

ACADEMY OF LANGUAGE STUDIES  
UNIVERSITI TEKNOLOGI MARA  
SABAH BRANCH, KOTA KINABALU CAMPUS

# WORDS IN ACTION II

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STORIES THAT TEACH: ANECDOTES, CASE  
STUDIES, AND REFLECTIONS FOR REAL-WORLD  
INSIGHTS



# **WORDS IN ACTION II**

## **STORIES THAT TEACH: ANECDOTES, CASE STUDIES, AND REFLECTIONS FOR REAL-WORLD INSIGHTS**

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e ISBN: 978-629-99065-8-2

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Published by Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM)

Sabah Branch  
Kota Kinabalu  
Locked Bag 71,  
88997 Kota Kinabalu, Sabah,  
Malaysia.

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## **Foreword**

Words in Action II: Stories that teach – Anecdotes, Case Studies and Reflections for Real-world Insights offers pragmatic approaches to problems we face and learn in everyday life. In this edition, the authors adopt problem-solving mindsets that focus on finding practical solutions to seek knowledge from real-life situations and draw insights from experiences. Sometimes, they trust their intuitions to improve decisions; at other times, they use theories to inform their practices and understand complex human behaviours and social environments.

### **A Lecturer's Journey**

Take a pastoral walk down memory lane as the author reminisces about the roads not taken, which eventually lead up to his current teaching position at UiTM. This reflective piece offers moments of lush metaphorical writing, and a brisk read.

### **All that Drama**

Why do stage plays stand the test of time? Is it due to their penchant for being used in pedagogy? Is it that an exploration of the human condition can be safely played out within a set boundary? Is it because they offer us a vicarious trip which deeply resonates with our longing for meaning and purpose? Is it because life imitates art and vice versa? It is all these, and more.

### **Analysing 'Bodoh' in Sociocultural Contexts**

Stupid is as stupid does. If one thing is certain, it is that there is no shortage of stupidity around us. But, how much of it is authentic stupidity? In this analytical piece, the authors illuminate us on this very dim subject.

### **A Beautiful Moment with Schizophrenia Client, Miss N**

In this case study, the author elucidates the complexities of providing healthcare for individuals with schizophrenia. A holistic multipronged approach towards healthcare appears to always be the necessity in giving such patients the best shot at living fulfilling lives. All the best to you Miss N, and kudos to the medical team assisting you in your therapy.

### **Colours from the Past... Into the Present**

The colours you like at a certain phase of life are literally a moment of self-discovery. Do colours and growth operate in tandem? Colours from the past... into the Present will tell you more.

## **Entre Sabah Et La Gaule: Un Pont Culturel Inattendu**

### ***Between Sabah and Gaul: An Unexpected Cultural Bridge***

This reflective piece serves as a reminder of a known fact about *homo sapiens*: deep down, we are truly all the same. Across cultures, regardless of time and space, the propensity to search for meaning in the realm of the intangible, the need for passing down time-honoured stories to the next generation, and the relishing of a warm meal with others appear to be traits that form the blueprint for our shared existence.

## **Foster More Gender Equality for Malaysian Workplace**

Are certain positions only held by men? Are women always sidelined in the workplace? It's high time we put an end to this gender stereotyping. Let's empower each other and foster a more equal and inclusive workplace.

## **From Mountains to Couches: My PHD Odyssey**

PhD journey is not so much about the conferment you receive at the end. It is a learning process – a very humbling experience – not academic in its entirety, but personal growth.

## **Hibiscus, the National Flower of Malaysia**

“Unity through diversity” has been the rallying cry of Malaysia since its inception, and the hibiscus is emblematic of its citizens; like the flower which comes in a dazzling array of shapes and hues, Malaysians unabashedly display their cultural differences openly for all to see and admire. In this piece, the author offers a deeper understanding of the hibiscus through the lens of biochemistry.

## **Hooray I Am Not Going Crazy!**

Setbacks are part of the journey in life. The roller coaster ride of perimenopause is erratic, but it's not a journey we have to face alone. The author, with courage and honesty, shares her moment of truth, breaking the stigma and taboo surrounding this topic.

## **Introspeksi Diri**

Kisah ini menyelami pengalaman peribadi dan pergolakan dalaman seorang anak yang berusaha mencari kedamaian di tengah panas yang membakar, bukan sahaja dengan dirinya sendiri, tetapi juga dalam hubungan dengan ibunya.

Semoga coretan ini menjadi renungan untuk kita semua tentang pentingnya kasih sayang dan cinta sejati kepada-Nya.

### **Kamehameha: The Magic Never Dies**

As a mother of four vibrant children, the author has experienced a journey filled with challenges and joys, emotions, and adventures that come with balancing work and family life. The author found strength in the magical word of “Kamehameha,” which magically gave her incredible energy to deal with the chaos of her parenting journey.

### **Kepentingan Adab dalam Pengajaran dan Pembelajaran**

Adab boleh dikatakan menjadi tunjang kepada pembinaan sahsiah diri yang holistik. Seseorang amat memerlukan pembangunan adab kerana proses intrinsik tersebut akan diterjemahkan kepada dunia ekstrinsik dan ini bermakna seseorang itu akan menjadi pembawa berkat kepada masyarakat sejagat.

### **Navigating Turbulent Waters**

This work shares the emotional struggles of growing up in a rough household. It is a journey of healing and self-discovery, demonstrating the strength it takes to break free from the past and embrace a future filled with love, resilience, and hope for a better life for the next generation.

### **Oh Sabah**

Penghijrahan ke bumi lain demi kerjaya merupakan sesuatu yang membawa rasa pahit manis. Bagi si pengkarya, kerinduan dan keazaman menjadi tema utama puisi ini.

### **Rakan Toksik**

Karya ini memberikan pandangan yang mendalam tentang kerumitan dalam menangani hubungan toksik di tempat kerja, berdasarkan lebih tiga puluh tahun pengalaman mengajar di Universiti Teknologi MARA. Ia menawarkan nasihat praktikal dan refleksi peribadi tentang mengenal pasti dan menguruskan tingkah laku toksik.

### **Ramadhan Yang Ku Rindui**

Menyambut Ramadan di Semenanjung Malaysia ada cabarannya, terutamanya ketika menghadapi kesesakan lalu lintas yang teruk, kenaikan harga makanan, dan keletihan. Walau bagaimanapun, dalam cabaran-cabaran ini terdapat detik-



detik kesyukuran yang istimewa dan pertumbuhan peribadi dan komunal. Penulis memberikan pandangan tentang dunia ini.

### **Sambutan Hari Raya Aidilfitri Yang Paling Bermakna**

Perayaan keagamaan boleh dipandang remeh oleh insan-insan yang sibuk bekerja. Renungan hari raya yang menyegarkan ini mengembalikan semua keseronokan, cinta, dan nostalgia yang dibawa oleh musim suci ini kepada umat Islam melalui kaca mata penulis.

### **Silent Screams: Exposing the Epidemic of Bullying**

The issue of bullying causes everlasting harm. It is sometimes a hidden problem affecting online spaces, schools & workplaces. Efforts to bring awareness prevail, but the effects continue. The author suggests we work in unity through education, empathy and stronger policies, to create safer & more caring environments for everyone.

### **Teaching Grammar through Poetry**

Passion motivates educators to enliven seemingly dull subjects and personalise learning. A dedicated lecturer recalls teaching grammar through poetry with inventive techniques.

### **Tekanan di Tempat Kerja. Apakah Penyelesaiannya?**

Penulis memberikan pandangan yang bernas, berkongsi empati tentang tekanan berkaitan kerja, dan nasihat praktikal untuk mengatasinya.

### **Ternyata Hanya Singgah**

Liku-liku kehidupan sememangnya menjadikan kita berasa hampa dan bimbang. Namun, wajarkah kita menguburkan diri dalam cekungan kegelisahan secara berpanjangan? Sudah tentu tidak. Dengan mendekati Tuhan, perspektif baru yang membawa ketenangan boleh ditimbulkan.

### **The Power of A Promise**

“The Power of A Promise” explores the profound impact of keeping promises within a culturally blended family. Through personal insight, it highlights how steadfast commitments shape character, foster unity, and drive societal change, illustrating that even simple promises can ignite transformative progress.

## **The Power of Affirmation to Bring Out the Best In Us**

“The Power of Affirmation to Bring Out the Best in Us” reveals how the right words can transform our lives. In times of self-doubt and negativity, affirmations can reshape our self-perception, build confidence, and inspire growth. This text illustrates how positive affirmations nurture a resilient mindset and manifest our deepest aspirations, guiding us toward personal fulfillment and gratitude.

## **The Power of Empathy in Leadership**

In "The Power of Empathy in Leadership," the essential role of empathy in transforming organizations is brought into focus. This text demonstrates how empathetic leaders foster trust, collaboration, and inclusivity, creating environments where individuals feel valued and motivated. By prioritizing emotional connection and understanding, empathetic leaders not only enhance employee satisfaction but also drive innovation and organizational success. This compelling exploration reveals how empathy can be a powerful catalyst for sustainable growth and a positive workplace culture.

## **The Tradition of the Hari Raya Celebration in Malaysia**

Hari Raya Aidilfitri, known locally as Hari Raya Puasa, marks the end of Ramadan with joy and reflection. This text explores the rich traditions of this celebration in Malaysia, from heartfelt rituals and festive attire to evolving practices influenced by modern technology. As we delve into the customs of this cherished festival, may it deepen your appreciation for the enduring spirit of unity, forgiveness, and celebration that defines Hari Raya Aidilfitri.

## **To Err Is Wrong?**

In “To Err is Wrong?” the author explores a fundamental issue in education: our deep-seated discomfort with making mistakes. Drawing from personal experiences and reflections, the text challenges the conventional belief that only correct answers are valuable. It advocates for a shift in mindset, where errors are seen as steppingstones rather than failures. This perspective not only enriches the learning experience but also encourages a more open and engaging classroom environment. Embracing mistakes as part of the learning journey, the author highlights the transformative power of seeing failure as an opportunity for growth and innovation.

# **Editorial Board**

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## **About The Authors**

### **Afifah Fadhlullah**

Afifah Fadhlullah is a senior lecturer at the Academy of Language Studies, UiTM Cawangan Melaka who has profound interests in creative writing, English literature and zealously finds creative ways with technology to make learning English and literature fun and engaging. She loves to read inspiring and spiritually uplifting motivational stories that can be shared with her students. She always looks at the beauty of life and treats problems as opportunities for growth, betterment and making positive changes.

### **Afni Anida Adnan**

Afni Anida Adnan is a senior lecturer at the Academy of Language Studies, UiTM Negeri Sembilan, Seremban Campus. Her interests include writing poems and designing card-based English Language games. She is also involved in UiTM's in-house training of newly appointed lecturers. Besides that, she occasionally gives training as well as assistance in the writing and refining of English Language modules for various institutions in Malaysia. Her philosophy in life is 'do your best and leave it to God to do the rest'.

### **Amnah Abdullah**

Amnah Abdullah, a part-time French lecturer at UiTM Sabah's Akademi Pengajian Bahasa, is an alumnus of the then Institut Teknologi MARA French Matriculation Program (KPP), bringing her expertise and passion for French language education to students.

### **Angeline Ranjethamoney Vijayarajoo**

She is an Associate Professor at the Academy of Language Studies, UiTM, Negeri Sembilan, Seremban Campus. Angeline is passionate about all that she does. She has written and published over 25 books for schools and college students. She is also actively involved in connecting foreign universities with local ones in order to collaborate and work together. She enjoys travelling, reading and writing. Her philosophy in life is to work hard, do good, give generously and bless others.

### **Anwar Farhan Bin Mohamad Marzaini**

Anwar Farhan Bin Mohamad Marzaini is currently pursuing his PhD in Education at Universiti Teknologi MARA, specializing in Teaching English as a Second Language (TESL). He holds both a Bachelor's and a Master's degree in

Education from the same institution. Currently, he serves as a lecturer at the Academy of Language Studies, Universiti Teknologi MARA, where he focuses on language instruction. Before entering academia, he spent five years as an ESL teacher in a public secondary school, where he also served as an SPM examiner. His research interests include Language Assessment, Teacher Training, Curriculum and Instruction, and Teaching Pedagogy.

### **Arutchelvi K.Kumaran**

She is a lecturer at the Academy of Language Studies, UiTMCNS Seremban campus. She enjoys teaching and engaging with her students, having many years of experience in the field. She is an avid reader and enjoys writing. Her philosophy in life is to be kind and helpful to all, no matter what.

### **Bodis Francis Ninggoi**

Bodis Francis Ninggoi, working at Samarahan Campus, UiTM Sarawak Branch, is deeply interested in the psychological aspects of mental health. Her philosophy in life revolves around the belief that understanding and addressing mental health is key to overall well-being. She is committed to promoting awareness, compassion, and support for mental health, striving to make a positive impact on individuals and communities.

### **Cynthia Robert Dawayan**

Cynthia Robert Dawayan has been with Universiti Teknologi MARA, Sabah Branch, for the past 18 years where she serves as a Senior Lecturer in the Faculty of Business and Management. She is currently head of a consultancy project funded by Yayasan Peneraju Pendidikan Bumiputera, under the Ministry of Economy of Malaysia, and Yayasan Sukarelawan Siswa, under the Ministry of National Unity. Apart from teaching and conducting research, she is also an experienced speaker on marketing and entrepreneurship related topics. She has published several research papers and chapters in books mainly in marketing and tourism-related topics. Specifically, her research interests are primarily on tourism marketing, digital marketing, entrepreneurship as well as community-based tourism topics.

### **Evelyn Sharminnie S.Vasuthavan**

She is a senior lecturer at Academy of Language Studies, UiTMCNS Seremban campus. She has taught in schools and universities since 1989. Her research interests are teaching English and Literature in ESL and ESP contexts. Her philosophy in life is to speak gently with kindness and to work hard with full commitment in what one does.

### **Fauziana Bt Fauzi @ Mat Rawi**

Fauziana Bt Fauzi is a Senior Lecturer at the Centre of Economics and Finance Studies, Faculty of Business and Management, UiTM Puncak Alam Selangor. She has almost 15 years of teaching and research experience. She has served in UiTM since 2009. From 2009 - 2015 she worked in UiTM Kelantan. Currently, she works in UiTM Puncak Alam. She teaches many Economic subjects at the Degree, Diploma, and Fundamental levels. Among the subjects are Monetary Theory and Policy, Monetary Economics, Economics, Managerial Economics, Statistical Methods, Microeconomics, Malaysian Economics, and many more including Finance and Insurance subjects. Besides teaching, she is also interested in doing research. She researches various issues and topics including Education, Monetary Economics, International Economics, Labour Economics, and many more. Currently, she is interested in creative works. She writes poems and articles to be published in magazines and e-books. In her free time, she loves to read books, especially on subjects related to motivation, bibliography, and history. She also loves camping and picnicking with neighbours and family members. She believes that hard work, honesty, and responsibility are among the values that a lecturer must have. Hard work will always lead everybody to success and there are always lights at the end of the tunnels.

### **Ibtisam Abdul Wahab**

Ibtisam Abdul Wahab lectures at the Faculty of Pharmacy, UiTM Cawangan Selangor, Kampus Puncak Alam.

### **Iz 'an Bin Rosmani**

Iz'an Rosmani is a dedicated English lecturer at UiTM Kelantan with a passion for language, photography and travel. He believes in the power of exploration and creativity as key to personal growth, constantly seeking new perspectives through his lens. His philosophy in life is to embrace every journey as an opportunity to learn and grow.

### **Jean Hoo Fang Jing**

Jean Hoo Fang Jing is a senior lecturer in the Academy of Language Studies, UiTM Melaka Branch. She has a Master of Arts degree in Linguistics. She enjoys creating creative works and writing research papers in linguistics and education. Her life motto is that simple things are the most remembered.

### **Kuan Siaw Vui**

Kuan Siaw Vui, a Senior Lecturer at UiTM Sarawak, is passionate about reading inspirational articles and sharing life experiences to inspire others. She is committed to giving her best in all endeavours, dedicating her work to glorifying God.

### **Marianne Estabella Fung**

Marianne Fung is an English language lecturer attached with the Academy of Language Studies based in Kota Kinabalu campus, UiTM Cawangan Sabah. Her areas of interest include the study of phonetics and phonology, interpersonal communication, metaphors in health communication and developing modules for job hunting skills. She has a wicked sense of humour, loves reading novels (whenever there's an opportunity) and occasionally pens thoughts to reflect on mundane events.

### **Mimi Sofiah Ahmad Mustafa**

Born in Perak, she has been living in Melaka for over 29 years because of her attachment to UiTM Cawangan Melaka. She is married to an architect and has four children. She graduated from a university in the United Kingdom. She is easily amused when reading novels by Picoult, Sheldon and Grisham.

### **Mohamad Firdaus Ahmad**

Mohamad Firdaus bin Ahmad holds a PhD in Sports Management from Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM). Currently, he serves as a Senior Lecturer at the Faculty of Sports Science and Recreation, UiTM Seremban Campus. In 2022, he was honoured with the UKM Outstanding Thesis Award for his exceptional doctoral research.

### **Mohd Ikram Mohd Nor Rizan**

Mohd Ikram Mohd Nor Rizan is a lecturer at the Academy of Language Studies, UiTM Cawangan Negeri Sembilan, Kampus Seremban.

### **Muhamad Azhar bin Zubir**

Muhamad Azhar has experience in teaching Arabic for 12 years. He obtained an MA in Teaching Arabic as a Second Language at the International Islamic University of Malaysia (IIUM) 2017 and a Bachelor's in Arabic linguistics at the same university. Now he is a permanent lecturer at the Academy of Language Studies, UiTM Cawangan Sabah since March 2021. He is an avid reader of history and civilization, adventure, and novels. His other hobbies

include travelling, watching movies & TV series, jogging, hiking and playing badminton. He is also a Research Assistant at IIUM and was appointed as a reviewer for the Borneo Akademika Journal, UiTM Cawangan Sabah. His areas of interest include Arabic linguistics and literature, lexicography, creativity, critical reading & writing and social studies.

### **Muhamad Hafiz Bin Hassan**

Muhamad Hafiz Bin Hassan is a graphic design lecturer at Kolej Pengajian Seni Kreatif, UiTM Cawangan Sarawak. His interests include motivational education and writing, with a philosophy focused on thinking positively and striving towards success. His work aims to inspire and elevate others through creativity and positive thinking, fostering growth and resilience.

### **Nazima Versay Kudus**

Nazima Versay Kudus is a senior lecturer at the Academy of Language Studies, Universiti Teknologi MARA Cawangan Pulau Pinang. With a deep passion for history, culture, food and traveling, she explores how these elements intertwine to shape human experiences. Her philosophy in life is rooted in sustainability and leading a wholesome life, values she integrates into her professional and personal endeavours.

