a form of an imageless sense of taste that bonds its religious belief. Rasa indung bini arranges the phenomena or order of natural life in modern times that seeks sacredness. Unlike the natural sense of taste, Rasa indung bini depends on the closeness of the bond with cosmological forces.

Respondents believe that,

“…Rasa indung bini can survive without the children but it’s the other way round with the children. Motherhood sense is connected with God. Rasa indung bini knows before the real happening, so you need to refer to Rasa indung bini before anything. (Case: R, age 50)
The encounter of Rasa indung bini, or Bruneian sense of motherhood, has indirectly distributed the teaching of its common moral values practiced by them. It is important to find interrelation of meanings in understanding the native indigenous sense, routinising its fundamentals in regard to daily matters. The daily crisis of Bruneian Malay, in particular, has survived through the basic teaching of Rasa indung bini, which is also less documented. This notion is also not observed as ambivalence by its religious Islamic institution. Rasa indung bini is conversed by its tangible/seen and intangible/unseen meaning that co-exists and is closely associated with the belief system and its cosmological understanding. In solving crises or disputes, the tangible/seen meaning of Rasa indung bini is collectively objectified into knowledge, justice, and sentiment.

Understanding motherhood, the unformulated body of experience: Rasa indung bini

In this part of Southeast Asia, especially in Brunei context, the Bruneians embark into the inner experience that begins beyond rationality, whereby, the elements do not rest with mental influences in the consciousness. The local describes this as the sense of Rasa [4]. Mas Irun (2020) states that the notion of Rasa in Bruneian knowledge is a divine inspiration that manifests a sacred order and exchange, used interchangeably between the common and uncommon experience of the way beyond rationality. It also generates communication of Rasa. Mas Irun adds that, “Rasa partly translates as the inner imaginary of reality and truth...as one enters a series of transference, from the inner (batin) to the outer (zahir/kasar), with the experience of the spiritual sense immersed in the self” (2020, p. 7).

Respondents express Rasa indung bini as having the ability to perceive or express motherly feelings through the faculty of intuition. Benamou (2010, p. 40) calls Rasa a tacit experience, whereby, the deep Rasa lies in the heart, where it is also interpreted as inner meaning, secret, mystery and refined perception (Benamou, 2010). Errington (1983) describes Rasa as the “...highest central belief of kebatinan [5]...” whereby the inner self is discovered by overcoming desires. Sheikh Shamsuddin (2005) describes Rasa as “...the inner tranquility...through a method of submission”. Associates Rasa with the teaching of Sufism. This also signifies a symbolic journey of the heart or the experience of the beyond rationality or the faculty of thoughts and logical sense.

Rasa indung bini affects the manoeuvre of change and transformation. The divine Rasa or inspiration does not transform a mother into a priest. Instead, it revolves as an inspired identity with religious charisma capable of radiating power and affection. Rasa indung bini is also interpreted as the capability to radiate blessings. Hence, to know the sense of motherhood is to get connected and be bonded with the sacred quality of mother, mothering and maternal senses. Such bonding is not connected or bonded with the spirits of the deceased or ancestors.

Unlike socially constructed motherhood as enquired in the feminist or Western perspective, such a pre-social perspective of Rasa indung bini forms the traditional basis of the mode of coherence in a maternal relationship. The surveillance of its quality is monitored by religious words and perspective, which persists throughout. Without the inner experience of Rasa, the meaning of motherhood represents a common interpretation. A Bruneian sense of the spiritual experience of motherhood encounters a journey into the sense of bonding that links with the punca (literally translated as the root of origin). The intricate connection between the punca and the ordinary or everyday experience of motherhood exposed a systematic reality in the local concept of motherhood. This also occupies a central concern in the modern and postmodern levels of consciousness. Incidences of pressure have frequently been encountered that voice out the need to manoeuvre the sense of power and influences
between mythical motherhood that unites with the *punca* and the profane motherhood of everyday experience.

