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### Social Change PostCOVID-19 in Malaysia: The Density of Social Network

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#### Abstract

The COVID-19 pandemic is a global health problem that has given the greatest challenge for humanity today. This paper discusses the social changes that have taken place on social network density after COVID-19 hit the world. The social network density discussed is based on Social Network Theory according to the current situation that has hit Malaysia. The methods used are based on document analysis and case analysis from official documents issued by the government. The analysis revealed that the COVID-19 pandemic has had a devastating impact on human health, social and economic. However, seen from the standpoint of social networks, the COVID-19 pandemic has led to the emergence of densities in social networks due to increased informal sector involvement in the formation of social networks. This means that, as the number of social networks is formed, the density of social network will increased as defined by Social Network Theory.

**Keywords:** COVID-19, pandemic, social network, density, Social Network Theory

#### Introduction

Infectious respiratory disease has emerged in Wuhan, Hubei Province, China on December 2019 and is named by the World Health Organization as Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) (Chakraborty & Maity, 2020). The COVID-19 pandemic is a global health problem that has given the greatest challenge for humanity today, even though it is considered a catastrophe for some countries. This is because the uninvited virus not only adversely affects human health but also profoundly affects many other aspects, especially the social and economic aspects of a country (Nicola, et al., 2020).

Looking at risk factors, statistics show that patients who already have chronic diseases such as high blood pressure, diabetes, cardiovascular disease and respiratory problems have a higher mortality rate than non-critical groups (Zheng et al., 2020). However, on the social side, it is likely that individuals will be affected by the emergence of the COVID-19 virus resulting in limited and disconnected relationships. Because of this, the existence of this contagious disease requires individuals to maintain distance from time to time to reduce the likelihood of viral transmission. This situation causes every member of the community not to meet face to face without any urgent need. On the economic aspects, COVID-19 which is hitting the world today, has forced many industries to stop their business operating activities for security purposes (Saadat, Rawtani & Hussain, 2020). Indirectly, this situation led to economic downturns and many workers had to be laid off. However, the covid-19 pandemic struck

worldwide; especially in Malaysia has a different impact on the density of social networks in people's lives.

## **Social Network Theory**

Social networks are viewed as social relationships that surround the life of an individual. According to Social Network Theory, social relations are ironically described as a set of nodes and ties. This group of nodes is described as an actor that may consist of individuals or organizations that exist within a social network. The ties, in turn, describes the relationship that exists between these individuals; that is, the existence of social relations between actors in a relationship (Marks, 2019; Siti Hajar, Siti Hajar and Haris, 2019; Siti Hajar, 2006; and Borgatti, 2002; Wasserman and Faust, 1994).

Relationships that exist between objects may consist of individuals, organizations, nations, items that are formed through friendship, love, power, ideas and may be caused by the illness encountered (Kadushin, 2012). Each group of norms, values and expectations that are formed through social networks is shared among members of a social group (Halpen, 2011). According to Boase, Jeffrey, John, Wellman and Rainie (2006), social networks involve a large number of members; which involves friends, neighbors, relatives and co-workers based on work or home. The development of the technological revolution then led to the formation of an internet-based social network. As more and more people are getting to know each other, the more interactions that take place over the telephone and the internet are growing. Enduring and continuous adaptations occur due to the personal bonding that results in large social networks.

In its simplest form, a social network is a description or description of all the bonds formed between the nodes involved. The more bonds exist between individuals within a network, the higher knowledge, influence and power of the main actors. This means that the more bonding or relationship exist, the higher of network density will be. What is the most important is the power to control the actors in the social networks that are formed (Kadushin, 2012).

## **Density Of Social Network Postcovid-19**

The emergence of the Covid-19 pandemic has a profound impact on the social network density. Although each individual in the community has limited movement due to the control of the government and especially the control under the Ministry of Home Affairs, but due to the sense of responsibility and responsibility, various parties appear to assist the government in providing assistance to every community especially the Non-Governmental Organization (NGO). Due to the Movement Control Order (MCO) set by the Malaysian government, most Malaysians have lost their food supply and access to other social activities. This has caused many parties to volunteer to provide assistance. Among the NGOs present to help are Global Peace Malaysia (GPM), GlasedCorp Malaysia, Priyaa Simmi, Kitafund, Refuge For The Refugees, Tenaganita, Kuala Lumpur Street Kitchen, Democratic People's League, SESO Malaysia, The Lost Food Project (TLFP), Savor of Life, HanafundMe.com, OPSHapan, and many lads along with individuals.