### **Norazlinda Hj Mohammad**

Norazlinda Hj Mohammad serves as a Senior Lecturer at UiTM Alor Gajah Campus, Melaka Branch. She has interest in writing articles, chapters in books, and periodical papers. She is on editorial boards for the publication of journals, innovation projects and translation work. Her philosophy in life is “quality work, perseverance and diligence are the keys to success.”

### **Norazrina Ag Ahmad**

Norazrina Ag Ahmad is a senior lecturer at the Academy of Language Studies, Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM), Sabah Branch. She specialises in English Language Teaching, Online Education, Teacher Education, Threshold Concepts, and Language Learning Strategies. She advocates for experiential learning, driven by passion and social-emotional development.

### **Norlela Ismail**

Norlela Ismail is a lecturer at the College of Creative Arts (Liberal Arts), Puncak Perdana Campus, Shah Alam specialising in screenwriting and film narrative. Nonetheless, she is also interested in creative writing - fiction and non-fiction writing.



### **Normala Ismail**

Normala binti Ismail is a senior lecturer in Economics at Universiti Teknologi MARA Pahang Branch, Jengka Campus. Like some other individuals, she has various hobbies, but her priority is taking care of Baby, Manja, Blackie and Chombie. Her life philosophy is very simple: “do not ever make other people’s lives difficult.”

### **Nurafiqah binti Mohamad Musa**

Nurafiqah binti Mohamad Musa is a lecturer from the Faculty of Hotel and Tourism Management, UiTM Sarawak Branch, Samarahan 2 Campus. Her interests are in tourism management and writing motivational content. She is passionate about inspiring others and making a positive impact in their lives.

### **Nur Dalilah binti Dahlan**

Nur Dalilah binti Dahlan is a lecturer at the Faculty of Sports Science and Recreation, UiTM Cawangan Negeri Sembilan, Kampus Seremban.

### **Nur Fatimah Aisyah binti Shahril**

Nur Fatimah Aisyah Shahril is an Arabic language lecturer teaching at MARA University of Technology (UiTM), Sabah Campus. She graduated from International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM) with a Master of Arts in Arabic Linguistic Studies and a bachelor’s degree in Arabic Language and Literature with a minor in Teaching Arabic as Second Language. She has been teaching Arabic since 2018 and has interests in linguistics, educational technology and computer & multimedia in foreign language studies.

### **Nur Nafishah binti Azmi**

Nur Nafishah Azmi is a creative writing lecturer at UiTM Puncak Perdana Campus. Her interest lies in creative writing that leads to writing modern poetry as well as discussions about self and divinity. Her life philosophy revolves around self-improvement to lead a happy and fulfilling existence while exploring the world.

### **Nur Syazwani Zulaikha Binti Safwan**

Nur Syazwani Zulaikha Safwan is currently lecturing at UiTM Seremban Campus. She combines her expertise in sports management with a strong commitment to driving progress and excellence in sports management education. She is passionate about mentoring and empowering others, and she

firmly believes that perseverance and continuous learning are the foundations of success.

### **Nurul Nadiah Rasdi**

Nurul Nadiah Rasdi is an English Lecturer at the Academy of Language Studies, UiTM Cawangan Johor, Kampus Pasir Gudang. She has been teaching in UiTM since 2014 and is very passionate about it. To her, the process of teaching and learning should be fun, and the students need to understand what they are learning.

### **Sharina Salmi Azmi**

She is currently a senior lecturer at the Academy of Language Studies, UiTM Negeri Sembilan, Seremban Campus. She has taught various English proficiency courses such as academic writing, listening, critical reading skills and oral presentations. She completed her undergraduate studies in English Language and Literature and pursued her graduate studies in Applied Linguistics at Universiti Putra Malaysia. She has more than 17 years of teaching experience. Her research interests include sociolinguistics, psycholinguistics and discourse analysis. Her philosophy in life is “each individual is responsible for their own happiness.”

### **Siti Nur Fatimah binti Md Aminullah**

Currently, Siti Nur Fatimah binti Md Aminullah is an Arabic lecturer with comprehensive experience and skills, who lectures at UiTM Cawangan Sabah. With 5 years of experience teaching Arabic, Fatimah is a very passionate lecturer who devotes her life to quality teaching and continues to create stunning learning spaces for students. She is thrilled to be part of UiTM’s line of educators. Fatimah is especially interested in learning about innovations in third language education.

### **Syazliiyati Ibrahim**

Syazliiyati Ibrahim is a senior lecturer at the Academy of Language Studies, UiTM Kedah Branch. She loves to observe life and indulge in good books. However, to keep up with the trend, she also makes sure that she is up to date with the latest K-dramas and restaurants that serve great dishes.

## **A LECTURER'S JOURNEY**

Iz'an bin Rosmani  
*Akademi Pengajian Bahasa,  
Universiti Teknologi MARA Cawangan, Kelantan*

Ever since I could remember, my dream was to become a university lecturer. The thought of shaping minds at a higher level, contributing to the ever-expanding tapestry of knowledge, and inspiring the next generation of scholars fuelled my ambition. As a child, I would watch documentaries about great universities and imagine myself standing at the podium, engaging students in stimulating discussions, the room humming with the energy of ideas. I vowed to turn these words into action.

In 2021, after years of dedication, I completed my Master's degree in English as a Second Language. The sense of accomplishment was overwhelming. It was a milestone that glittered with promise. Shortly after, I received an offer to work at a public university. The excitement was palpable; however, the position was on a contract basis. After much soul-searching, I decided to pursue other opportunities. I sought stability, a role that would allow me to plant roots and flourish. It was a difficult decision, but I believed that my dream job was still ahead, waiting to be discovered.

After that, in 2022, another opportunity presented itself. I was offered a position as a school teacher under Kementerian Pendidikan Malaysia (KPM). The job promised security and benefits, a shelter in a storm. But it wasn't aligned with my ultimate goal. Turning it down without a backup plan was a leap into the unknown, and many around me questioned my decision. Still, my heart was set on becoming a university lecturer, and I was determined to stay true to my words.

I began attending numerous interviews for lecturing positions, traveling across the country and honing my presentation skills. Each rejection stung like a cold wind, but I refused to let it deter me. My words were my bond, a beacon guiding me through the fog. During this period, I faced financial strain and moments of doubt, but I reminded myself of my commitment. That same year, I received another offer, this time from a private college. Yet again, it was a contract role. I accepted the offer while waiting for other interview results, believing that something better was on the horizon.

2023 brought a glimmer of hope, a shaft of light piercing through the clouds. I was offered a permanent lecturing position at a Polytechnic in Malaysia. The campus was vibrant, a garden of minds blooming with enthusiasm. "One step closer," I thought to myself, embracing the opportunity as a significant milestone on my journey. I poured myself into my work, developing new curricula, and engaging with students. It was a fulfilling experience, like tasting the first sweet fruits of a long-tended orchard, but I knew my journey was not complete.

Then, in 2024, my perseverance bore fruit. Alhamdulillah, I received a permanent post as a university lecturer at UiTM. The moment I received the offer letter was surreal, a dream crystallizing into reality. My colleagues congratulated me, and my family rejoiced. My words had indeed turned into action. The journey was arduous, filled with uncertainties and tough decisions, but staying true to my words had paid off.

Walking through the halls of UiTM, I felt a profound sense of belonging. The university atmosphere, with its spirited academic discussions and bustling campus life, was everything I had dreamed of. I began to design courses that not only taught language skills but also encouraged critical thinking and cultural awareness. I initiated research projects and collaborated with colleagues, contributing to the academic community that I had longed to be part of.

Reflecting on my journey, I firmly believe that if you have faith in yourself and remain unwavering in your commitments, you can achieve anything in life. My story is a testament to the power of words in action. Every step, every decision, and every challenge faced with determination brought me closer to my goal. The path was not easy, but it was worth every moment. My dream of becoming a university lecturer had become a reality, and it all began with a promise I made to myself to turn words into action.

## **ALL THAT DRAMA**

Afifah Fadhlullah  
*Akademi Pengajian Bahasa,  
Universiti Teknologi MARA Cawangan, Melaka*

*All the world's a stage,  
And all the men and women merely players;  
They have their exits and their entrances,  
And one man in his time plays many parts,*

Have you ever heard of this famous monologue by William Shakespeare? I believe every drama student must have come across these lines from the pastoral comedy, “As You Like It” which describes perfectly the many roles that humans have throughout their lives akin to actors on stage.

Drama is an art form that is meant to be performed in front of an audience on a theatrical stage. Words are put into action through dialogue and the drama performance will be brought to life when the words are acted out. It is performed by a group of actors and actresses ‘live’. Thus, this can make it highly challenging. It is not like dramas on television where you can play out your part as many times as the director wants until he is satisfied with your acting. Therefore, extensive preparation should be done before you perform on stage which can be stressful but at the same time, enjoyable and rewarding.

Teaching drama to my diploma students who are taking Literature as a compulsory course in their first semester was no easy feat. Some groups were rather slow to start with the task and have problems with time management. I also had to spend more time checking the scripts they had adapted when it was given to me at the very last hour aside from the rush to give my feedback so that they could put together a great drama presentation. However, I would say the toil and grit was worth it.

Performing a drama presentation is one of the final assessments for Literature and it was obvious my students were really ‘hyped’ and buzzing with excitement upon its arrival. They had to first adapt a play script before preparing for the drama presentation and were given the liberty to choose a classical or modern play to be adapted. After a series of consultations with the class lecturer and revisions to the script, they were finally ready to

rehearse and prepare for the drama presentation which would be presented during the final week of the semester.

The majority of them did not have any acting experience but they took up the challenge really well to showcase an outstanding performance. Their success was not just due to the advice and guidance that I gave them but their teamwork and mental resilience made it happen. Some of them were not in their best condition and fell sick during their drama preparation. However, they did not want to let down their group members and devotedly rehearsed together with them. The proficient ones also coached and guided the group members who had a tough time memorising their lines and internalising the right emotion to their characters. They also did not break down under pressure despite their hectic schedule and when they did not have a proper place to do their drama practice on campus.

Drama is not only about flawless acting but it is deeper than that as it brings people together. It is proven that drama can unite us since all of them managed to overcome their differences in personality, opinions and style of working. Despite some groups having internal conflicts with their group members due to lack of commitment and poorly-written script adaptations, all of these were put aside when it was time for them to perform.

I was clearly impressed and amazed with their creativity and the raw talent shown. What captured my attention was the play “Hang Tuah: The Mafia” which was an adaptation from the “The Legend of Hang Tuah” with a modern twist to fit the modern audience but still addresses the issues of love, friendship, loyalty and betrayal. The students came up with the idea from the influence of ‘gang-based’ or mafia-themed movies in modern cinemas; however, they stayed close to the original plot and characters. A blend of history and legend can be seen in their play adaptation to uphold the Malay identity. There was a group which brilliantly adapted the Greek play, “Oedipus the King” but the ending was totally unexpected: overcome with greed and a lust for power, Oedipus’ own sister-in-law, Creona (originally a male character) set her evil scheme of overthrowing him in motion. They stayed true to the elements of drama in Greek tragic plays and tried their best to create a ‘Greek’ vibe with a modern plot twist.

It would not be complete if Shakespeare’s plays were not mentioned, as one group performed a musical play on the star-crossed lovers “Romeo and Juliet”, inspired from the musical movie, “La la land”. In this production, they did not die; instead, Juliet’s cousin, Rosaline died in her place in the

middle of a heated argument with Romeo. Besides that, “Julius Caesar: The Un(bleeding) Crown” had a clever plot twist towards the end as Caesar was poisoned by his own son, Octavius who conspired with Brutus, Caesar’s righthand man. Last but not least, the allegorical play by Christopher Marlowe, “The Tragedy of Doctor Faustus” is also worth mentioning as the group explored the horror genre, by blending two horror movies: “The Conjuring” and “The Nun” to provide the audience with a visceral lesson about the catastrophic effects of being blinded by ambition and fame, which brought about one man’s ruin. It included the themes of redemption, and the classic struggle between good and evil.

I was also touched when they followed one of the tips that I had shared which was to avoid blocking your group members on stage, and to play around with the lighting to create different moods for the setting. They also successfully applied the relevant elements of drama that I had covered with them in class, specifically on dialogue, monologue, soliloquy and aside. To top it off, they clearly outdid themselves with their costumes, background music, voice projection and the use of props to bring their performances to life.

Through their drama presentation, they have learnt to be empathetic and patient with one another. Besides, it helps them to build their social communication and boosts their confidence level. Even the introverted students were able to come out from their shells to show a different side of themselves. It was indeed a great exposure to the students concerning the basics of drama and it enabled them to build good social skills as well as to reap the benefits of drama: being part of a cathartic process of portraying the realities and ever-changing roles of humans in different stages of life. All in all, drama truly puts words into action.

So now, it is the end of my drama ramblings. Curtains closed. *Exeunt.*

## **MEMORIES FROM THE DRAMA PRESENTATION**







## **A BEAUTIFUL MOMENT WITH SCHIZOPHRENIA CLIENT, MISS N**

Bodis Francis Ninggoi  
*Fakulti Sains Kesihatan,  
Universiti Teknologi MARA Cawangan, Sarawak*

Miss N's case presents a profound exploration of schizophrenia, a complex mental health disorder that significantly impacts individuals' daily functioning and quality of life. At just 14 years old, Miss N's journey with schizophrenia began against a backdrop of personal adversity and familial challenges. Raised in an environment marked by the loss of her father, her mother's remarriage, and subsequent relocation, Miss N experienced profound emotional turmoil and social isolation.

Her symptoms, which emerged during her early adolescence, included auditory and visual hallucinations, suicidal ideation, and disruptions in sleep patterns. These symptoms, characteristic of schizophrenia, posed significant challenges to Miss N's well-being and necessitated immediate intervention and treatment.

Upon admission to Hospital Sentosa, Kuching, Miss N's case was met with a comprehensive approach to care, acknowledging the multifaceted nature of schizophrenia and its impact on various aspects of her life. Through a combination of medication management, psychoeducation, and therapeutic interventions, healthcare professionals endeavored to address Miss N's symptoms while fostering her overall recovery and well-being.

The treatment journey for Miss N involved collaboration between healthcare professionals, caregivers from Rumah Kanak-Kanak (RK), and community resources, highlighting the importance of a multidisciplinary approach to mental health care. Efforts were made to involve RK staff in Miss N's care, recognizing the significance of ongoing support and follow-up in her recovery process. These collaborative efforts underscored the importance of community involvement and support in providing comprehensive care for individuals with schizophrenia.

In addition to medical interventions, Miss N received psychoeducation aimed at enhancing her understanding of schizophrenia and its symptoms. Despite challenges with medication compliance and insight into her illness, Miss N demonstrated progress through engagement in therapy, participation

in social activities, and spiritual support. These holistic interventions aimed to address the multifaceted needs of Miss N and empower her to navigate her challenges effectively.

Miss N's case also shed light on the intricate interplay of predisposing, precipitating, and perpetuating factors contributing to her schizophrenia. Factors such as familial trauma, social isolation, and potential substance use were identified as potential contributors to the onset and exacerbation of her condition. Understanding these factors provided valuable insights into Miss N's unique circumstances and informed her individualized treatment plan.

The comprehensive psychological treatment provided to Miss N encompassed various therapeutic modalities tailored to her unique needs and circumstances. Individual psychotherapy sessions aimed to establish rapport and facilitate emotional expression, while spiritual therapy sought to strengthen her connection with her faith. Furthermore, efforts were made to involve Miss N in ward activities, fostering social interactions with peers and promoting a sense of belonging.

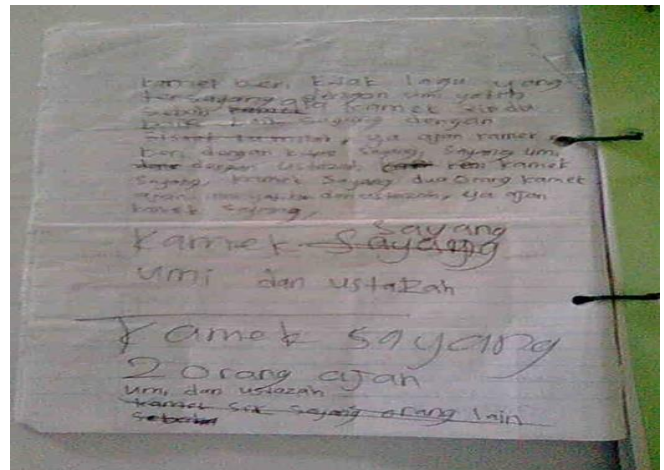
Miss N's physical health was also prioritized, with regular medical assessments conducted to monitor her overall well-being. Blood investigations and physical examinations provided valuable baseline information, informing her ongoing treatment and care. Additionally, a scheduled CT scan of the brain aimed to provide additional insights into any potential organic factors contributing to Miss N's schizophrenia, highlighting the importance of comprehensive assessment in mental health care.

As Miss N's treatment journey progressed, the importance of ongoing support from caregivers, community resources, and healthcare professionals remained paramount. Collaborative efforts between healthcare providers, caregivers, and community organizations aimed to provide continuous support and facilitate Miss N's journey towards recovery and well-being.

In conclusion, Miss N's case serves as a poignant reminder of the complex nature of schizophrenia and the importance of comprehensive, multidisciplinary care in addressing the needs of individuals with mental health disorders. Through a combination of medical interventions, psychoeducation, therapy, and community support, individuals like Miss N can navigate their challenges and achieve meaningful recovery and fulfillment in their lives.



Scar on her left leg.



Client's handwriting.

## COLOURS FROM THE PAST...INTO THE PRESENT

Angeline Ranjethamoney Vijayarajoo, Afni Anida Adnan, Sharina Salmi  
Azmi, Evelyn Sharminnie S. Vasuthavan, Arutchelvi K. Kumaran & Mohd  
Ikram Mohd Nor Rizan  
*Akademi Pengajian Bahasa,  
Universiti Teknologi MARA Cawangan, Seremban*

Colours mean different things to different people and bring on different moods. As a kid growing up in an age of tea parties, candies were always dark pink or green. Any other colour was not acceptable. Jelly was also a similar colour – red, not pink or green.

Hence, when I became an adult and colours became all jumbled up ( to me), it was difficult to adjust to the new scheme of colours. Candy came in colours ‘other than pink or green’. Jelly came in a flush of colours that I just couldn’t imagine. Eating such food in colours other than what I was used to makes it difficult for me to indulge or even engage in, to say the least. Politely, I would refuse and try to move to other food which had similar colours in my memory.

As the younger generation looks at ‘other’ colours, I sidestep and watch. I reminisce about the days of tea parties, with candy pink and green, jelly red and green....

Christmas cake was always wrapped in see-through plastic wrappers, which were red or green. I don’t see much of this anymore, but I reminisce about the days of Christmas tea parties with rich fruit cake wrapped in such wrappers.