Traditionally, it was considered sinful or improper to manoeuvre motherhood in a sense away from spiritual commitment and authorisation. Hence, to understand the regulated Bruneian sense of motherhood and its role as a social body, the complex process of its spiritual sense has to be taken on board. Therefore, confining motherhood and women to the domain of reproduction in the home and its access to another world. Insights into its unformulated and formulated sense, characterised the social organisation of motherhood and its maternal psyche in Bruneian motherhood. In its reflexive formulation, exploring *Rasa indung bini* also reveals the secret form of motherhood sense that clarify the difference between unformulated and formulated meaning.

**Body-social of Brunei Malay women**

Like other countries, primary socialisation in Brunei begins from the family, particularly from the mother, and these functions continue to date. “*As a mother, women play the main role of instilling in their children’s good values and manners, shaping them to be individuals who will constantly uphold good morals and ethics and shun away from immoral activities*,” said Pehin Dato Major General (Rtd) Hj Awang Mohammad bin Hj Daud, the Honourable Minister of Culture, Youth and Sports, Brunei Darussalam to show the importance of motherhood in Brunei culture. Respondents mentioned that children at a young age start to receive cultural norms and values through family, and they are used to believing these values. Some values and ethics are taught to youngsters, such as disobedient children would be punished by fate, depicted by the term *Tula* (punishment), and children who respect their parents will experience *barkat* (blessings). As time progressed, these youngsters made an effort to follow those values rather than argue or disagree. The mother in a family is primarily responsible for imparting these values. These principles are also discussed in terms of ethics. It is a component of Malay culture that reflects Islamic values as well.

Respondents quoted a piece of Malay mythology called “*Jong Batu*”, as an example, said that those who offended their mothers were punished by God by being turned to stone. These kinds of folktales were once told to Bruneian children by their mothers as a way of instilling in them the value of receiving their parents’ blessings. The absorption of religious values in their usual behaviour becomes cultural practice for them. They stated that not only were they taught religious beliefs, but also these cultural norms and values were practiced by their grandmother and mother as well. One of the respondents said,

“… in a family, it is the mother’s duty to teach good behaviour and etiquette to their children. (Case: MH, Age: 66)

The knowledge transmitted by parents, particularly by mothers to their offspring, is a reflection of their own empowerment through *Rasa indung bini*. The participants stated that motherhood is instinct, which is pure, and this feeling naturally appears when she gave birth to a child.

**Socially involved Rasa indung bini: adat and religion**

Throughout the respondents of Bruneian sense of motherhood, the observation encounters the notion *Rasa indung bini* as a sense of spiritual heart or locally identified as *tabuka hati* (open heart). The local’s interpretation of *Rasa indung bini* has long remained at the periphery of the feminist perspective in understanding the Bruneian perspective.

Traditionally, the cultural-ecological milieu of both land and water draws the social character of Bruneian people that consists of seven *puak* (indigenous groups) of Brunei
Malay, namely puak Kedayan, Melayu Brunei, Dusun, Tutong, Bisaya, Belait and Murut. King (1993) describes the social system as more complicated since there are also groups of non-citizens, citizens and stateless groups living in the city, namely the Penan, Iban, the Chinese, the Indians and other foreign citizens. The dichotomy of orang kampong ayer (the sea dwellers with puak Melayu Brunei as the dominant) and orang darat (the land dwellers) conforms to the variants of Malay cultural beliefs and practices. Latif Ibrahim (1998) draws the relevance of social boundary perpetrated by the national ideology of Melayu Islam Beraja (Malay Islamic Monarchy), with adat and religion remaining as the charter for nation-building.

One way Brunei society spiritualised is through the connection to the adat (Mas Irun binti Haji Alli, 2020), the customary law. This refers to the locals’ collective customary practices and institutions among the Bruneian puak. The essence of its cultural depths and rhetoric are transmitted through the adat. Geertz (1983, pp. 207–224) explains that adat incorporates the moral ideal of “social consonance” and the propriety of behaviour. Through the adat, Bruneian’s proper order of etiquette is identified. Through adat, the experience of Rasa indung bini is superimposed by its cultural traditions, morals and etiquette formalised in the state ideology of ‘Malay Islamic Monarchy’ named as MIB (Malay Islam Beraja), as well as through knowledge that supports the necessary belief that forms a proper structure of the family as an institution. In times of family crisis, the notion of Rasa indung bini is revived and appreciated towards any efforts. The belief in barakat (blessings) of Rasa indung bini is expressed as a religious moral voiced out in a restricted code that regulates a specific practice of Rasa indung bini.