The main driving force of this NGOS is fundraising effort. However, all relevant NGOs picking up or delivering groceries, finishing administrative duties such as calling people and replying messages, and in any other way you're comfortable helping, work to connect the needy with someone who's specifically able to assist with what they need, aid struggling NGOs and charity partners who are suffering from the lack of resources during the MCO, distribution of food items, precautionary supplies (face masks, sanitisers, handwashing liquids, etc.) for staff and monthly funds to support the cafe during a time where dine-ins are not allowed, daily essentials, food and drink, personal hygiene items and more for higher institutions student, amass essential food items to feed pregnant, single mothers throughout the period of the MCO, support the livelihood of refugees, combat food poverty amidst those isolated by society through the act of serving communal meals to the homeless and needy, providing advice and lifestyle tracking to individuals and corporate organisations, and crowdfund

education-centric projects across the country, with emphasis on raising funds for schools, classrooms and learning centres that are in dire need of financial help.

However, in order to prevent the covid-19 pandemic from spreading, the government, in particular with the cooperation of the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Defense, has required that all assistance provided to every member of the community must be through the Department of Social Welfare of Malaysia (JKMM) in each area. These conditions have been issued by the government so that control over the outbreak can be implemented without further spread. The JKMM, which is a focal institution, is responsible for the cooperation of other frontliners such as the police and Malaysian Volunteer Corps Department (RELA). The aid management system in the event of a pandemic disaster struck for the safety of all Malaysians. This centralized management also enables every segment of society that exists in Malaysia to receive a fair share of their daily needs.

In addition, the Malaysian Government has also provided the National Concerned Aid (BPN) to B40 and M40. The eligibility criteria and the amount of ringgit provided by it are as shown in Table 1 below:

Table 1: National Concerned Aid (BPN)

Category & Monthly Income	Household Income RM4,000 and below	Household Income RM4,001 to RM8,000	Single RM2,000 and below	Single RM2,001 to RM4,000
Amount of BPN Assistance	RM1,600	RM1,000	RM800	RM500
Duration / Payment	April: RM1,000 Mei: RM600	April: RM500 Mei: RM500	April: RM500 Mei: RM300	April: RM250 Mei: RM250
BPN recipients do NOT need to apply or submit new applications	Households previously approved under the Life Assistance (BSH) list	Existing taxpayer households are registered with the LHDN	Single individuals previously approved under the Life Assistance list (BSH)	Existing taxpayer single individuals are registered with the LHDN
Acceptance of assistance payments	Directly to a bank account registered under BSH	Directly to a bank account registered with the LHDNM	Directly to the bank account listed below BSH	Directly to a registered bank account dengan LHDNM

Source: Economic Stimulus Package (ESP), 2020

According to Table 1 above, the RM250 billion Economic Stimulus Package (ESP) or known as PRIHATIN was announced by the Prime Minister of Malaysia on March 27, 2020. The amount of assistance provided is based on the terms and monthly income of each household. Not only that, university student and sixth graders as well as civil servants are also given BPN. The BPN is given to all Malaysians in the hope that individuals will continue to live their lives just as they did despite the covid-19 pandemic that hit the world.

At the same time, the government has also implemented a moratorium on all Malaysians for six months from April 2020 to September 2020. Moratorium period refers to the period of time during which you do not have to pay an EMI on the loan taken. This period is also known as EMI holiday. Usually, such breaks are offered to help individuals facing temporary financial difficulties to plan their finances better. The extension will provide relief to many, especially the self-employed, as they would have found it difficult to service their loans like car loans, home loans etc. due to loss of income during the lockdown period from March 25, 2020. The proposed moratorium has had a positive impact on Malaysians. This is because the existing ringgit surplus has led to the emergence of new NGOs and new volunteers to help the local community (Ministry of Finance Malaysia, 2020).

Not only this, it also affected the emergence of the informal sector. Due to limited movement and the constraints of daily needs, immediate family members and neighbors began to reach out to each other. For example, in Kedah, Malaysia. Since the MCO was implemented, a farmer shares the crop he planted with his neighbors and relatives. In the past, her crop was sold in the market, but since the covid-19 pandemic hit the world, things have changed. The same constraints faced by each individual have created a new normal in society. Not only do they share crops, they also share other daily necessities such as rice, cooking oil, and so on. Existing interactions and mutual help have created a stronger bond of relationship among the community. The diversity of assistance provided by individuals, NGOs and the government has created a bond. The diversity of existing groups and the increasing interaction among members of the community has increased the density of social networks. This is because, according to Social Network Theory, the diversity of existing groups with increasing number of interactions leads to increased social network density.

## Conclusion

The worldwide COVID-19 pandemic has disrupted the public's health, economy and daily life (Shah & Farrow, 2020). This kind of pandemic is not just a biological phenomenon. It greatly affects society and has long-term psycho-social implications. The emergence of this pandemic is fundamentally negatively impacting human life. For this reason, this pandemic has also led to the sudden closure of business premises, mass hysteria, panic, uncertainty and increasing anxiety in some places (Chinazzi et al., 2020). However, from the point of view of establishing a social network, the COVID-19 pandemic has provided a very positive impact. Increasing existing linkages especially involving the informal sector has increased social network density. The more dense the social network becomes, the more integrated the network becomes.

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