As a child, I loved the sunshine and the light of the day. As night grew, I did not like the dark skies. When I closed my eyes at night, I wondered if my parents or grandparents were watching over me. My grandmother would say, “Even if we were not watching, God is”. As a child, it was not quite as reassuring as having what I could see watching over me, but it had to do with my tired eyes becoming heavy and then going to dreamland.

As a young adult, I loved the idea of matching colours. For example, a pink skirt would have pink shoes and possibly a pink purse. Likewise, a blue pantsuit would have a blue clutch bag. Sometimes, even a shade of blue in a scarf. Where are all the scarves.....?

Some days ago, I was having a drink with a friend at a shopping mall when I saw a lady walk in. She was in green—a green swishy, attractive skirt, green shoes, and a green clutch bag. I reminisced about the days of matching colours and shades of colours.....

In the mornings, shades of yellow make me feel rejuvenated and ready to take on the day—a bright day to kick-start the rest. I think of yellow as happy and springtime, though we have spring all year round!

Somehow, shades of blue and green in the evenings always gave me a sense of calm. I would happily sit in shades of blue and green bulbs as evening draws. These colours made me happy and relaxed at the end of the day.

I guess we all have favourite colours in terms of clothes, food and to set our moods right. These are some of mine. What are yours?

## FROM MOUNTAINS TO COUCHES: MY PHD ODYSSEY

Norazrina Ag Ahmad  
*Akademi Pengajian Bahasa,  
Universiti Teknologi MARA Cawangan, Sabah*

*“Some days you’ll move mountains, other days you’ll move from the bed to the couch. Both are necessary” – Anonymous*

The quote above has stayed with me throughout my PhD journey. It encapsulates the essence of my PhD journey: the highs and the lows. It reminds me that it’s okay to feel down and exhausted sometimes, and it’s okay to rest as long as you don’t quit. You can’t be productive all the time. Taking a rest is important to maintain your mental health, especially when you feel overwhelmed with never-ending tasks and the open tabs in your head. Three years ago, I decided to pursue my PhD, and there have been struggles and moments of fulfilment along the way.

There were moments of self-doubt, setbacks and obstacles. When I first embarked on this journey, I felt confused, and there were a lot of things to read, learn and relearn. I wasn’t sure what I was doing, and sometimes, I felt foolish. Reading is one thing, but understanding what you read is another challenge. I spent a lot of time reading and doubting whether I have what it takes to complete this arduous journey. After joining several webinars and courses, I started to gain trust and confidence in myself. There were also moments of meltdown - times when I felt like I didn’t want to do anything and didn’t even switch on the computer for months. It may sound like hopelessness, but I believe that I needed that time away from the screen. I needed a break. So, I moved from the bed to the couch. I watched my favourite TV shows and sometimes binge-watched my favourite K-dramas. For a moment, I forgot about the theories, methodologies, and my thesis. Sometimes, you need this. But not too long. It’s dangerous to stay in that euphoric mood for an extended period as you might lose the momentum to write again. So, be patient and give yourself as much time as you need to regain your energy and focus.

While the trials and tribulations of my PhD journey were daunting, they helped shape my personal and academic growth. As I grappled with self-doubt and faced seemingly insurmountable challenges, I discovered an inner resilience I never knew I possessed. These struggles tested the limits of

my determination. There were moments when I questioned the path I had chosen, wondering if pursuing a doctoral degree was worth the emotional rollercoaster it demanded. But then, those ‘Aha!’ moments made it all worthwhile. I can vividly recall the excitement of finally cracking a research problem that had baffled me for months. Or the time when the journal editors said, “We are pleased to confirm that your article has been published,” after patiently waiting for months or even years. I remember the celebratory moment when I finally finished that last interview transcription. My supervisor kept telling me to just ‘trust the process’. It all makes sense as I put the writing pieces together. It’s like putting pieces of puzzles together and seeing the complete picture. The feeling of achievement and fulfilment I experienced in those moments was incomparable. Similarly, the day I submitted my soft-bound thesis marked the beginning of relief from a huge burden on my shoulders. I realised that the struggles had been the mould that sculpted my journey. These fulfilling moments, which left a permanent mark on my journey, served as beacons of hope during the darkest nights of doubt.

As I navigated the waters of my PhD journey, I learnt the most profound lesson: the importance of resilience. In the face of setbacks and obstacles, it is important to know how to bounce back, to come back stronger, and to persevere in the face of adversity. I learnt to keep going and moving forward, even when the path was obscured by uncertainty. I learnt to let go of things I could not control. I realised that I needed to balance my work and my emotional well-being. It’s important to take care of your mental health as the PhD journey is not about how clever or intelligent you are but how strong your determination and mental strength are. The journey has profoundly taught me about human strength and the capacity to endure and thrive.

In closing, this journey has taught me the value of patience and persistence. It has been a rollercoaster of challenges and triumphs, moments of despair and euphoria. Perhaps the most significant lesson I’ve learnt is that, amid the pursuit of knowledge, maintaining your mental and emotional well-being is paramount. The mountains I’ve climbed and the days I’ve spent on the couch have both contributed to the person I’ve become. This expedition is not just about the destination, but about the transformation that occurred along the way. Remember that there are opportunities for growth and achievement in the most challenging moments. As Napoleon Hill said, “Every adversity, every failure, every heartache carries with it the seed of an equal or greater benefit.”

## **HOORAY, I AM NOT GOING CRAZY!**

(Dedicated to all the women and men who love their women)

Marianne Fung

*Akademi Pengajian Bahasa,*

*Universiti Teknologi MARA Cawangan, Sabah*

Imagine starting the day with your favourite drink to give you that energy boost to face whatever challenges are ahead. It becomes a routine that you won't miss that drink, come what may. Then, one day, you realise that something is not quite right with your drink. You tried tweaking it by adding or reducing water, sugar, coffee or chocolate but nothing seems to work. You can't seem to get the original taste back, and you are at a loss. This is the analogy I use to explain the changes I experienced. They were so subtle that I didn't realise them until I didn't feel and look right.

I have been a pretty active person for most of my life and have never had health issues other than the usual cough, cold, or flu. However, for six years, I have been experiencing issues with my joints, starting from my toes and eventually creeping up to my neck. The severity of the aches fluctuates from morning to night and day to day. Changing position from standing to sitting and vice versa was painful, to say the least. Moving, in general, hurts. Hence my journey of visiting (auditing) health care facilities begins.

I started with one appointment with our panel clinic, then low and behold, I ended up being a patient in various clinics in the government hospital, i.e. Orthopaedic Clinic Queen Elizabeth Hospital (QEH) 2, Physical Therapy clinics of QEH 1, Likas Hospital, Traditional Chinese Medicine clinic in Likas Hospital, Sports and rehabilitation Clinic in QEH 1 and finally I am still a patient of pain management clinic in QEH 1. At one point, I was also a patient in the ENT specialist clinic in QEH1. With all the treatments that I have been receiving, one would think that I am really ill; however, visually, I look normal. Even more frustrating is that all the test results return as normal. So, it's only natural for me to feel like I'm going crazy with all the appointments to keep and medication to take, but I still don't have a name for my condition. In fact, I even went to see a psychologist to check if this was all in my head. The prognosis was grim.

That is until I watched a short YouTube video this year. This woman, who called herself Dr Mary Claire Haver, started listing all the symptoms that I



have. I thought to myself, hang on a minute, and she was describing me to a tee. These were the symptoms mentioned: joint pains, fatigue, dry eyes, ringing in the ears, crawling sensation under the skin, frozen shoulders, mysterious overnight weight gain, feeling hot and cold, breakouts, eczema and brain fog. Aha! I finally have a name to explain all my experiences - Perimenopause.

What is perimenopause? According to experts, this is a stage where the level of life-giving hormone, a.k.a oestrogen in my system, has started to drop. The common understanding of oestrogen is its contribution to the reproductive system, but apparently, it plays a significant role in maintaining almost every part of the human body (yes, including men). This hormone contributes to our cognitive and bone health, keeps the function of our cardiovascular system and other crucial bodily processes involving muscles and cells, and regulates body temperature. What intrigued me was knowing that oestrogen helps maintain urinary continence (that's why older women make frequent toilet visits); it is anti-inflammatory, which helps decrease the risk of plaque buildup in our arteries and joint pains; it helps preserve our bone density and prevent certain types of cancer. According to Dr Haver, women in the US between the ages of 35-45 will start experiencing perimenopause. The average age for women to experience full menopause is between 45 and 55. Only 15% of women are given treatment for menopausal symptoms, while almost 25% will be given antidepressants. Only 7% of menopausal women are on hormone replacement therapy (HRT). 100% of women will experience menopause, but most will live longer and suffer from poor mobility because they didn't know the condition they have or were not given the right treatments.

A few years ago, I suspected that I might be going through menopause. My monthly cycle was erratic, and my mood was affected by sensory overload (and having a messy teenage son didn't help my condition). So, I went to my gynaecologist to get it checked out. His initial response was, "You're too young. It's all in your head". The blood test also confirmed his diagnosis since the hormone level was normal. I felt dejected and humiliated, thinking I was a hypochondriac addicted to seeking medical attention. I discovered that checking the level is pointless as it fluctuates throughout the day. This time, after watching the video and doing some more research, I was determined to talk to another gynaecologist about my condition, and thankfully, she believed me and supported my wish to start on hormone replacement therapy (HRT). She said many doctors are still old school, and if I talked to ten different doctors, I would get ten different opinions.

Immediately after starting the treatment, I felt my old self coming back and, man, how I missed her. I am not quite back to my old self yet; it will take some time. After all, I did suffer for many years. However, I now know what food to take more of, i.e. protein and fibre. Intermittent fasting is useless. Cardio exercises are bad for me as cortisol (stress hormone) will flood my system. I should lift weights and do more stretching exercises like yoga. Magnesium is also one of the essential supplements that I should.

Did I have any regrets about all the hospital appointments? The short answer is no. Although the trips were stressful, they actually gave me my PhD topic, which I am currently pursuing (wish me luck!) I am not a doctor, so I can't offer any medical advice, but I can offer some friendly advice. This is not a woman's problem alone. Men who have important women in their lives must also be aware of this condition. Many suicide and divorce cases (US statistics) occur during this period of a woman's life. They can't help themselves since they could be clueless about their condition. I also wouldn't be surprised if men also suffer many conditions due to hormonal imbalance. Please get it checked out. Ladies, this is not a taboo topic. We should normalise talking about this and support each other, not in a hushed tone. Just because the childbearing phase of our life is coming to a close shouldn't negate our value and contribution to society. Women who take care of themselves early will become stronger and more productive once they hit menopause. So, let's take care of each other and celebrate, knowing that we don't have to feel like we are going crazy!

## INTROSPEKSI DIRI

Nur Nafishah Azmi  
*Fakulti Pengajian Seni Kreatif,  
Universiti Teknologi MARA Kampus Puncak Perdana*

Panas. Itu rasa aku ketika menerimanya. Aku fikir panas itu satu perasaan daripada luar kerana cuaca yang agak tidak menentu sejak kebelakangan ini tetapi sebaliknya. Panas itu dari 'dalam' diri aku, bukan kerana panas dek aku bikin panas tetapi panas akibat silaturrahim yang aku cuba junjung tetapi gagal namun juga masih belum berpenghujung. Aku cuba mencakna rasa panas tersebut, dari pelbagai sudut. Timbul pelbagai persoalan, adakah aku merasa panas kerana perbuatan aku? Adakah aku merasa panas kerana bahang darinya yang memperlakukan aku? Setelah menikmati rasa panas itu aku sedar dan aku gusar. Ya, saat melakarkan kata panas ini aku masih mengawal panas yang semakin berkurangan tetapi bahang tempiasnya tetap ada. Gusar itu adalah tempiasnya.

Emak! Maafkan anakmu ini. Perbalahan pendapat antara kita berdua bukan kerana dunia ini emak. Perbalahan pendapat ini adalah kerana aku mencintai-Nya lebih daripada aku mencintai diri aku sendiri. Aku mengerti rasa cinta manusia wahai emak, aku mengerti rasa cinta seorang emak kepada anak kerana aku adalah emak dan aku adalah anak. Mungkin perlu aku betulkan, perasaan manusia antara manusia sekadar tahap kasih dan sayang sahaja, cinta itu adalah milik-Nya sahaja. Harap kita mengerti segalanya, emak. Untuk kesekian kalinya emak, izinkan aku meluahkan rasa cinta ini kepada-Nya untuk aku temui ajal yang selamat dan kematian yang bahagia di dunia ini. Emak, mungkin emak pernah tahu atau emak tidak pernah tahu bahawa dunia ini adalah penjara bagi orang Mukmin dan syurga bagi orang kafir, adakah kita ini tergolong dalam golongan kafir emak atau kita adalah mukmin sejati yang seperti kita canangkan?

Panas ini masih ada dan aku merasainya selagi aku tidak membuang ego jua tidak berlapang dada. Panas itu dari 'dalam' diri dan membawa keluar, pentajaliannya benar belaka. Tidak boleh menafikan ini kerana penzahiran melalui tubuh badan yang bukan dibuat-buat atau direka-reka dengan aturan manusia. Aku mencari titik temu antara diri aku dan panas ini tetapi tidak ada jawapan, mungkin belum aku temui atau telah aku temui tetapi tidak aku sedari. Panas itu bukan aku, panas itu yang berlawan antara diri aku dan aku. Aku terfikir mengapa perlu aku kekal berada di panas

sedangkan yang nyaman itu kekal. Derita awalnya telah aku perbaiki dan saat ini aku perlu nikmati.

Saat anakmu ini mencoretkan segala kejadian yang berlaku, jujurnya ada rasa penyesalan dalam hati. Awalan kepada setiap tingkah laku anakmu adalah untuk penyatuan antara anak dan emak, bukan niat untuk berjauhan atau bermusuhan bagi memutuskan silaturrahim. Bertukar gambar setiap hari, bertanya khabar, mengemaskini setiap kegiatan yang berlaku dan memberi pelaporan gembira dari seorang anak kepada emak tentang cucunya. Hanya ini sahaja niat yang terbuku untuk disampaikan kerana isi hati yang mudah rapuh ini tidak pernah berhenti ada rasa kasih, dan sayang kepada seorang emak dan cinta kepada-Nya. Ya, emak mengertilah maksud anakmu ini.

Panas yang membahang masih tidak surut. Aku mencari punca untuk penghidupan kita. Cerita derita anak dan emak melalui rasa panas yang berlaku. Perbuatan aku sebagai anak memanaskan rasa emak. Emak, sedarilah bahawa perasaan panas itu bukan ditubuh badanmu emak, itu adalah hatimu sakit kerana setiap perkara betul yang menjadi saksi. Saat ini bermain di minda anakmu tentang, “Anak itu ibarat seperti kain putih, ibu bapalah yang akan mencorakkannya menjadi Nasrani, Yahudi ataupun Majusi.” (Riwayat Bukhari dan Muslim). Hadis ini seharusnya menjadi sandaran untuk kita kenali siapakah anak, siapakah ibu, siapakah bapa? Ini bukan untuk mereka yang diberi gelaran tersebut tetapi ini adalah untuk kita kenali apa yang hendak Allah SWT itu hadirkan. Allah SWT itu maha adil kerana setiap yang diperturunkan bukan sia-sia tetapi untuk manusia sekalian alam.

Emak, rasa ini terlalu peribadi untuk aku kongsi kepada sesiapa tetapi aku yakin konflik sebegini bukan berlaku antara kita berdua sahaja tetapi berlaku dalam kalangan semua manusia yang masih bergelar manusia. Emak, anakmu ini masih yakin dengan rasa kasih, dan sayang kita. Kita kekalkan, kita pupuk dan suburkan demi kematian yang perlu ditemui saat ini dan ajal yang selamat. Kita hadapinya bersama walaupun syurga ini derita tetapi masih bahagia. Introspeksi diri aku kepada aku dalam menikmati panas.

## **KAMEHAMEHA: THE MAGIC NEVER DIES**

Mimi Sofiah Ahmad Mustafa  
*Fakulti Undang-undang,  
Universiti Teknologi MARA Cawangan, Melaka*

Children, generally and universally, are so full of energy that we can never understand where the energy can possibly emerge from, especially after all the running, yelling, and squabbling they do all day long. The thought of having four bubbly children in my life always leaves me smiling from ear to ear. I would repeat the journey again, with the condition of ‘age revitalisation’!

My two daughters and two sons each have their own set of uniqueness which I sometimes feel rather challenging as a working mom trying to balance between a lifelong career and the love for my family. Each one of them has challenged me abundantly in many ways and surprisingly, I find myself missing the adventures again and again now that all of them have left the nest to pursue their careers and family life, except for the two boys who are still studying at higher institutions.

There were times when I was too tired to argue about getting them to go to the toilet to bathe after a long day at work, while they were returning from their afternoon classes. Nobody moved, even after numerous attempts of threatening screams and constant whips of the ‘rattan’ on the table and the chair. Their eyes were glued to the television screen which was probably airing their favourite cartoon episodes (there was no such thing as Wi-Fi or internet in those old good days).

Or in another bout to have them prepare their school bags for the following day’s class. It was always a “In a moment, *ibu!*” or “It’s still early, *ibu!*” or “I can do it tomorrow morning before going to school, *ibu!*” and heaps of other excuses! The result of not preparing the school bag earlier before going to sleep could be detrimental. Homework incomplete or not done, materials that should have been brought to school for class activities not available at home and needed to be bought at the store, the physical education attire that should have been used for the following day was still in the school bag and seemed to ‘disappear’ because it was tucked under the books and piles of stuff collected at school and home, important forms to be filled out by me or their father were left untouched (that sometimes

explained why we were the last ones to submit the forms after regular reminders by their teachers, unfinished packed food turned mouldy that could have been hibernating in the school bag for ages, and many more unfavourable impact of not observing this very vital and crucial discipline of the so-called ‘preparing the school bag according to the timetable given by the teachers’.

Meal time was another stage of struggle that needed my irresistible creativity, surpassing any extent of formal training I had had at tertiary levels. There was never a no-chicken day during lunch and dinner. If there was no chicken supply at home, the children would decide the food to be chicken-related, and it apparently turned out to be eggs! The usual ones approved by the clan were fried eggs (some preferred *goyang*, some not), scrambled eggs (fluffy or soft), boiled eggs and omelette (*telur dadar!*). If there were no chicken or eggs, then the verdict would have been “We’ll have *Maggie*, ibu!” It was always a mystery to me knowing that my kids went to the childcare centre and I knew for truth that they did serve fish in their menus. But I would never be forgiven if I forgot their love for chicken when preparing the meals!

All the adventures illustrated in the preceding paragraphs were at times miraculously resolved by me chanting one magical word, which I learned from watching the cartoons that my children were absorbed in. When I needed them to follow my instructions, I sometimes roared, “*Kamehamehaaaaaa!*” with both my hands rolled into a big ball and releasing the ‘ball’ that actually contained invisible ‘energy’ to direct my children to do what they were supposed to do. If they were to take their bath, I would release the ‘energy’ towards the toilet! If they were supposed to do their homework, then I would focus the ‘blast’ to their school bags! If they refused to eat what I had prepared for them, then the ‘gust’ would be centred on the food on the table! Amazingly, the ‘magic’ worked, although not all the time. But I seriously had to pat myself on the back for considering to include their favourite cartoon character in their daily life and managing to spare pointless, unnecessary time babbling.