Islam is the state religion, with His Majesty the Sultan and Yang Dipertuan as the Head of the Islamic faith in the country. Hence, Islam is the centre of religious role and guidance for the Muslims in Brunei Darussalam. Issues related to traditions and patriarchal social norms do not tend to burden the notion Rasa indung bini with the pressure of preference and expectation of a male heir to either her or her husband’s lineage. Rasa indung bini remains glorified and appreciated when she gives birth to a child, and it does not devaluate the essentialism of Rasa indung bini. In Majlis Mandi Belawat, both the mother and the newly born child are paraded in the crowd with good food and attire. The need for a son for an heir is privately anticipated but seldom gives rise to social pressure. Social sentiment between the mother and the child is openly involved and promoted. Altogether in this social context, Rasa indung bini is observed to accentuate women’s leadership and authority in community building.

**Rasa indung bini as a symbol of spiritual unity**

Bruneian’s traditional conceptualisation of motherhood earned its resistance by its spiritual cohesion triggered within the family. The notion of rumah tangga (family and household) revolves around the direct presence of the mother and the belief that radiates as both a symbol of religious spirituality and social unity. Rasa indung bini is often paired with the Malay proverb, “syurga ditelapak kaki ibu” (literally translated as the heaven under mother’s feet), which spells a natural sense of obedience. Such cosmological-derived belief for Rasa indung bini is further regulated as part of the important element in the daily prayers with the mother and her maternal form be persistently alive and hence putting an order in the social arrangement. Spiritual obedience regulates the identity of Rasa indung bini as a symbol of unity. Despite the patriarchal order, Rasa indung bini, there exists an equal interest in the motherhood sense. Though according to the respondents, Bruneian women talk about complementarity rather than equality regarding gender issues. The expression of equality with Rasa indung bini is anchored by the idea of spiritual unity regardless of the respondents’ various social backgrounds. Various images and differences of Rasa indung bini are shared as similar stories and manoeuvred to the point of familiarity. Sensitivities on its spiritual aspect
are kept at its confidential. Restricted code on spiritual Rasa indung bini is clearly understood as serumpun (unity). This notion is found in the variants of images that radiate from Rasa indung bini manifested in mother, mothering, motherhood, maternal power and birthing. The sense of spiritual unity and belonging to one root is partly knowledge determined where the body-social is also understood as a spiritual collective body. The religious belief in blessings, locally known as barkat further infused into the local knowledge of Rasa indung bini. The impact of not having barkat, Rasa indung bini is an expression of regret for the loss of pure value. As a symbol of spiritual unity, Rasa indung bini is also observed as an instrument of reciprocity between mother and children. By association with the belief system, a mother has access to power.

In search of synthesis concepts
Since the Independence of 1984, the role of women got expanded with the new development motto, Brunei Yakin (Brunei Sure; convinced; firm). The spirit of development gives birth to a new form of synergy, from family to nation. The respondents do not change, but the issues are now taken over from pure activity to the use of power relations. This allows the emergence of new opportunities and perspectives. With improvement in education, women voice out an adaptation to the new political discourse. Rasa indung bini remains only to liberate and form a different pattern of experience as active participants in the development scope and not merely observed as a form of social pressure.

One of the respondents mentioned that,

“...motherhood sense remains, but we must also be opened to new opportunities. My mother accepted traditions. She did not go to school, but she was a strong woman to encourage all her children to earn a higher education. (Case: RM, Age: 72)

Increased social mobility may have an impact on traditional beliefs and loosen social norms. Raising children with culturally traditional values, teaching them about the sacred, profane and life here-after (Duniya-Akhirat), and emphasising the importance of social relationships within the family are all roles that were traditionally filled by family members, especially mothers. These roles are now managed to carry out by the government in Brunei. Therefore, certain significant motherly functions in families are considered as being “institutionalised” by the government (i.e. Day-Care Centres, Ugam etc.). Thus, the government of Brunei has taken several steps to uphold its people’s traditional values and culture to protect social bonds through different institutions in a bureaucratic way.