Kamehameha is indeed an action word. It is actually a technique, a signature energy attack used in the Dragon Ball series, created by the character Master Roshi, but later passed down to and utilised by several other characters, including Goku, Krillin, and Yamcha. The attack involves concentrating *ki* (life energy) into one's hands or mouth and then releasing it in the form of a powerful beam or blast. It is one of the most iconic and frequently used techniques in the Dragon Ball universe (Wikipedia.com).

While Kamehameha is most commonly associated with a fictional energy attack in the context of the Dragon Ball series, it can still serve as a word of action, particularly in a playful or metaphorical sense. In another perspective, sometimes facing life's challenges can feel like summoning the strength to unleash a Kamehameha i.e. gathering all your energy and determination to overcome obstacles and achieve your goals. So, when you encounter difficulties, remember to channel your inner warrior and unleash your own version of a Kamehameha to conquer whatever stands in your way. In this sense, Kamehameha symbolises the idea of summoning one's inner strength and determination to take decisive action and overcome obstacles.

## ENTRE SABAH ET LA GAULE: UN PONT CULTUREL INATTENDU

(Between Sabah and Gaul: An Unexpected Cultural Bridge)

Amnah Abdullah

*Akademi Pengajian Bahasa,*

*Universiti Teknologi MARA Cawangan, Sabah*

### **Entre Sabah et la Gaule: Un Pont Culturel Inattendu**

Il est fascinant de voir comment des pays qui semblent si différents peuvent partager des cultures étonnamment similaires, créant ainsi un pont culturel inattendu qui transcende les frontières et relie les traditions à travers le monde. En grandissant, je suis souvent fasciné par les récits d'Astérix et Obélix, ces guerriers Gaulois courageux et bruyants. Mais à mesure que je découvre les traditions de mon propre peuple, les Kadazan Dusun de Sabah, je vois une connexion étrange entre ces deux mondes, séparés par de vastes océans, mais semblables dans leur esprit.

La tribu Kadazan Dusun, tout comme les Gaulois Français, possède ses propres coutumes et saveurs uniques. Par exemple, le festin gaulois de sanglier et de vin se reflète dans nos plats de *sinalau bakas*, c'est-à-dire du cochon sauvage fume, et de *lihing*, un vin traditionnel à base de riz. Tout comme les Français fabriquent leur vin à partir de raisins, nous faisons le nôtre à partir du riz qui nourrit notre terre. Il est fascinant de voir comment la nourriture et les boissons, éléments essentiels de la culture, créent des liens qui transcendent les frontières.

Puis il y a les mystiques de chaque culture: le druide gaulois et le *bobohizan* (ou grande prêtresse) Kadazan Dusun. Dans les bandes dessinées, le druide Panoramix (connu sous le nom de Getafix en anglais) détient le secret d'une potion magique qui confère l'invincibilité, tout comme nos *bobohizan* possèdent des recettes de guérison transmises de génération en génération. Les parallèles ne s'arrêtent pas là. Panoramix manie une faucille sacrée, un outil aussi vénéré que le *pais*, un couteau porté par les *bobohizan*. Le couteau utilisé par Panoramix dans les bandes dessinées Astérix est une faucille en forme de croissant, un outil druidique traditionnel. Cette faucille est principalement utilisée pour la récolte du gui, une plante sacrée dans les rituels celtiques et druidiques. De manière similaire, la tribu Kadazan-Dusun de Bornéo honore la plante sacrée *Komburongo* (*Acorus calamus*) en l'attachant au couteau sacré du bobohizan, soulignant l'importance de cette



plante dans leurs propres pratiques spirituelles. Tous deux utilisent ces outils non seulement pour des cérémonies, mais comme des symboles de leur lien sacré avec la nature. Cependant, il y a toujours un ingrédient que Panoramix ne révèle jamais, et les *bobohizan* aussi omettent souvent un élément essentiel de leurs remèdes, conservant ainsi le mystère et le pouvoir de leur art.

Alors que les druides gaulois sont exclusivement des hommes, les *bobohizan* de Kadazan Dusun Penampang sont principalement des femmes, bien que certains hommes aient récemment pris ce rôle. Ce contraste met en lumière la flexibilité des traditions et montre comment les rôles de genre, même au sein de cadres culturels similaires, peuvent varier d'une culture à l'autre.

En regardant de plus près ces similitudes, on comprend que la culture ne connaît pas de frontières. À travers le monde, nos rituels, nos nourritures, nos histoires et nos croyances s'entrelacent d'une manière familière mais toujours fascinante.

En fin de compte, entre Sabah et la Gaule, ce pont culturel inattendu révèle que malgré la distance et le temps qui les séparent, les cultures de Sabah et de la Gaule anciennes partagent des similitudes remarquables. De leurs rituels à leurs traditions culinaires, ces deux mondes nous rappellent que les expériences humaines, bien que façonnées par la géographie, s'entrelacent souvent de manière inattendue. Ce pont culturel nous invite à explorer et à apprécier les valeurs communes qui nous unissent au-delà des frontières.

### **Between Sabah and Gaul: An Unexpected Cultural Bridge**

It's fascinating how countries that seem so different can share strikingly similar cultures, creating an unexpected cultural bridge that transcends borders and connects traditions across the world. Growing up, I often found myself enchanted by the tales of Asterix and Obelix, the brave and boisterous Gallic warriors. But as I delved deeper into the traditions of my own people, the Kadazan Dusun of Sabah, I began to see an uncanny connection between these two worlds, separated by vast oceans but similar in spirit.

The Kadazan Dusun tribe, much like the French Gauls, has its own unique customs and flavors. For instance, the Gallic feast of wild boar and wine is mirrored by our own dishes of *sinalau bakas*, that is to say, smoked wild pig and *lihing*, a traditional rice wine. Just as the French make their wine from

grapes, we make ours from the rice that nurtures our land. It struck me how food and drink, essential elements of culture, serve as bonds that transcend borders.

Then there are the mystics of each culture: the Gallic druid and the Kadazan Dusun *bobohizan* (or high priestess). In the comic books, the druid Getafix (known as Panoramix in the French version) holds the secret to a magic potion that grants invincibility, much like how our *bobohizan* possess healing recipes passed down through generations. The parallels don't stop there. Getafix wields a sacred sickle, a tool as revered as the *pais*, a knife carried by the *bobohizan*. The knife wielded by Getafix in the Asterix comics is a crescent-shaped sickle, a traditional druidic tool. This sickle is primarily used for harvesting mistletoe, a plant sacred to ancient Celtic and Druidic rituals. In a similar vein, the Kadazan-Dusun tribe of Borneo honors the sacred plant *Komburongo* (*Acorus calamus*) by attaching it to the *bobohizan*'s sacred knife, underscoring the plant's importance in their own spiritual practices. Both use these tools not just for ceremonies, but as symbols of their sacred connection to the natural world. However, there's always one ingredient Getafix never reveals, and the *bobohizan* too, will often omit a single crucial element from their remedies, guarding the mystery and power of their craft.

Yet, while the druids of the Gauls were exclusively men, the *bobohizan* of the Penampang Kadazan Dusun are predominantly women, though some men have taken on the role in recent times. This contrast highlights the fluidity of tradition and how gender roles, even within similar cultural frameworks, can differ from place to place.

As I reflect on these similarities, it becomes clear that culture knows no boundaries. Across time and space, the human experience, our rituals, our foods, our stories, and our beliefs, intertwine in ways that are both familiar and endlessly fascinating.

In the end, between Sabah and Gaul, this unexpected cultural bridge reveals that despite the distance and time that separate them, the cultures of ancient Sabah and ancient Gaul share remarkable similarities. From their rituals to their culinary traditions, these two worlds remind us that human experiences, though shaped by geography, often intertwine in unexpected ways. This cultural bridge invites us to explore and appreciate the shared values that unite us across borders.

## NAVIGATING TURBULENT WATERS

Norlela Ismail

*Kolej Pengajian Seni Kreatif,*

*Universiti Teknologi MARA Kampus Puncak Perdana*

Broken glasses, things flying in the kitchen, blood trickling on the floor, always being told off, hitting and kicking all around — these are memories from my tough childhood.

Growing up in a poor family where my parents argued frequently was difficult. The environment was filled with intense emotional turmoil, stress, and hostility. The echoes of their disagreements stayed in my young mind, affecting me for a long time. In a place where the emotional and psychological needs of children were neglected due to a lack of affection and a high value placed on respect. Struggling to grasp how to express love and affection, as these actions were unfamiliar in my home, I felt adrift, seeking love and connection in a seemingly cold and harsh adult world.

The future seemed bleak, overshadowing my dreams. I watched my parents' relationship fall apart; their love soured into resentment. The idea of a perfect family felt like a far-off dream, almost like a fairy tale, making me believe that relationships were fragile and bound to end in disappointment.

As I got older, the pain from my childhood made it hard for me to form trusting relationships. I found it tough to connect deeply with others as I feared being hurt or abandoned. The constant fear of divorce served as a reminder that love is delicate and can shatter easily.

Yet, I was resolute in not letting my past dictate my future. I embarked on a journey to understand and mend myself, seeking assistance to address the emotions that had confined me. Through self-reflection, I gradually unravelled the pain and insecurities that had hindered my progress. Over time, I came to comprehend that my self-worth was not tied to the opinions of others. I recognised that my value was inherent, regardless of how I was viewed by those around me.

Recognising this was a pivotal moment that enabled me to appreciate my true worth. I discovered that vulnerability is not a flaw but a source of strength. Embracing openness and authenticity, I discovered the beauty of

genuine love and connection with others. This revelation was freeing and empowering, leading me to cultivate more profound and fulfilling relationships.

Even so, my marriage ended sooner than expected. I've noticed a recurring pattern in my life, where history appears to replay itself. This realisation led me to seek a divorce to prevent reliving the pain my mother and siblings went through. Perhaps I am still on the path to healing, as I have yet to fully overcome the turbulent memories of my past.

Healing from my past has been a challenging and non-linear path for me, yet I now see it as a crucial aspect of my personal growth. I take pride in the strides I've made and feel ready to face upcoming obstacles with newfound courage and empathy. Ensuring my two sons feel loved and cared for, I express my affection daily, aiming for them to grow into confident, loving, and emotionally secure individuals.

In the quiet depths of my soul, I seek  
A haven of inner peace, where calmness speaks  
Taking fate's hand, I strive to endure  
Facing trials from above, with faith as my guide

Through challenges and hardships, I remain strong  
Resolute in spirit, prepared to answer the call  
Though obstacles may appear, I confront them with grace  
Persistent in spirit, I overcome each race

Whispers of destiny lead me forward  
On an unfamiliar path, where I find my place  
In the tapestry of life, I find my thread  
Navigating through obstacles, following where I'm led

Accepting what's destined, I paved my own path  
In the rhythm of fate, I learn to adapt  
Meant for greatness, I soar beyond  
In life's harmony, embracing love

## RAKAN TOKSIK

Normala Ismail

*Fakulti Pengurusan Perniagaan,  
Universiti Teknologi MARA Cawangan, Pahang*

Selama lebih tiga puluh tahun mengajar di Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM), dahulunya Institut Teknologi MARA (ITM) memang jauh berbeza. Bekerja sebagai seorang pensyarah, bukanlah mudah. Pelbagai cabaran yang saya hadapi, bukan sahaja dengan pelajar-pelajar, malah rakan-rakan sekerja. Ada ketikanya sangat mencabar dan ada ketikanya pula, melucukan. Semua pengalaman ini, saya titipkan sebagai sebuah diari kehidupan yang amat berharga dan tidak ternilai. Namun, apa yang ingin saya kongsi di sini, adakah anda pernah berada dalam persekitaran rakan-rakan toksik? Pernahkah terdetik dalam hati anda bahawa segala keikhlasan dan kebaikan yang kita lakukan, hanya dipergunakan untuk kepentingan diri mereka semata-mata? Bak kata pepatah, “habis madu, sepah dibuang.”

Rakan toksik boleh didefinisikan sebagai rakan yang mempunyai tingkah laku yang sangat tidak menyenangkan. Melalui pengalaman dan pengamatan, saya mendapati mereka ini suka ‘meracuni’ orang-orang yang berada di sekeliling kita. Mereka sama sekali tidak berasa gembira mahupun bersikap positif terhadap kehidupan orang lain. Mereka juga tidak pernah berasa puas hati di atas kejayaan, malah akan cuba melakukan sesuatu agar kita tampak teruk di mata orang lain. Rakan-rakan sebegini sebenarnya adalah bahaya kerana mereka berkepakaran dalam memanipulasi keadaan, seolah-olah kita pula yang bersalah. Mereka ini suka memerangkap kita secara psikologi. Mereka akan berterusan mengambil kesempatan untuk menyakitkan hati dan perasaan kita, kemudian memutar-belitkan fakta dengan menyatakan bahawa mereka melakukan sedemikian hanyalah untuk melindungi kita yang kononnya tidak tahu apa-apa dan tidak tahu hendak mengenang budi.

Rakan-rakan toksik ini boleh dijumpai di mana-mana sahaja sama ada di persekitaran keluarga, tempat kerja mahupun komuniti kejiranan. Justeru, adalah mustahil untuk kita mengubah mereka, namun kita boleh ubah cara kita berurusan dengan mereka. Bagaimana? Antaranya, mungkin dengan mengetahui bagaimana jenis-jenis tingkah laku mereka akan membantu kita menyelamatkan diri dari dimanipulasi secara berterusan.

Pertama, rakan-rakan toksik ini selesa berbohong. Kebanyakan mereka suka menipu dengan mereka-reka cerita dalam segala perkara sehingga kita tidak tahu kata-kata benar mahupun tidak benar yang terbit daripada mulut mereka. Biasanya, mereka menyembunyikan pembohongan dengan kata-kata manis sehingga tampak yakin agar orang-orang di sekeliling tidak berasa syak terhadap mereka.

Kedua, rakan-rakan toksik ini merupakan pakar dalam memanipulasi keadaan. Kita sahaja yang bersungguh-sungguh bersahabat, mengemuka cadangan atau melaksana sesuatu projek atau tugas dengan baik dan cemerlang, sebaliknya mereka ini suka ‘menangguk dalam air keruh’. Konon-kononnya, merekalah yang bekerja kuat dan menjayakan sesuatu projek atau tugas. Mereka akan berterusan mengambil kesempatan, seolah-olah kita ini langsung tidak berbuat apa-apa.

Ketiga, mereka akan cuba mengunjurkan perasaan (*projecting feeling*) mereka ke dalam kita. Seboleh-bolehnya, mereka tidak mahu dan tidak suka kita mendahului atau lebih baik berbanding dengan mereka dalam hal-hal kerja. Rakan-rakan toksik ini mempunyai ego yang tinggi, mereka berasa cemburu, tetapi tidak mahu mengaku apa yang dirasa. Sebaliknya, mereka berkelakuan seolah-olah kita pula yang mencemburui mereka. Kekadang kita tidak perasan kerana kata-kata mereka kedengaran lembut, “Saya pun ada buat, tapi malaslah nak beritahu orang.” Kita pula yang beria-ia dan berterusan mempertahankan diri, walaupun kita tidak seperti apa yang digambarkan. Dalam situasi ini, mereka berjaya mengunjur atau memancarkan perasaan mereka ke dalam diri kita.

Keempat, rakan-rakan toksik ini selalu penuh dengan drama. Mereka kerap memperbesar-besarkan cerita untuk menarik perhatian orang di sekeliling. Mungkin perkara yang diperkatakan itu ada kebenarannya, tetapi mereka tidak perlulah terlalu dramatik. Misalnya, mengeluarkan air mata berjurai-jurai untuk meraih simpati seolah-olah merekalah yang benar. Lakonan mereka ini sangat licik dan jika dipertaruhkan, mereka layak untuk memenangi Anugerah Oskar. Mereka adalah pakar dalam membuatkan orang yang mendengar berasa kasihan dan simpati terhadap mereka. Mereka ini tidak pernah mengambil peduli akan perasaan kita. Mereka hanya mengambil berat mengenai perasaan mereka, perkara yang membawa kepentingan terhadap diri mereka, apa yang mereka mahu lakukan, apa yang mereka perlukan. Mereka berasa gembira dan puas hati jika dapat menjatuhkan atau memburukkan kita serta sanggup melakukan apa sahaja untuk kita berasa sedih dengan mengkritik kemahiran kita dan pelbagai lagi.

Kelima, rakan-rakan toksik ini selalu meninggalkan perbualan tergantung. Lain yang disoal, lain yang dijawab. Misalnya, mereka suka menimbulkan lebih banyak persoalan daripada mengemukakan penyelesaian atau membuat keputusan dalam sesuatu mesyuarat. Mereka gagal membuat dan menyatakan keputusan secara jelas, mungkin ingin meraih populariti dalam kalangan ahli mesyuarat. Alih-alih, kita pula yang dipersalahkan kerana memandai-mandai membuat keputusan sendiri tanpa berbincang terlebih dahulu dengan mereka.

Keenam, rakan-rakan toksik ini akan menggunakan kata-kata lembut, tetapi makan dalam atau berbisa. Mesej yang hendak disampaikan mungkin nampak murni, tetapi disampaikan dengan nada sindiran yang membawa maksud atau makna yang lain. Kata-kata sinis sudah menjadi amalan dan tabiat mereka untuk membuatkan kita rasa berkecil hati dan bersalah. Apabila ditanya mengapa mereka berkata-kata begitu, kita pula yang dikatakan terlebih sensitif, seolah-olah ingin mencetuskan provokasi atau pertengkaran. Jika terdapat isu atau konflik mengenai kerja dan kita cuba memberi cadangan penyelesaian, rakan-rakan toksik ini akan menghujah perkara-perkara yang tidak relevan ke atas cadangan yang diberi dengan perkara-perkara lepas yang tiada kaitan. Mereka gemar memperbesarkan isu-isu kecil untuk merendah-rendahkan sekali gus menunjukkan kelemahan kita. Mereka gemar bercakap mengenai perkara-perkara lepas, mengungkit nama-nama dan menyalahkan individu yang langsung tiada kaitan.

Situasi ini membawa kita kepada tingkah laku rakan-rakan toksik yang ketujuh. Mereka ini suka menilai. Siapa sahaja di dunia ini yang tidak pernah melakukan kesilapan. Namun, mereka akan mensensasikan kesilapan seolah-olah kita telah melakukan kesalahan yang besar. Sebagai contoh, dengan hanya mendengar kata-kata satu pihak sahaja yakni rakan-rakan toksik, tanpa diselidik terlebih dahulu, orang-orang lain di sekeliling menghakimi dan menjatuhkan hukuman terhadap diri kita seolah-olah kesilapan yang dilakukan adalah satu dosa besar.

Hakikatnya, kita mahu berkawan dengan semua, tetapi pada masa yang sama, kita terperangkap dengan rakan-rakan toksik. Toksik sinonim dengan racun, menyerang anggota tubuh badan secara senyap, mengakibatkan lumpuh dan akhirnya, membawa maut. Lama-kelamaan, berkawan dengan rakan-rakan toksik ini akan merosakkan minda dan jiwa kita. Jadi, apakah kata-kata tindakan (*words of action*) yang boleh kita lakukan?

Kaedah terbaik adalah mengurangkan perhubungan dengan rakan-rakan toksik. Jangan sesekali kita rasa bersalah. Kita perlu tabah dan cekalkan hati. Kita tidak kehilangan atau rugi apa-apa kerana ramai lagi orang yang mahu bersahabat dengan kita, bukan mereka sahaja. Oleh itu, cintailah diri kita dahulu, sebelum kita mencintai orang lain. Selain itu, kita tidak perlu berdebat dengan mereka. Sejajurnya, niat mereka adalah untuk memprovokasi dengan membangkitkan kemarahan kita. Jadi, jangan biarkan mereka mengunjurkan perasaan kita. Rakan-rakan toksik ini cukup handal bermuka-muka dan memutar-belitkan kata-kata. Mereka hanya mahu menang dan pentingkan diri sendiri. Justeru, tiada gunanya kita melayan orang-orang sebegini. Sebaik-baiknya, kita jalan terus dan jalan tegak.

Di samping itu, jika kita menerima suatu berita yang baik, mereka akan mencari sebab berita yang baik itu bukan bagus bagi kita. Misalnya, jika kita berjaya memperoleh geran penyelidikan, mereka akan mengucapkan, "Tahniah! RM3,500.00 je ke? Si X, Y dan Z dapat banyak." Begitulah adab mereka, kata-kata negatif di sebalik ungkapan positif. Mereka cuba melemahkan semangat dengan membuatkan kita berasa ragu-ragu. Oleh itu, jangan sesekali biarkan mereka memperkecil dan merendahkan diri kita. Lagipun, kita yang menanggung beban kerja, bukan mereka. Jadi, kita tidak memerlukan kata-kata positif daripada mereka. Memetik kata-kata Michelle Obama, *"When they go low, we go high."*

Akhir sekali, setiap daripada kita tidak boleh lari daripada melakukan kesilapan. Namun, dalam kelompok rakan-rakan toksik ini, jika mereka membuat kesilapan, mereka akan menutup kesilapan yang dilakukan dengan seribu-satu alasan. Sebaliknya, jika kita yang melakukan kesilapan, ianya akan disensasikan. Mereka akan bertindak sebagai hakim dan menjatuhkan hukuman seolah-olah kesilapan yang kita lakukan adalah terlalu besar dan berat. Mereka cuba menjatuhkan harga diri kita dengan menunjukkan yang kita ini lemah kerana telah melakukan kesilapan. Hakikatnya, tidak salah untuk sesiapa pun melakukan kesilapan kerana ia adalah sebahagian daripada proses pembelajaran dalam kehidupan. Oleh itu, mengapa harus kita membiarkan orang (manusia) menghakimi dan menilai kita?

Sebagai kesimpulan, perlukah kita seorang rakan? Radar komunikasi seseorang yang bergelar rakan adalah tidak mesra dan mungkin hanya berputar mengenai perkara-perkara yang menyenangkan. Misalnya, membicarakan soal aktiviti seharian, hobi di masa senggang dan sebagainya. Justeru, kita sebenarnya memerlukan seorang sahabat. Topik perbualan seorang sahabat adalah lebih mesra, matang dan serius berbanding dengan



seorang rakan. Sahabat adalah orang yang sanggup bersama-sama kita sewaktu susah dan senang. Paling beruntung dan seronok adalah apabila kita memiliki sahabat sejati, yang akan sentiasa membantu walau kita berada dalam situasi apa sekali pun. Mereka adalah individu yang mampu memahami diri kita ketika tenang mahupun beremosi, bersabar dengan kerenah kita dan yang paling penting adalah mereka bersahabat dengan kita secara telus, ikhlas, tidak berpura-pura ataupun menikam dari belakang. Akhir sekali, memetik kata-kata Michelle Obama, "*Choose the people who lift you up*" maka, elakkanlah diri kita daripada mempunyai rakan-rakan toksik walaupun sahabat sejati itu sukar dicari.

## **RAMADAN YANG KU RINDUI**

Fauziana Fauzi @ Mat Rawi  
*Fakulti Pengurusan Perniagaan,  
Universiti Teknologi MARA Kampus Puncak Alam*

Ramadan tahun ini ku rasakan sangat mencabar kerana terpaksa berpuasa dalam keadaan cuaca yang amat panas. Hal ini disebabkan oleh fenomena El-nino yang telah melanda negara. Fenomena tersebut berlaku disebabkan angin timuran yang biasanya bertiup ke arah Malaysia menjadi lemah dan bertukar ke arah Lautan Pasifik. Namun aku merasa amat kagum dengan semangat anakku yang berumur 10 tahun, berpuasa tanpa culas. Situasi ini tanpa kita sedar adalah juga rahmat kepada para penjual di bazar Ramadan. Cuaca yang kering dan panas ini membolehkan mereka menjual dengan selesa dan sesetengah barang jualan mendapat sambutan yang tinggi daripada pembeli terutamanya air balang.

Masa yang dilalui sepanjang Ramadan tahun ini juga ku rasakan sangat singkat dan sibuk. Kebetulan pada tahun ini anakku yang sulung telah berada di tingkatan satu dan persekolahan pada tahun ini bermula pada bulan Ramadan. Di dalam kesibukan membuat persiapan untuk menyambut bulan Ramadan, kala itu jugalah aku perlu membuat persiapan untuk persekolahan anak-anak. Seawal 4.30 pagi lagi aku sudah bangun dari tidur dan bergegas ke dapur bagi menyiapkan juadah untuk bersahur. Kebiasaannya lebih lauk berbuka akan dijadikan hidangan di waktu sahur. Jika tidak, aku akan menyediakan juadah baru yang mudah dan cepat seperti sardin dan nasi goreng. Selain mengejutkan anak-anak bangun sahur, suami juga turut membantu menyediakan hidangan untuk kami semua. Menu yang selalu suami ku sediakan sudah pastinya lauk berasaskan telur. Mudah katanya. Sepanjang Ramadan juga waktu persekolahan adalah lebih singkat. Jika pada hari biasa waktu anak di Taska adalah sehingga pukul 5.30 petang, namun pada bulan Ramadan, seawal 4.30 petang guru-guru sudah mula beransur pulang.

Bulan Ramadan adalah bulan yang Istimewa. Hanya pada bulan ini kita menunaikan solat tarawih. Aku dan seluruh ahli keluarga berkesempatan untuk menunaikan solat tarawih di surau di taman perumahanku bersama jiran tetangga yang lain. Seperti tahun-tahun sebelum ini, pihak surau telah melantik imam dari luar untuk mengemudikan solat tarawih dan witir sebanyak 11 rakaat. Padaku, 11 rakaat sudah memadai kerana majoriti

penduduk di sini bekerja di Kuala Lumpur. Seawal pukul 6 pagi mereka telah keluar dari rumah menuju ke tempat kerja masing-masing. Sudah pastinya pada awal Ramadan surau dilimpahi dengan para jemaah sehingga ada jemaah yang terpaksa pulang kerana saf tidak mencukupi. Namun kehadiran Jemaah semakin sedikit dari sehari ke sehari sehingga akhir Ramadan. Tidak dapat dinafikan, ini adalah fenomena biasa di bulan Ramadan di mana-mana tempat sekalipun. Usai solat, jemaah akan moreh bersama. Moreh biasanya terdiri daripada kuih-muih, laksa, bihun sup, bihun goreng dan pelbagai juadah ringan. Sebelum bulan Ramadan lagi slot-slot untuk moreh ini telah dibuka kepada penduduk dan mereka yang berkemampuan akan memenuhi slot-slot tersebut. Aku juga tidak ketinggalan menyumbang beberapa jenis makanan dan minuman untuk moreh. Kerap juga aku membawa tea ais ke surau kerana ianya adalah minuman kegemaran jiran tetanggaku.

Ukhuwah sesama jiran tetangga di kawasan perumahan kami boleh dikatakan agak kuat. Banyak lagi program yang telah dilaksanakan bersama di sepanjang Ramadan. Beberapa hari sebelum Ramadan, kami bergotong-royong membersihkan surau dan kawasan di sekitarnya. Karpet-karpet dicuci, kipas- kipas tambahan dipasang dan lantai-lantai dimop. Pihak pengurusan taman yang telah dilantik juga telah membuat renovasi dengan memindahkan tempat wudhu ke tandas dan menggantikannya dengan ruang solat. Selain itu juga penceramah terkenal iaitu Ustaz Pahrol Mat Juoi telah dijemput ke Ceramah Perdana Ambang Ramadan. Program ini dianjurkan setiap tahun oleh pihak surau bagi mengingatkan para penduduk tentang amalan-amalan baik yang boleh dan perlu dilaksanakan sepanjang Ramadan.

Pihak surau juga turut menganjurkan Program Tadarus Perdana. Pihak muslimin dan muslimat dipecahkan kepada kumpulan-kumpulan kecil dan setiap kumpulan perlu menghabiskan juzuk-juzuk al-quran yang telah ditetapkan dalam tempoh masa tertentu. Seminggu sebelum Ramadan melabuhkan tirainya, Majlis Khatam Al-Quran telah diadakan. Ahli-ahli tadarus diberikan cenderamata sebagai tanda penghargaan atas penyertaan mereka. Bagi mengeratkan lagi silaturrahim sesama penduduk, kami turut berbuka puasa bersama-sama di sekitar kawasan surau. Setiap keluarga membentangkan tikar masing-masing. Kami memasak juadah berbuka bersama-sama. Kami memasak nasi, menggoreng ayam serta memasak bubur lambuk sebanyak lima kilogram.

Pada tahun ini aku jarang membeli juadah berbuka di bazar Ramadan. Jika tidak berbuka diluar, pasti aku akan memasak makanan berbuka setiap hari.

Lauk kegemaran anak-anak dan suami pada tahun ini adalah gulai ikan jenahak. Hampir setiap minggu aku akan memasak lauk tersebut. Melihat anak-anak makan bertambah dengan penuh berselera membuatkan aku tersenyum sendiri walaupun kadang-kala perasaan penat untuk memasak datang menjelma. Antara faktor lain yang menyebabkan aku tidak berbelanja di bazar Ramadan juga ialah kerana mutu kuih yang dibeli tidak setimpal dengan harga yang dibayar. Pernah suamiku membeli sebiji martabak. Isinya hanyalah bawang dan rasanya agak tawar. Sedangkan martabak tersebut adalah RM6 sebiji.

Antara peristiwa yang tidak dapat aku lupakan pada Ramadan kali ini ialah apabila terpaksa bersolat dalam kepanasan. Beberapa hari sebelum raya, kami sekeluarga pulang ke kampung di Terengganu. Aku mengajak suamiku untuk solat tarawih di masjid besar di kampungnya. Suami enggan dan mengajak ke surau berdekatan kerana katanya di surau tersebut terdapat penghawa dingin manakala di masjid tersebut hanya ada kipas. Namun aku berdegil dengan alasan masjid lebih meriah daripada surau. Suamiku akhirnya menuruti kehendakku. Namun, benar seperti yang dikata, solatku pada malam tersebut tidak khusyuk kerana bahang panas di dalam masjid tersebut. Buat pertama kalinya juga pada tahun ini kami tidak menempuh jem untuk Kembali semula ke Puncak Alam. Hal ini kerana suamiku berjaya menemui jalan lain untuk Kembali ke rumah. Pada tahun-tahun sebelum ini, kami pernah meredah jem selama berbelas jam lamanya. Ianya amat memenatkan. Semua hentian R&R dipenuhi dengan kenderaan dan perlu beratur selama sejam untuk ke tandas.

Aku juga turut bersyukur kerana pihak universiti telah membenarkan kuliah dijalankan secara bersemuka atas talian walaupun pensyarah perlu melaksanakannya di pejabat. Sekurang-kurangnya kami tidak merasa penat jika terpaksa ke bilik kuliah untuk mengajar. Ramadan kali ini juga sangat memberi keinsafan kepadaku apabila menyaksikan kesengsaraan penduduk Palestin yang terpaksa berpuasa dalam keadaan serba kekurangan. Hal tersebut meningkatkan lagi kesyukuranku dan sentiasa mengingatkan diri untuk tidak membazirkan makanan.

Sesungguhnya Ramadan pada tahun ini meninggalkan memori yang sangat indah buat diriku. Bulan ini merupakan bulan tarbiah yang mendidik jiwa menjadi insan yang sabar. Ianya juga merupakan bulan yang dipenuhi dengan amal ibadat serta bulan yang merapatkan ukhuwah sesama muslim. Semoga aku masih berkesempatan untuk berjumpa lagi dengan Ramadan seterusnya.

## **SAMBUTAN HARI RAYA AIDILFITRI YANG PALING BERMAKNA**

Fauziana Fauzi @ Mat Rawi  
*Fakulti Pengurusan Perniagaan,  
Universiti Teknologi MARA Kampus Puncak Alam*

Sudah menjadi kebiasaan buat kami sekeluarga setiap tahun untuk pulang ke kampung di Terengganu bagi menyambut Hari Raya Aidilfitri. Di akhir Ramadan, lagu-lagu raya semakin kerap dimainkan di corong-corong radio. Lagu “Alamak Raya Lagi!” yang dipopularkan oleh Kumpulan De Fam, Lagu “Ketipak Ketipung Raya” oleh Aisha Retno dan Aziz Harun dan “Raya Mana?” oleh Nabila Razali sungguh sedap didengar dan seakan memanggilku untuk segera pulang ke kampung. Aku dan suamiku berasal dari negeri yang sama. Cuma kami dari daerah yang berlainan. Suamiku dari daerah Kuala Terengganu, manakala aku pula dari daerah Besut. Sungguhpun berasal dari negeri yang sama, dialek yang ditutur oleh kami berbeza. Aku menggunakan dialek Kelantan kerana daerah Besut bersempadan dengan negeri Kelantan. Malah, jarak ke Kota Bharu lebih dekat daripada Kuala Terengganu. Maka tidak hairanlah jika keluargaku lebih kerap ke Kota Bharu berbanding Kuala Terengganu untuk urusan membeli-belah atau makan angin.

Suamiku berhasrat untuk pulang beraya pada hari Sabtu. Hari Raya Aidilfitri pula jatuh pada hari Rabu. Kami telah sepakat untuk beraya di Besut terlebih dahulu kemudian pada hari raya ke-2 akan beraya di Kuala Terengganu pula. Kami bertolak dari Puncak Alam pada pukul 9 pagi dan tiba di Kuala Terengganu pada pukul 5 petang. Lalu lintas pada hari tersebut sangat lancar. Aku seperti biasa akan mudah terlelap jika menjadi penumpang lebih-lebih lagi jika ianya melibatkan perjalanan yang jauh. Setibanya di Kuala Terengganu kami terus singgah di bazar Ramadan. Terlalu banyak pilihan makanan yang ingin dibeli. Ada makanan-makanan yang telah aku idamkan sejak sekian lama yang tiada di Puncak Alam. Tambahan pula harganya agak murah. Semuanya kelihatan enak dan lazat belaka. Makanan yang wajib aku beli sudah semestinya keropok lekor. Aku juga turut membeli beberapa jenis lauk-pauk seperti ayam panggang madu serta daging goreng sebagai pelengkap kepada juadah berbuka puasa yang telah disediakan oleh ibu mentua. Pada tahun ini kami sempat berbuka puasa sekali di rumah mentua dan dua kali di rumah ibuku.

Pada tahun ini kami memilih tema merah maroon. Baju raya ada yang dibeli secara online dan ada juga ditempah dengan tukang jahit di kampung. Kelainan pada tahun ini ialah aku beserta anak-anak membuat sendiri biskut raya untuk dibawa pulang ke kampung. Ada juga biskut raya yang dibeli. Suami juga turut menyediakan duit raya dan tugas mengisi duit raya ke dalam sampul raya diserahkan kepada anak-anakku. Sehari sebelum raya aku bersama adik-beradik yang lain bergotong-royong membersihkan rumah ibuku. Tidak seperti tahun-tahun sebelumnya ibuku kini kian uzur kerana sakit lutut yang dihidapinya. Kami juga bersepakat untuk menempah sahaja juadah hari raya. Antara juadah yang ditempah ialah sate dan juga nasi minyak. Abangku ada juga menyediakan ketupat, leman serta tapai daun getah. Aku gembira kerana tidak perlu memasak namun pada masa yang sama aku sedih kerana ibuku tidak lagi mampu untuk memasak nasi minyak yang menjadi kewajiban pada setiap 1 Syawal. Pada tahun ini hanya empat beradik sahaja yang balik beraya bersama ibu di kampung. Dua daripadanya bertugas di luar negara dan dua orang lagi beraya di ibu kota.

Aku sangat suka mendengar takbir raya di televisyen setelah solat subuh. Padaku, takbir raya hanya dapat didengar 2 tahun sahaja dalam setahun. Setelah bersembahyang raya, kami terus ke kubur ayahku. Dia telah meninggalkan kami semua sejak tahun 2012 lagi. Banyak kenangan indah bersama ayah bermain di fikiranku. Terbayang kebaikan dan kesungguhannya membesarkan aku. Kini aku belajar bahawa ketika membesarkan anak-anak aku hendaklah sentiasa mencipta memori indah bersama mereka supaya kelak, bila aku sudah tiada lagi, memori ini akan menemani mereka.

Di rumah, kami adik-beradik berkumpul. Bersalaman, bermaaf-maafan dengan ibu dan juga sesama kami. Banyak gambar diambil untuk dijadikan kenang-kenangan. Dalam busana indah dan berwarna warni kami bergelak ketawa sesama ipar-duai dan aku seakan tidak percaya sudah mempunyai lebih daripada 15 orang anak saudara yang semakin meningkat dewasa. Cepat sungguh masa berlalu. Saat itu adalah saat yang paling bahagia dan bermakna di dalam hidup aku kerana kami telah lama tidak berkumpul seperti itu atas komitmen masing-masing dan semuanya berada di perantauan kecuali abang sulung yang kini bertugas dan tinggal di Kemaman. Kepada suamiku aku memohon segala kemaafan. 15 tahun kami melayari bahtera. Sudah tentu terdapat khilaf di mana-mana. Sedangkan lidah lagi tergigit. Inikan pula suami isteri.