Summary and conclusion
To conclude, the study discusses the sense of motherhood and the Bruneian notion of it. This exploratory research was conducted to explore the power of Rasa indung bini in Brunei and how religious and societal beliefs work as a means to empower women through motherhood in Brunei. In Brunei Malay culture, the term Rasa indung bini symbolises motherhood with religious and spiritual beliefs that portray motherhood as a divine aspect of society. When mothers give blessings to their young ones is an example of religion and spirituality related to motherhood. Mothers are depicted as supernatural beings who have the ability to give birth to humans and are directly involved with their upbringing. In other words, they are responsible for providing their child with daily necessities, teaching them daily life skills, morals and values, and also protecting their young ones. Bruneians believe that they have the power and ability to emit blessings, though that does not mean that mothers are treated as priests or a knowledgeable body of religion. Respondents regarded it as an agency of women’s empowerment though the mother herself is unaware of it, as the expression is pure.
The respondents use the word “pure” to express its sacredness. The idea of motherhood itself plays a role in empowering women. They argued that motherhood is not a means to keep the women inside the house or to chain them only within the family; rather, it could help a woman become stronger. As a mother, she can build her own empire inside her family through this strong bondage. It can make her more confident in dealing with others outside the family.

The study also found that the previous notion of being a single mother was always looked down upon. Society usually uses the notion of single mothers will always struggle to take care of their children and it is needed to have a male counterpart to aid in growing and developing their children. However, nowadays single mothers are treated as spiritually gifted and have strong backing from established and dominant discourses.

Moreover, the mother of this generation can teach their offspring to be respectful toward humans regardless of gender to build a better future with gender parity. Government should make effective policies to nurture motherhood. The findings of this study are also important to motivate social researchers for further study as there is less discussion about the sense of motherhood from a women’s empowerment viewpoint in Brunei Darussalam.

Notes
1. There are variants to the meaning of rasa. Taken from Kamus Dwibahasa Oxford Fajar, the word rasa refers to “...to feel, explore or perceive by touch be conscious of (being); give a sensation; have a vague conviction or impression; have as an opinion” (p. 200). In Hindu term, rasa refers to the inward contemplation, the experience of transcendence and intricate bonding connection with divinity inside the divine realm (http://www.britanica.com/art/raja). Chaudhury (1965, pp. 145–149) describes rasa as extraordinary and or unworldly and transcendental. In the theory of rasa, refers to, “…it points to the peculiar, self-contained nature of the emotion as divested of its cognitive tendencies” (Chaudhury, 1965, p. 146). In Javanese context, rasa means secret, mystery or sap. Juice, essence, serum, milk, potion, semen, mercury, gold, mineral, myrrh, onion, resin, flavour, affect, aesthetic, the faculty of taste, sentiment and disposition (Benamou, 2010, p. 40). In general, the term indung is a collective word referring to parents or guardians. Contextually, indung also refers to collective qualities such as mother, motherhood and maternal sense. Rasa Indung in Brunei context refers to sense of motherhood experienced from mystical and Godly inspiration.

2. “We have commanded people to honour their parents. Their mothers bore them through hardship upon hardship, and their weaning takes two years. So be grateful to me and your parents — To me is the final return” (Quran, Surah Luqman, 31, p. 14).


4. Taken from the unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Mas Irun binti Haji Alli, Understanding the Forms of Life and Spirit of Brunei: Ethnography of Ilmu Experiences in Brunei Darussalam, 2020. The author describes Rasa as the mystical foundation that connects the heart. Literally, Rasa is commonly understood as a tangible sense of taste, smell, and sight. Spiritual Rasa is understood as a journey to become.

5. The root word for kebatinan is batin. Batin is a borrowed term from Arabic language. It refers to the inner self and in Bruneian ilmu (native knowledge) the notion of batin is described as mystical (Mas Irun binti Haji Alli, 2020).

References


**Further reading**


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