Kami kemudiannya menziarahi saudara-mara terdekat. Aku sungguh bernasib baik kerana bersebelahan dengan rumahku ialah rumah ibu saudara di sebelah ayah serta bapa saudara di sebelah ibu. Namun kini kedua-duanya telah terlantar sakit. Ibu saudara ku sudah sangat uzur kerana usianya telah mencecah 85 tahun. Manakala bapa saudaraku pula walaupun masih dalam lingkungan 50an, namun telah menderita sakit batu karang di dalam buah pinggang. Mereka berdua adalah orang yang sangat aku sayang dan sentiasa membantu aku sejak dari kecil sehingga aku dewasa. Mereka sentiasa memberi nasihat dan melayan aku dengan sangat baik. Dari situ aku belajar bahawa kasih sayang tanpa syarat adalah memori yang berkekalan sepanjang hayat. Mereka bukanlah orang senang. Tetapi amat kaya dengan akhlak dan budi pekerti. Aku juga turut menziarahi nenek sebelah ibu yang juga turut terlantar kerana sakit tua. Umurnya juga telah mencecah 90 tahun. Aku sangat mengagumi beliau kerana di usia begitu beliau tidak pernah meninggalkan solat meskipun telah sedikit nyanyuk dan masih boleh mengingat ayat-ayat al-quran yang telah dihafal semasa di usia muda.

Hari-hari yang masih berbaki kami isi dengan aktiviti ziarah-menziarahi sanak saudara. Di kampungku kini telah ramai jiran yang telah kembali ke rahmatullah. Banyak rumah yang telah terbiar kosong dan kampung tidak semeriah dulu lagi. Hal ini mengingatkan aku supaya sentiasa menghargai setiap detik indah yang hadir di dalam hidup ini kerana suatu ketika nanti ianya akan hilang. Cuaca yang agak panas juga menghalangi aku untuk berada lama di sesebuah rumah. Sudah pasti air berais menjadi sasaranku. Berat juga hati aku untuk meninggalkan ibuku di kampung kali ini. Namunku merasa puas kerana dapat berkhidmat untuknya dengan membersihkan rumah serta memasak makanan kesukaannya. Syawal kalini benar-benar memberi seribu erti buat aku.

Di Kuala Terengganu pula, aku meneruskan raya dengan mengambil gambar bersama keluarga mentua. Mentuaku sebenarnya seorang yang sangat suka memasak. Nasi minyak lauk gulai ayam yang disediakan amat lazat. Melihat anak-anakku bergembira bermain bunga api bersama sepupu-sepupunya membuatkan ku merasa sangat bahagia. Telah lama aku nantikan saat ini dan aku sentiasa berdoa supaya diberi peluang lagi untuk menyambutnya bersama orang tersayang pada masa yang akan datang.

## **TERNYATA HANYA SINGGAH**

Nurafiqah Mohamad Musa  
*Fakulti Pengurusan Hotel dan Pelancongan,  
Universiti Teknologi MARA Cawangan, Sabah*

Akan indah pada waktunya bagi mereka yang berusaha dan tawakkal. Seindah indah perjuangan adalah DOA. Kita juga harus percaya pada akhirnya, doa kita pasti terjawab. Sedih dengan musibah? Gelisah dengan masa depan? Buat apa kita nak berfikir tentang sesuatu yang kita tidak tahu apa kesudahannya. Ya, berserahlah pada Yang Esa. Jika kita bersandar pada manusia, kita akan kecewa. Jika kita bersandar pada Allah, kita akan tenang. Bersabarlah saat ditimpa musibah, bersyukurlah saat diberi nikmat. Memang benar, rezeki tidak pernah salah alamat, cuma cepat atau lambat. Ingin merasa lebih tenang? Merasakan ujian kita yang paling berat? Pandanglah pada orang yang lebih bawah dari kita. Kita merungut kita miskin? Pandanglah orang yang lebih miskin dari kita. Kita merungut kita tak punya zuriat? Pandanglah pada orang yang tak memiliki pasangan. Kita merungut pekerjaan kita susah? Pandanglah pada orang yang tidak memiliki pekerjaan.

Ternyata ujian dan nikmat itu hanyalah satu persinggahan. Nikmat hanyalah sementara, ujian juga hanya sementara. Semua yang ada di dunia ini hanyalah sementara, jadi mengapa berharap pada sesuatu yang sementara? Semua yang terjadi adalah penguat hidup kita. Ujian kita lain-lain, kenapa? Kerana tahap kemampuan kita tidak sama. Diuji dengan kehilangan, namun diganti dengan yang lebih baik. Di sebalik nikmat itu ada ujian, di sebalik ujian ada nikmat. Ada orang yang diberi nikmat sihat, namun tidak mahu beribadah, ada yang diberi ujian sakit, namun masih mahu beribadah. Itulah manusia, makhluk yang berbolak-balik hatinya. Dalam hidup, kita semua diberikan kesempatan untuk bertemu masalah dan ujian, yang membezakan kita hanyalah bagaimana cara kita untuk menghadapinya, maka bersangka baiklah pada Allah kerana sesungguhnya ujian itu adalah tanda kasih sayang Allah terhadap hambaNya. Belajar redha.... belajar menerima... jangan iri dengan rezeki orang lain kerana kita tidak pernah tahu apa yang Allah telah atur untuk kita. Kita tidak tahu, kita tidak pasti, yang pastinya aturan Allah itu adalah yang terbaik buat kita.

Sesuatu yang telah ditakdirkan untuk kita, tidak akan pernah pergi dari kita, dan sesuatu yang tidak ditakdirkan untuk kita, tidak akan pernah menjadi milik kita. Tenanglah dalam urusan rezeki kerana rezeki kita tidak akan



pernah diambil orang lain. Percayalah, yang sedang merasakan gelisah dan kesedihan hati, itu tandanya Allah sedang menghapus dosa-dosa kita. Semakin kita redha, semakin kita sabar dengan ujian, pada saat itu, keampunan Allah sedang ditakdirkan untuk kita. Bersangka baik pada Allah, maka yang baik-baik akan datang kepada kita. Husnuzon... Yakin pada takdir Allah yang indah... In shaa Allah...

## THE POWER OF A PROMISE

Jean Hoo Fang Jing  
*Akaademi Pengajian Bahasa,*  
*Universiti Teknologi MARA Cawangan, Melaka*

My children are from a mixed Chinese-Malay household. As a mother, ensuring balance and togetherness between two families is always a difficult and challenging duty. However, I made a promise many years ago to keep the responsibilities and to bring both families together without holding any grudges and to be as fair as possible. Whether it's their schooling, dress code, the language they use and speak at home, or the holidays, weddings, funerals, and so on. It is not always rainbows and unicorns when it comes to keeping the promise. It is never easy to keep a commitment made years ago, but a promise is still a promise. It must be kept regardless of any challenges or obstacles that arise along the way.

The genuine significance of a promise lies in its embodiment of respect and integrity. Often, the most impactful words are not the ones uttered publicly, but rather the ones cherished inside the depths of one's heart. The power of words to shape our perceptions, relationships, and the world is transforming. All started at home with a promise. The word promise must be taught to children and embedded into their lives. The community's basic identity should contain a promise. A simple promise, nevertheless, could resonate far beyond home. That promise was a solid foundation for our children through thick and thin, shaping their personalities and determining their decisions. They are going to miss their sense of security of the promise made at home as they face the unexpected faces and chaotic pace of adulthood. When that happens, they'll find out that promises were for more than just their home. Their unwavering resolve will drive them to embrace and refine this promise concept on a grander scale — within the country.

The process should start in a humble manner, with modest gestures of kindness and unity among neighbours. The willingness to support one other, in good times and bad, should have a profound impact. The impact would have subsequently spread over the entire nation. Communities unite in support of the concept of fulfilling commitments. Leaders are acknowledging and paying attention to the obligations made to citizens, and they are working on developing policies to fulfil those commitments. In addition, schools should adopt the significance of commitments, imparting to

the younger generation the need of reliability and integrity. The promise will become a symbol of hope and unity, a reminder that a single promise — nurtured at home — could transform lives and inspire a nation. But one shouldn't deviate from its original intention. It is important to recognise that a promise is powerful both when made and when kept. It is remarkable to see a simple promise go from being a flickering ember on a fire to become the light of a nation driven by dedication.

Shouldn't this be the case if we were to cultivate and empower the younger generations to become formidable and remarkable world leaders? Instilling the younger generations with a solid basis of honesty, dedication, and the importance of keeping one's word can effectively prepare them to become future leaders who possess empathy, moral principles, and the ability to bring about positive changes on a global scale. They ought to have faith in the potency of pledges and not merely verbal expressions, but steadfast obligations that have influenced the course of fates. A new group of individuals committed to fulfilling their promises will arise, their eyes filled with aspirations for a more favourable future. Therefore, the potential for the future rests with the youthful generation — strong, daring, and connected by an unwavering sense of dedication.

By pledging to end racial discrimination and misuse of power, these leaders show they will stand by basic principles of justice and equality. A leader who makes a promise to end prejudice and abuse of power should be able to demonstrate moral leadership. A strong message that discrimination and abuse of power have no place in society or government is conveyed when leaders keep their promises. Real change and influence can be achieved by keeping promises to fight racial discrimination and abuse of power. It calls for institutions and communities to adopt policies and practices that foster inclusion, equity, and diversity. When leaders do what they say they will do to end discrimination, it gives voice to the voiceless and fights for their rights. Democracy and human rights depend on keeping pledges to fight prejudice and misuse of power. Leaders who stand up to injustice and misuse of power motivate others who will come after them.

The power of a promise made is extraordinary and astounding, despite its seeming simplicity.

## TO ERR IS WRONG?

Kuan Siaw Vui  
*Fakulti Pengurusan Perniagaan,  
Universiti Teknologi MARA Cawangan, Sarawak*

“Can someone tell me what Human Resource Management is?”

A complete silence flooded the classroom and all the heads dropped as low as possible to prevent any chance of eye contact with the teacher. This is a typical classroom scenario every time a more challenging or academic question is raised.

When I was pursuing my postgraduate studies years back, I realized that I was also one of the students who responded in this very “familiar” manner as questions were posed to us. This really prompted me to ponder. We are just so uncomfortable with errors. Perhaps, I think it is our educational system which is based very much on the ‘right answer’ belief, which molds our thinking into a very conservative way.

From a very young age, we are told and taught that right answers are good and wrong answers are bad. This is so deeply embedded in our minds that it drives us to avoid putting ourselves in situations where we might fail, just to avoid the stigma our society places on “failure”. We learn to make sure that all answers given are right answers and to keep our mistakes to a minimum. In other words, we learn that “to err is wrong”. I certainly believe this very attitude prevents us from venturing into many new learning opportunities and experiences. With this, I told myself, I should start from my very self to overcome the fear of failure and see failure as a stepping stone to more new ideas, perspectives and learning opportunities instead before I can motivate and convince my students to do so. And I will also know that it is all right to err.

Since then, I always make an effort to say, “thank you for the answers” or “thank you for trying to answer my question”, every time when students respond to my questions, though the answers given are not always correct. I will also tell the students that it is fine and in fact better to make mistakes during the classroom discussions than to make the mistakes during the final exam. This is one of the essences in teaching to encourage students’ participations in the teaching and learning process which I have reaped fulfilment and satisfaction. Yes, it is “All Right” to err.

## OH SABAH

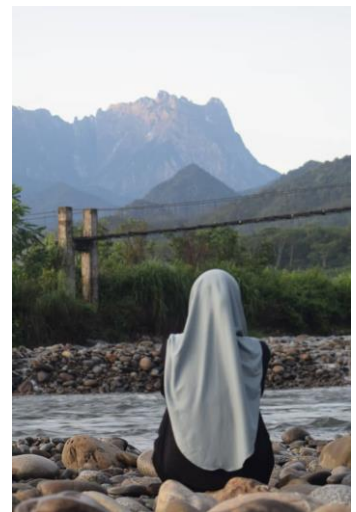
Nur Fatimah Aisyah Shahril, Siti Nur Fatimah Md Aminnullah  
*Akademi Pengajian Bahasa,  
Universiti Teknologi MARA Cawangan, Sabah*

Oh Sabah,  
Bumi yang tidak pernah ku sebut  
Yang tidak pernah ku ulang dalam doa,  
Aku berada di sini,  
Karena takdir yang Kau atur, Tuhan.

Saat ini, aku duduk menatap si Aki,  
Di atas hamparan butir-butir batu,  
Ditemani lembut embun pagi,  
Diiringi kicauan burung bak nyanyian merdu,  
Sementara arus terus mengejar.

Mungkin disini akan tercatat,  
Sebuah kisah seorang aku,  
Perempuan yang punya cita dan impian,  
Berkhidmat dan berbakti,  
Mendidik anak bangsa.

Biar jauh dari keluarga,  
Biar sering berteman rindu,  
Ini cerita seorang aku,  
Demi cita dan impian.



## ANALYSING ‘BODOH’ IN SOCIOCULTURAL CONTEXTS

Nazima Versay Kudus & Syazliyat Ibrahim  
*Akademi Pengajian Bahasa,  
Universiti Teknologi MARA Cawangan, Pulau Pinang & Kedah*

### **The controversy**

Muhaya Mohamad, a renowned ophthalmologist and motivational speaker in the country, sparked controversy in 2021 with a video statement where she mentioned, “Orang lelaki suka perempuan lembut-lembut, biar macam bodoh-bodoh sikit” (Men prefer women who are gentle and somewhat naive) as a rationale for finding love. This remark naturally led to backlash on social media platforms.

### **The backlash**

Soo Winci, a holder of multiple PhDs, strongly criticised the notion and vehemently stated “biar tak kahwin daripada buat bodoh-bodoh” (better to remain unmarried than to act foolishly) (Utusan Malaysia, 2021, June 10). Amalina Bakri, a Malaysian surgeon based in London, stated that her mother had not raised her to act foolishly in front of men with the intention of meeting her soul mate. She expressed concern that such messages were sending the wrong signals to women and young girls. She added women should not compromise their level of wisdom just to attract men. Instead, women should stay true to themselves and not feel compelled to diminish their dignity and self-respect merely to find a spouse. In her tweet, actress Sharifah Amani Syed Zainal Rashid Al-Yahya stated that she did not need to act foolishly to find her soulmate. She expressed her belief that her partner had already been predetermined by a higher power. Currently, her focus is on improving her life and supporting her family while waiting for what destiny has in store for her.

### **The defense**

Despite the various backlashes from fellow celebrities and netizens, Muhaya had been defended by a few others. Among them was Ahmad Dusuki Abdul Rani, a Muslim preacher who interpreted Muhaya Mohamad's statement as possibly referring to the attitude of humility and modesty regarding oneself. He equated this to the Arabic word, “tawadduk”. He further explained “tawadduk” as a fundamental aspect of spirituality and character development in Islamic teachings encouraging believers to approach others and situations with humility, respect, and modesty. Consequently, this leads

to elevation in the eyes of Allah, akin to the status of a pious woman and in turn can attract a good spouse. Another celebrity, Wan Aishah Wan Ariifin or mononymously known as Aishah also defended Muhaya's statement. According to the singer, what the motivational expert shared was true and not wrong for women to pretend to be stupid in front of others to get what they wanted.

Muhaya asserted that her statement might have been misconstrued. During her 45-minute YouTube live session titled “Antara Antara Cinta dan Cita-Cita” (Between Love and Aspirations) on February 6, 2021, she responded to a question posed by KK-Talib, regarding the dilemmas faced by women torn between advancing their careers, pursuing love and fulfilling family responsibilities. The viralled clip circulating was a mere 56-second excerpt from this longer discussion.

A relevant concept to the related situation is called “framing” in communication studies. It has to do with how information is presented and put into context, which affects how people see and understand it. This idea is related to the practice of setting the agenda because it looks at how the media directs public attention to certain issues and decides what will be on the agenda. Framing goes even further by changing how news is presented, which affects how people see it and how they make decisions. When people's words are cut down to seconds on the internet, for example, the way they are presented can have a huge effect on their meaning and impact. This shows how powerful framing is in shaping stories and interpretations in media and communication studies (Lindgren et al., 2022). “Context collapse” is another term used in social media studies that means the same thing. In the study of social media, “context collapse” means the loss of meaning that happens when people share the same information on different social media sites and in different situations. This can cause confusion and mistakes because people who hear the words in a different setting might not fully understand what they meant in the first place (Wexler et al., 2018).

### **Etymology of 'bodoh' and cultural variations**

Let us analyse the word *bodoh* according to the etymology. Kamus Dewan Edisi Keempat, (online version of Malay language dictionary fourth edition) defines ‘*bodoh*’ as ‘*sukar mengerti atau mempelajari sesuatu*’ (having difficulty to understand or learn something) *or* the one-word synonym ‘*bebal*’, ‘*dungu*’ *or* ‘*total*’ which means stupid. Variations of ‘*bodoh*’ can be found in various Malay dialects of the Nusantara or the Malay Archipelago. In Minangkabau, the dictionary states ‘*bongok*’ is equivalent to ‘*bodoh*’ *or*

‘dongok’ (stupid). In Melaka it is termed ‘bingai’. Penang dialect is ‘maarop sintok’ a curse word to stupid people or stupid acts as in “*Maarop sintok mana la yang buat sampah kat sini*” (Which asshole has disposed the garbage here). A blog Kamus Melayu Kedah includes lexical variations of ‘doyok’, ‘dungu’ lembap(b) (sic), and ‘koro’. In Negeri Sembilan, ‘ngok’ or ‘ngong’ are used, very likely they are shortened forms of ‘bongok’ or ‘bengong’. ‘Dol’ in Perlis is clipped from ‘lurus bendul’ from the simile ‘lurus macam bendul’ or as straight as a door sill. ‘Paloi’ is a word in one of Sarawak ethnic groups. The Bruneian would say ‘palui’. The Kenyahs of Sarawak termed stupid as ‘andun’. In Sabah, ‘buat’ is ‘bikin’ and ‘budu’ is the equivalent of ‘bodoh’, hence ‘bikin budu’. In Javanese, ‘bongok’ is ‘kemplu’.

In the Malaysia urban dictionary (and also in Manglish, Singlish or Malay and Singaporean slang), ‘Buat bodoh’ is the shortened form of ‘buat-buat bodoh,’ or in spoken expression, ‘buat bodo,’ with the ‘h’ dropped. In Sabah, ‘buat’ is ‘bikin,’ and ‘bodoh’ is localised as ‘budu,’ hence ‘bikin budu.’ Another equivalent phrase is ‘buat dunno,’ a very popular catchphrase among the younger generation. People who ‘buat bodoh’ are not necessarily stupid; instead, they are acting stupid for a reason.

### **Idioms and proverbs reflecting 'bodoh'**

The Malay language has various expressions related to unintelligence and foolishness “Otak udang” is a figurative expression meaning shrimp brain, used to refer to someone as a dimwit or someone with limited intelligence. “Golok kayu” literally translates to wooden machete, an expression that describes someone as foolish but pretending to be clever. While “lurus bendul” (as straight as a beam) means someone who strictly follows rules or guidelines, often without considering practicality or common sense or they go by the book. “Bodoh macam lembu” is a simile comparing someone's stupidity to that of a cow's, emphasising a lack of intelligence. Another example is "bodoh macam keldai", which compares someone's foolishness to that of a donkey's.

The Indonesian language also boasts a rich collection of expressions related to the word “bodoh” (JagoKata, 2024). These idioms and proverbs capture various aspects of foolishness and offer cultural insights into how wisdom and folly are perceived. Expressions like “bagai buntal kembung” (like a bloated puffer) describe someone who is both foolish and arrogant, while “bagai membakar tunam basah” (like burning wet rice) refers to the difficulty of teaching a foolish child who struggles to understand or accept lessons. “Belalang hendak menjadi helang” (The grasshopper pretends to be



an eagle) highlights someone foolish trying to act like a wise and honourable person, and “Bodoh-bodoh sepat, tak makan pancing emas” (A foolish fish does not bite golden hooks) shows that even a fool can differentiate between good and bad choices for themselves.

Other expressions critique the tendency to blame external factors for one’s own mistakes. “Buruk muka cermin dibelah” (Blame the mirror for a flawed face) is used when someone blames others instead of acknowledging their own foolishness. “Busuk ketekuk, pinter keblinger” (Rotten is folded, clever is misguided) implies that whether foolish or intelligent, everyone may face difficulties or misfortunes at some point. Similarly, “Ilmu lintabung” describes someone who is foolish yet arrogant and “keledai hendak dijadikan kuda” (a donkey wants to be made into a horse) represents a foolish person aspiring to be seen as wise.

The expressions also capture pretence and hypocrisy. “Kendel ngringkel, dhadag ora godhag” means pretending to be brave and intelligent when actually timid and foolish. “Manusia tertarik oleh tanah airnya, anjing tertarik oleh piringnya” (Humans are attracted by their homeland, dogs are attracted by their bowl) contrasts the intellectual curiosity of wise people with the narrow focus on immediate needs of foolish ones. “Serigala berbulu domba” (A wolf in sheep's clothing) refers to someone appearing foolish and obedient but who is actually cruel, deceitful, and wicked. “Seperti mentimun dengan durian” (Like a cucumber with a durian) describes an unequal match or opposition, such as between a weak and strong person or a foolish and wise person.

Lastly, expressions like “tak ada guruh bagi orang pekak, tak ada kilat bagi orang buta” (there is no thunder for the deaf, no lightning for the blind) highlight how good speeches or valuable information have no impact on extremely foolish individuals. “Tinggi terbawa oleh ruasnya” (Tall because of its segments) indicates someone who remains foolish despite their age or experience and “tong kosong nyaring bunyinya” (an empty barrel makes a loud sound) shows that foolish people tend to talk a lot without substance.

The Indonesian language vividly captures various nuances of foolishness through its rich array of expressions. These idioms and proverbs not only highlight different aspects of foolish behaviour but also offer cultural insights into how wisdom and folly are perceived. From arrogance and pretence to the difficulty of teaching the ignorant, these sayings reflect a deep understanding of human nature and social dynamics. They serve as

both warnings and reflections, emphasising the importance of wisdom, humility and self-awareness in everyday life.

### **‘Bodoh-bodoh’ and ‘buat bodoh’ in Munshi Abdullah’s Writing**

Abdullah bin Abdul Kadir, also known as Munshi Abdullah, was a prominent Malay writer and translator born in 1796 in Melaka. He is often regarded as the "Father of Modern Malay Literature" for his influential works, which provide valuable insights into 19th-century Malay society and the impact of colonialism. Abdullah's writings are notable for their use of clear, straightforward Malay language and their critical perspective on traditional Malay culture and the colonial administration. Among his critiques is the concept of "bodoh-bodoh" (foolishness) as he observed it in the society of his time.

In *Ceretera2 Karangan Abdullah* Abdullah compares the Malay people to Jakun (an indigenous group often seen as backward by others) and questions why Arabs do not waste their wealth. He criticises the Malays for incorporating foolish customs into their lives, such as spending years reading texts they do not understand. He labels this behaviour as "bengis" (fierce or aggressive), implying that these customs are not just foolish but also harmful. Abdullah discusses the consequences of not respecting Arabs or reading letters without understanding their content. He questions how the Arabs perceive Allah's nature, suggesting that foolish customs could lead to damnation. Abdullah critiques the blind adherence to customs without understanding, portraying it as a path to ignorance and moral peril.

In the same book, Abdullah describes several incidents where "buat bodoh" (acting ignorant) is used as a strategic response. In one incident, Abdullah's Chinese friend advises him to "buat bodoh" as they approach a group of people and dogs. The friend tells him to remain still and unbothered to avoid attracting the dogs' aggression. Abdullah is clearly afraid, but his friend's advice to act calm and naive helps reduce the danger. In another scenario, the same friend suggests "buat bodoh" in a social context. He tells Abdullah to stay silent and act ignorant while holding a bundle and an umbrella, presenting themselves as poor Malays. This tactic helps them navigate a potentially hostile environment safely. Additionally, Abdullah faces an internal conflict when he suspects some goods to be stolen. He chooses to "membuat bodoh" (pretend ignorance) by refraining from drinking from a dirty cup, masking his disgust and suspicion. Here, "buat bodoh" allows Abdullah to gather information without revealing his true thoughts or feelings and in turn avoiding confrontation. These examples show that

Abdullah uses "buat bodoh" as a smart strategy to handle threats and social situations.

In a different book, *Hikayat Abdullah bin Abdul Kadir* (1842, rev. 1849), Abdullah describes how adherence to ancient customs prevents intellectual and moral growth. He argues that clinging to foolish traditions hinders the acquisition of knowledge and makes people a subject of ridicule by other nations. He emphasises that these customs are not religiously mandated and do not bring any real benefit, only increasing foolishness.

While in *Pelayaran Abdullah ke Kelantan* (1838), Abdullah reflects on the state of the people in Kelantan, likening them to slaves because they follow foolish and harmful customs. He notes that even if someone wanted to abandon these customs, they would not dare to do so. This observation underscores the societal pressure to conform to foolish traditions, despite their detrimental effects.

Munshi Abdullah's use of 'bodoh-bodoh' and 'buat bodoh' highlights different aspects of foolishness. 'Bodoh-bodoh' is a critique of genuine foolishness and harmful customs that obstruct intellectual and moral development. In contrast, "buat bodoh" is a strategic, deliberate act of feigned ignorance used to navigate and mitigate danger or social pressure. Abdullah's insightful distinction between these concepts underscores his advocacy for critical thinking and reform in Malay society.

(Extracts of Abdullah bin Abdul Kadir's writings are cited from: Proudfoot, I. (n.d.) Malay concordance project. <https://mcp.anu.edu.au/Q/mcp.html>)

### **Reasons and effects of buat bodoh**

There are multiple reasons and effects of playing dumb or pretending to be foolish depending on the context and motives behind such an act. One, a person might 'buat bodoh' and opt for this silence mechanism in order to not engage or pursue in for instance political or religious matters that can be controversial thus leading to heated arguments. Arguments can arise out of the mundane, such as the personal preference of putting the toilet seat up or down, to world issues such as climate change. On one hand, it can serve as a shield against responsibility, allowing individuals to avoid accountability for their actions. It may also be used as a manipulative tactic to gain sympathy or attention from others. However, this strategy can lead to missed opportunities for growth and advancement, as acting foolish may result in being underestimated or not taken seriously. In relationships, playing dumb

can affect trust and communication if discovered by a partner, since it is perceived as an insincere or manipulative act. Moreover, continuously pretending to be foolish can influence self-perception, potentially damaging confidence and self-esteem over time. Thus, while there may be short-term benefits, the long-term consequences of playing dumb include missed opportunities and strained interpersonal dynamics.

## Conclusion

The semantic evolution of the phrase ‘bodoh-bodoh’ or ‘buat bodoh’ highlights its varied use across different sociocultural contexts. Originally denoting foolishness or ignorance, the term has undergone significant reinterpretation. In contemporary Malaysia and among Bahasa Malaysia (Bahasa Melayu) speaking communities, both terms have shifted to mean deliberately acting ignorant or naive, often for strategic or social reasons. This transformation reflects a broader cultural and social dynamic, where the phrase now embodies a tactical behaviour with both positive and negative connotations. This shift underscores the complexity of language and its role in shaping and reflecting societal values, illustrating how linguistic expressions can evolve to capture the nuanced interplay between behaviour and cultural norms.

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## **FOSTER MORE GENDER EQUALITY FOR MALAYSIAN WORKPLACE**

Norazlinda Hj Mohammad

*Fakulti Komunikasi dan Pengajian Media,  
Universiti Teknologi MARA Cawangan, Melaka*

Malaysia is a progressive nation that requires sufficient and quality human capital for both genders to generate massive outcomes for an organisation. This helps in developing social development and economic growth, escalating progress, and contributing to national income. In response, promoting gender equality in the workplace is vital to curb the normalised gender stereotyping in Malaysia. This is also in line with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) five, which promote gender equality and support SDGs three, which generate good health and well-being among working women in an organisation.

According to the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, gender stereotype is defined as a generalised preconception about attributes of women and men, or about the roles that they perform. It is a global issue and needs to be discussed. Eventually, it resulted in the issues of discrimination and sexism.

Generally, gender stereotyping is so normalised that we sometimes don't even realise that we are being sexist. This can be seen in several workplaces where women are less likely to hold the top positions or receive promotions compared to men due to the cliché perceptions given to a lady. It is devastating to see women still underrepresented in management or company as they are perceived as less "powerful" than men, and their abilities are questioned when they have their families. This should not be the main excuse for why women are being discriminated against in achieving their dreams and their utmost potential in reaching the peak of their career ladder in a company. Besides, gender stereotyping is institutionalised by leaders and passed down to younger generations. Thus, when it is institutionalised and normalised, it tends to create unspoken barriers in society.

Adversely, the existence of toxic masculinity, where men are taught to be less vulnerable and seldom show emotions, has to be stopped. For instance, people who always have a platitude on girls are more likely to be weak and praised for being well-groomed, soft and well-behaved, while boys are more

likely to be complimented for their ideas, courage and wisdom. In the course of that, children grow up in environments where their self-perception has been shaped based on these stereotypes, affecting their self upbringing, academic performance, career options, and mental well-being.

### **Women are discriminated**

Astoundingly, only 55.5% of women in the year 2021, as compared to 80.0%, are men holding the top positions in the workforce, as stated by the Statistics Department. There is a huge gap in the figures shown in the workplace. Fundamentally, the winds of change and transformation of old mindsets on patriarchal attitudes should be done to foster healthy gender equality in an organisation. Women, Family and Community Development, Datuk Seri Nancy Syukri, said that the government is encouraging better female workplace participation. It acts as an effort to combat the gender stereotyping issue among working women. She also added that the government hopes to increase the female labour participation rate to 59% by 2025. This also adheres to the policy and aspiration of ensuring women make up 30% of decision-making positions, which is consistently incorporated in the development plans for the nation of Malaysia. It speaks to address the challenges and proves that women can also reach the top, opposing the thoughts of or barriers of women who need to juggle or balance their career and family commitments. Hence, for that matter, gender equality is pivotal for women to reach their potential and have equal opportunities for them.

### **Solutions to promote better gender equality**

When there is a will, there will always be a way to solve gender stereotyping. Malaysia needs a top-down approach to end gender stereotyping in institutions and companies. Management has to understand and play a role in eradicating gender stereotyping to comply with the regulations imposed by the Malaysia Employment Act of 1955. Women have to be treated with respect, receive equal treatment on promotion, have the right to make decisions in a company, have labour protection on maternity leave, and be paid equal wages.

Employers should always be stern in not only prohibiting sexual harassment but also creating awareness in maintaining a happy and healthy environment for both genders.

In terms of education, the current syllabus and textbooks in schools need to be evaluated to check for any gender stereotyping content. Generally, most

textbooks feature families comprising a working father and a mother as a nurturing housewife. Some seek to insert subliminal messages or perceptions that are subconsciously moulding the minds of children of their gender roles since they were young. The educators or teachers should also be trained in highlighting good examples and putting them on a proper basis on gender issues so that students will not be misinformed or receive the wrong idea about gender stereotyping in school.

The government is also compassionate and doing its best by taking action to amend the Employment Act, such as increasing paid maternity leave from 60 to 98 days and enforcing the sanction of terminating a pregnant employee or suffering from illnesses due to the pregnancy.

The ongoing legislative reform, plans, and policies are significant in promoting equality for women in attaining their best potential in any career in an organisation. As the saying goes, a Rome city or the Colosseum is not built in one day; it is built gradually, so similarly, a change in a company won't take place overnight. It takes a huge struggle and more than a few laws and policies to end gender stereotyping in the country; long-term plans and commitments are needed from the decision-makers.

Most importantly, it is a wake-up call to start now, and there is always a sign of hope and enlightenment for changes to ensure that women are treated fairly and not discriminated against for good in keeping a healthy environment in a Malaysian workplace.

*“Gender equality is more than a goal in itself. It is a precondition for meeting the challenge of reducing poverty, sustainable development and building good governance.” - Kofi Annan.*

## HIBISCUS, THE NATIONAL FLOWER OF MALAYSIA

Ibtisam Abdul Wahab

*Fakulti Farmasi,*

*Universiti Teknologi MARA Kampus Puncak Alam*

The word hibiscus from Latin, means marshmallow plant. Malaysians are proud to have this brightly coloured hibiscus (*Hibiscus rosa-sinensis* or bunga raya, Figure 1) as the national flower. There are five petals on the flower, which represent five aspects of the National Principles, or Rukun Negara. The hibiscus is the chosen symbol of unity for Malaysians. It is categorised in the genus of *Hibiscus*, under the Malvaceae family, comprising about 300 plants. Due to its popularity, the research and development of hibiscus species is increasing. In the chemical investigations, for instance, the distribution of its organic composition, especially the flavonoids, among the Malvaceae members, are also reviewed. The flavonoids, anthocyanins and aliphatic hydrocarbons were separated and identified from the flowering part of this plant. Photography enthusiasts find joy in their beautiful petals.



*Red hibiscus  
rosa-sinensis cultivar*



*White hibiscus*



*Peach hibiscus*





*Orange hibiscus*



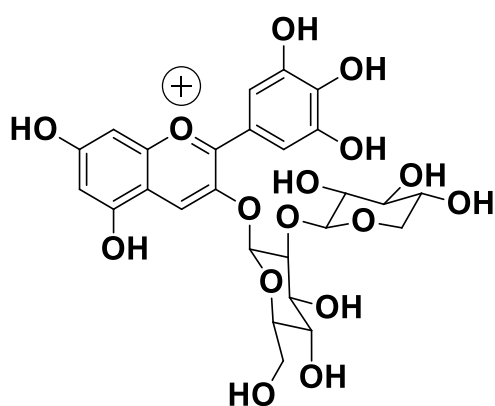
*Red-layered hibiscus*



*Purple hibiscus*

Figure 1: Some photos of colourful, ornamental *Hibiscus rosa-sinensis* cultivar, showing the pistil and stamens, were captured at Kuantan Rest & Revive (R&R) Area, East Coast Expressway (ECE) / Kuala Lumpur-Karak Expressway.

The molecular components of the hibiscus species would depend on the sample origin and the plant parts. The anthocyanin, for an example, is present in the flower extracts. This type of compound is significant in contributing to the production of colours. One of the hibiscus species, the roselle (*Hibiscus sabdariffa* L.), is very popular, due to its dried calyces. It is utilised as a colouring agent in commercial food and drink. The chemical structure of an anthocyanin in roselle calyces extract is shown (Figure 2). Another species of hibiscus is known as *Hibiscus acetosella*. It is available locally and is informally called the false roselle (Figure 2). Their fruits are red ovoid capsules, similar to the roselles. Meanwhile, a hibiscus species, called the sea hibiscus, can be found in the tropical and coastal areas of Darwin, Northern Australia. The investigations on the biological actions of the hibiscus extracts were reported in online scientific articles. They include antimicrobial, antiparasitic, anti-ulcer, anticancer and antioxidant properties. It is anticipated that more innovations would involve the biomaterials of this traditional plant. The love for hibiscus flowers is strengthened by its capability to be repotted and it thrives in shady spots, even indoors.



An anthocyanin, found in roselle



*Hibiscus acetosella*



A yellow sea hibiscus

Figure 2: The chemical structure of an anthocyanin in roselle (*Hibiscus sabdariffa* L.) calyxes extract (left), while the false roselle (*Hibiscus acetosella*) has deep-red leaves (middle). A yellow hibiscus (*Hibiscus tiliaceus*) can be found in the north of Australia (right).

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## **KEPENTINGAN ADAB DALAM PENGAJARAN DAN PEMBELAJARAN**

Muhamad Azhar Zubir  
*Akademi Pengajian Bahasa,  
Universiti Teknologi MARA Cawangan, Sabah*

Adab, atau etika, memainkan peranan yang sangat penting dalam konteks pengajaran dan pembelajaran. Ia bukan sahaja memberikan asas untuk membina persekitaran pendidikan yang positif, tetapi juga menyentuh pelbagai aspek yang mempengaruhi kejayaan proses pembelajaran dan perkembangan individu. Kepentingan adab dalam pendidikan meliputi pelbagai dimensi yang mencakupi suasana kelas, interaksi antara guru dan pelajar, serta pembentukan sikap dan nilai peribadi.

Salah satu aspek utama kepentingan adab adalah kemampuannya untuk mewujudkan persekitaran pembelajaran yang positif dan membina. Jika adab dipraktikkan, nilai hormat menghormati antara guru dan pelajar serta antara pelajar dengan pelajar dapat dijulangi. Prinsip adab seperti menghormati pandangan orang lain, bertutur dengan sopan, memberi ruang untuk berbicara, dan mencipta suasana yang kondusif akan melahirkan pembelajaran yang lebih menarik dan berkesan. Apabila pelajar dan guru saling menghormati dan mengamalkan budi bahasa, mereka menciptakan ruang yang selesa di mana semua individu merasa dihargai. Ini memudahkan komunikasi yang berkesan, memupuk komunikasi dua hala, dan mencapai persefahaman bersama yang merupakan elemen terpenting dalam proses pengajaran dan pembelajaran.

Adab juga memainkan peranan penting dalam menggalakkan penyertaan aktif pelajar. Dalam persekitaran yang penuh dengan sokongan moral dan penghargaan, pelajar lebih cenderung untuk terlibat secara aktif dalam perbincangan kelas, mengajukan soalan, dan berkongsi idea. Apabila mereka merasakan diri mereka dihargai dan didengari, secara tidak langsung ia akan meningkatkan motivasi untuk lebih aktif dan produktif dalam pembelajaran. Penglibatan aktif ini bukan sahaja memperkayakan pengalaman pembelajaran tetapi juga membangunkan rasa tanggungjawab dan inisiatif dalam kalangan pelajar.

Kepentingan adab dalam pengajaran dan pembelajaran juga terletak pada kemampuannya untuk meningkatkan kerjasama dan kerja berpasukan.

Adab yang baik menekankan nilai seperti empati, kerjasama, dan ketepatan yang membantu pelajar bekerja secara semangat berpasukan dengan lebih baik. Dalam suasana yang menghargai pandangan dan pengalaman masing-masing, pelajar belajar untuk menghormati perspektif orang lain dan belajar daripada satu sama lain. Pengalaman pembelajaran kolaboratif ini tidak hanya memperdalam pemahaman mereka tentang subjek sahaja, namun memperbaiki kemahiran interpersonal dan kemampuan mereka untuk bekerja dalam kumpulan yang pelbagai.

Adab juga menyokong pembangunan holistik sahsiah pelajar. Dengan mengamalkan adab, integriti, dan tingkah laku beretika, pelajar bukan sahaja dapat memupuk rasa hormat diri dan maruah tetapi juga mengembangkan empati, belas kasihan, dan integriti. Nilai-nilai murni ini bukan sahaja penting untuk kejayaan akademik tetapi juga untuk pertumbuhan peribadi dan tanggungjawab sosial. Pendidikan yang mengintegrasikan adab membentuk individu yang berpegang teguh pada prinsip etika dan mempunyai kesedaran sosial yang tinggi.

Kemahiran sosial dan komunikasi yang diperoleh melalui amalan adab adalah aset yang sangat berharga dalam pendidikan. Keterampilan seperti mendengar dengan teliti, menghargai pandangan orang lain, dan menyampaikan pandangan dengan sopan, adalah penting dalam interaksi sosial dan profesional. Pelajar yang mengamalkan adab dalam komunikasi mereka lebih cenderung untuk menjalin hubungan yang baik dengan rakan sebaya, guru, juga masyarakat sekelilingnya. Kemahiran ini membantu mereka dalam kerjaya masa depan dan dalam kehidupan sosial mereka secara umum.

Suasana pembelajaran yang beradab turut membantu dalam mengurangkan konflik dan ketegangan. Apabila prinsip hormat dan empati menjadi asas dalam interaksi, perbezaan pandangan dan konflik dapat diatasi dengan lebih baik. Adab membantu pelajar dan guru menangani ketegangan dengan cara yang membina, mencipta suasana yang lebih damai dan produktif di dalam kelas.

Selain itu, kemahiran yang dipelajari melalui adab juga mempersiapkan pelajar untuk kejayaan di luar bilik darjah. Dalam dunia era globalisasi yang berdaya saing ini, kemahiran interpersonal, keupayaan komunikasi, dan adab sosial yang diperoleh melalui adab menjadi aset yang sangat penting dan berharga. Pelajar yang mempunyai adab yang baik lebih

bersedia untuk menghadapi cabaran dalam kerjaya masa depan dan memberi sumbangan positif kepada agama, bangsa dan negara.

Disamping itu juga, adab menyokong kesihatan mental dan kesejahteraan pelajar. Suasana pembelajaran yang penuh hormat dan sokongan moral mengurangkan stres dan meningkatkan kesejahteraan emosi mereka. Kesihatan mental yang baik adalah penting untuk meningkatkan prestasi akademik dan kemanisan belajar, serta menjamin kehidupan seharian para pelajar dalam mendepani dunia kini yang penuh dengan mehnah dan tribulasi.

Secara keseluruhannya, adab memainkan peranan yang sangat penting dalam mewujudkan persekitaran pembelajaran yang positif, inklusif, dan kondusif. Dengan menekankan prinsip hormat menghormati, berbudi bahasa, dan tingkah laku yang beretika, pendidik dapat mencipta suasana yang memupuk rasa ingin tahu, semangat bekerjasama, dan menyokong perkembangan holistik pelajar. Adab tidak hanya menyumbang kepada kejayaan akademik tetapi juga membentuk individu yang bertanggungjawab, empati, kesedaran sosial, serta menyediakan mereka untuk menjadi anggota masyarakat yang berjaya dan memberi sumbangan besar kepada dunia.

## SILENT SCREAMS: EXPOSING THE EPIDEMIC OF BULLYING

Anwar Farhan Mohamad Marzaini

*Akademi Pengajian Bahasa*

*Universiti Teknologi MARA Cawangan, Pulau Pinang*

In the corridors of schools, the cubicles of offices, and even the digital expanses of social media, an insidious epidemic quietly spreads — bullying. Despite increased awareness and anti-bullying campaigns, this silent scourge continues to inflict profound psychological and emotional damage in individuals, often leaving scars that last a lifetime. Bullying, in its many forms, remains a pervasive problem that demands urgent attention and comprehensive solutions. Bullying, in its many forms, remains a pervasive problem that demands urgent attention and comprehensive solutions. Bullying is a repeated aggressive behaviour that involves an imbalance of power or strength. It can manifest physically, verbally, socially, or through cyber channels. Physical bullying involves harm to a person's body or property, while verbal bullying includes insults, taunts, and threats. Social bullying aims to damage someone's social reputation or relationships, often through exclusion or rumour-spreading. Cyberbullying leverages digital platforms to harass, threaten, or embarrass individuals. Statistics reveal a troubling reality. According to the National Center for Education Statistics (2021), nearly 20% of students report being bullied at school. Hinduja and Patchin (2016) also found that about 34% of students have experienced cyberbullying. In workplaces, a 2020 survey by Al-Ghabeesh and Qattom reported that 19% of American workers are currently being bullied, with another 19% having experienced it in the past. These numbers only scratch the surface, as many victims remain silent due to fear of retaliation or disbelief that they will be supported. The stigma surrounding bullying often discourages reporting, perpetuating the cycle of abuse.

**The Ripple Effect:** The repercussions of bullying create a ripple effect that extends to families, schools, workplaces, and the broader community. Understanding these ripple effects is crucial for comprehending the full scope of bullying's damage and for developing comprehensive strategies to address it. The most impact of bullying is on the victims, who often suffer severe and long-lasting consequences. Victims frequently experience anxiety, depression, and low self-esteem. These mental health challenges can persist long after the bullying has stopped, sometimes leading to chronic issues like post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Victims may withdraw from social

interactions to avoid further bullying, leading to loneliness and a lack of social support. This isolation can exacerbate mental health problems and hinder personal development. In addition, the effects of bullying extend to the victim's family, impacting family dynamics and emotional well-being. Parents and siblings of bullying victims often experience significant emotional distress. They may feel helpless, angry, or guilty about their inability to protect their loved one. The stress and tension resulting from a child's bullying experience can strain family relationships. Parents might disagree on how to handle the situation, and siblings may feel neglected or worried. On top of that, bullying also affects the overall climate of schools and workplaces, influencing the experiences of all individuals within these environments. Bullying creates a climate of fear and mistrust in schools. When students feel unsafe, it can undermine the learning environment, leading to lower overall academic performance and school engagement. In workplaces, bullying can lead to a toxic work culture. It affects morale, increases staff turnover, and can lead to legal issues if the workplace fails to address the problem adequately. Witnesses to bullying, or bystanders can also experience significant effects. Bystanders often feel anxiety and guilt, particularly if they feel powerless to stop the bullying. Witnessing repeated aggression can also lead to desensitisation to violence. Bystanders might adopt aggressive behaviours themselves or withdraw to avoid becoming targets. The overall social dynamic can become one of the fear and compliance, rather than mutual respect and support.

**Addressing the Epidemic:** Education is the cornerstone of any effective anti-bullying strategy. Comprehensive anti-bullying programs in schools play a crucial role in addressing the issue at its roots. These programs should encompass awareness and education. Students need to understand the various forms of bullying, including physical, verbal, social, and cyberbullying. Educating students about the harmful effects of bullying can foster empathy and encourage a supportive peer environment. Teaching empathy also helps students understand and share the feelings of others, reducing the likelihood of bullying behaviour. Conflict resolution skills equip students with non-violent methods to handle disputes, promoting a culture of respect and cooperation. In addition, teachers and school staff are on the front lines of identifying and addressing bullying. Effective training programs should help teachers and staff identify both obvious and subtle signs of bullying. This includes physical injuries, changes in behaviour, social withdrawal, and academic performance issues. Staff should be equipped with clear strategies for intervening in bullying situations. This includes knowing how to de-escalate conflicts, provide immediate support to

victims, and follow up with appropriate disciplinary actions for bullies. On top of that, encouraging open and honest communication between parents and children can help identify bullying early. Parents should create an environment where children feel safe discussing their experiences and concerns. Parents should be aware of their children's social interactions and online activities. Guidance on appropriate behaviour and online etiquette can prevent cyberbullying and help children navigate their social lives responsibly. Moreover, strong policies and legislation are essential to provide a consistent and enforceable framework for combating bullying. Many regions have anti-bullying laws, but enforcement can be inconsistent. Strengthening these laws and ensuring they include clear definitions and consequences for bullying behaviours is crucial. Schools should have clear, written policies on how to handle bullying incidents. These policies should outline procedures for reporting, investigating, and addressing bullying, ensuring that all cases are handled promptly and fairly. At the workplace situation, employers also should implement anti-bullying policies that protect employees from harassment and provide avenues for reporting and addressing bullying behaviour. Finally, the broader community plays a vital role in combating bullying and fostering a culture of respect and empathy. Schools, workplaces, and community organisations can partner to create a unified front against bullying. Collaborative efforts can include shared resources, joint training programs, and coordinated responses to bullying incidents.

As a conclusion, bullying is a silent epidemic with devastating effects. Its impact on mental health, academic performance, and overall well-being is profound. To combat this issue, a collective effort from educators, parents, policymakers, and communities is necessary. The time to act is now, for the well-being of current and future generations depends on it. Addressing bullying with urgency and dedication is not just a moral imperative but a necessary step towards building a healthier, more compassionate society. Only through sustained, collective efforts can we hope to end the silent epidemic of bullying and ensure a safer, more inclusive environment for everyone.

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## TEACHING GRAMMAR THROUGH POETRY

Nurul Nadiah Rasdi  
*Akademi Pengajian Bahasa*  
*Universiti Teknologi MARA Cawangan, Johor*

When I saw the theme "Words in Action," poetry came to my mind. I use poetry as an activity when I teach grammar. Grammar is important for students to know. We need to use grammar in all skills in English. However, it is difficult for students to remember all of the information, all of the rules, all of the exceptions, and it can be confusing. Therefore, interesting activities need to be conducted to motivate, attract, and engage the students in learning English.

Poetry comes into the picture as an activity to strengthen students' knowledge on grammar. As an example, after a lesson on parts of speech, specifically on nouns and adjectives, the students were asked to write poems. Although some of them knew how to write poems, they took up the tasks and did them successfully. They needed coloured pens/ colour pencils/ highlighters and a piece of paper to do the activities. The types of poetry that they had to write were an acrostic name poem and a shape poem. Both poems were explained, and some examples were shown.

Acrostic name poems require students to describe themselves via their name. When describing, an adjective is used. They will choose a part of their name (proper noun) and use each letter as the first letter of a word (adjective). For example, my name is NADIAH.

<b>N</b>	-	Nice
<b>A</b>	-	Amiable
<b>D</b>	-	Diligent
<b>I</b>	-	Intelligent
<b>A</b>	-	Adorable
<b>H</b>	-	Honest

A shape poem is a poem where the students have to describe something (noun) using words (adjectives) to form a shape, instead of drawing it. Below are some of my students' works:



## **TEKANAN DI TEMPAT KERJA. APAKAH PENYELESAIANNYA?**

Nur Dalilah Dahlan  
*Fakulti Sukan dan Rekreasi,  
Universiti Teknologi MARA Cawangan, Negeri Sembilan*

Menurut definisi Kamus Oxford, tekanan adalah respons terhadap situasi atau masalah dalam kehidupan seseorang. Ini boleh berlaku apabila seseorang terlalu banyak berfikir, menghadapi masalah hidup yang kompleks, atau merasa tertekan dengan tugas yang melampaui kemampuan mereka. Selain itu, faktor-faktor lain seperti penyakit kronik, urusan harian yang berturutan dan interaksi dengan individu di sekeliling juga boleh menjadi pencetus tekanan kepada seseorang. Isu tekanan di tempat kerja adalah perkara yang amat serius dan perlu dititiberatkan kerana ia dapat mempengaruhi prestasi dan produktiviti organisasi secara keseluruhan.



Laporan Pertubuhan Kesihatan Sedunia (WHO) menunjukkan tekanan adalah antara punca berlakunya masalah kesihatan mental yang boleh menyebabkan hilang upaya. Apakah punca berlakunya tekanan ini? Setiap pekerja memiliki faktor-faktor yang berbeza dalam menghadapi situasi dan masalah tekanan di tempat kerja. Antara faktor yang menyumbang kepada tekanan di tempat kerja adalah seperti bebanan tugas kerja yang terlalu banyak, tempoh bekerja yang terlalu lama, objektif organisasi yang tidak jelas sehingga menyebabkan belakunya konflik antara pekerja, tidak diberi peluang untuk meningkatkan peluang kerjaya dalam kalangan staf, dan lain-lain lagi. Tekanan adalah perkara yang tidak boleh dipandang enteng oleh semua pihak, kerana ia mampu meragut nyawa seseorang individu jika terlewat dicegah dan diubati. Tekanan yang berterusan tanpa kawalan boleh memudaratkan kesihatan pekerja, termasuk dalam aspek tingkah laku, fizikal, dan psikologikal. Dengan kepelbagaian kemajuan dalam bidang perubatan moden dan bantuan pencegahan melalui pendekatan sokongan moral seperti kaunseling, psikoterapi, terapi kognitif dan sebagainya, mampu merubah kehidupan seseorang menjadi lebih baik.

Antara kesan buruk yang boleh memudaratkan kesihatan pekerja adalah seperti sakit kepala yang berpanjangan, kemurungan, peningkatan kadar degupan jantung dan tekanan darah yang tinggi. Jika perkara ni berlarutan, ia mungkin akan memberi kesan dalam jangka masa yang panjang kepada pekerja jika ia tidak dicegah dari awal. Oleh yang demikian, pengurusan tekanan di tempat kerja amatlah penting dan perlu diberi penekanan dalam organisasi bagi mengurangkan masalah tekanan berlaku dalam kalangan pekerja. Keseimbangan antara kerjaya dan kehidupan merupakan salah satu langkah yang baik bagi mencegah berlakunya tekanan dalam kalangan pekerja. Sebagai pekerja atau individu, mereka perlu peka dalam mengimbangi masa dan ruang bersama keluarga serta kerjaya. Perubahan cara komunikasi yang berkesan juga dapat mengelakkan masalah tekanan berlaku dalam kalangan pekerja. Anda perlu bersikap jujur dan terbuka jika mempunyai sesuatu masalah dan luah serta berkongsilah dengan ketua di tempat kerja anda sekiranya perlu. Sistem komunikasi yang lebih telus dan baik akan meningkatkan prestasi kerja yang lebih efektif dan efisien. Jika perlu, ambillah masa untuk berehat seketika dari bebanan kerja yang perlu digalas dan diselesaikan. Percayalah, dengan mempunyai minda yang cerdas, jiwa yang tenang dan fizikal yang sihat akan memberi impak yang positif kepada prestasi pekerja. Justeru, rancang dan susunlah jadual tugas anda dengan baik dan mengikut kepentingan yang bersesuaian. Kesihatan mental anda adalah keutamaan, kebahagiaan anda adalah kepentingan dan penjagaan diri anda adalah satu keperluan.



## **THE POWER OF AFFIRMATION TO BRING OUT THE BEST IN US**

Cynthia Robert Dawayan  
*Fakulti Pengurusan Perniagaan,  
Universiti Teknologi MARA Cawangan, Sabah*

When used appropriately, words can greatly impact our lives by shaping our thoughts, beliefs, and actions, often influencing our perceptions of ourselves, others, and the world around us. Living in these challenging times filled with negativity and self-doubt, we need to learn to talk appropriately to ourselves. The right words can bring us through difficult times and motivate us to move forward. As such, we must learn to incorporate affirmations into our daily routine. No matter if we are seeking to boost our confidence, overcome challenges, or cultivate a sense of gratitude, words in the form of affirmations have the potential to transform our lives in remarkable ways. These simple yet profound affirmations have the power to help us nurture a positive mindset that can bring us hope and strength, especially in difficult times.

Words have the amazing ability to uplift, inspire, and affirm individuals. A simple "you got this" can ignite a spark of confidence in someone facing an overwhelming situation. Affirmations, whether spoken aloud or internalized, have the power to reshape our self-perception, reinforcing positive traits and encouraging personal growth. On the contrary, insensitive use of words can hurt and diminish a person. Criticism can harm a person's self-esteem and increase their self-doubt, especially when delivered harshly or repeatedly. Negative words have a way of lingering in the mind, shaping beliefs about our abilities and worthiness. Nonetheless, criticism can also help build strength and improve a person to be better when offered sincerely with empathy and guidance, promoting improvement rather than destruction.

Essentially, the power of affirmation lies in its ability to change the way we think. Our minds are incredibly powerful, but they can also be susceptible to negative thought patterns that hinder our progress and happiness. As such, affirmations serve as a tool to interrupt these patterns and replace them with more empowering beliefs. When repeated consistently, affirmations send signals to our brains that reinforce positive beliefs about ourselves and our abilities. Over time, these statements become embedded in our subconscious

minds, which will then shape our thoughts, feelings, and align our actions to achieve our goals as well as aspirations.

There are various benefits of practicing affirmations, one of which is to boost our confidence and self-esteem. By affirming our worthiness, strengths, and potential, we silence the inner critic that often holds us back and embrace a more compassionate and empowering narrative. When done regularly, we build a positive mindset that can support us during times of doubt or uncertainty. Instead of dwelling on our perceived shortcomings, we focus on our inherent value and capacity for growth, allowing us to approach challenges with greater resilience and determination.

Affirmations are also a powerful tool for manifesting our goals and dreams. By stating our intentions with clarity and conviction, we align our energy and focus with the outcomes we desire, thereby increasing the likelihood of their manifestation. When we affirm that we are capable, worthy, and deserving of our goals, we develop a sense of belief and expectancy that pushes us forward. This positive mindset not only enhances our motivation and drive but also opens opportunities and possibilities that may have otherwise gone unnoticed.

In addition to shaping our internal dialogue, affirmations can also grow a deeper sense of gratitude and positivity in our lives. By acknowledging and appreciating the blessings and abundance that surround us, we shift our perspective from always feeling insufficient to a perspective that we always have enough. By incorporating gratitude affirmations into our daily routine, we train ourselves to focus on the good in our lives, despite any challenges and obstacles. This shift in perspective not only enhances our overall well-being but also attracts more positive experiences and relationships into our lives.

Now that we are aware of the transformative power of affirmations and the benefits it offers, we can use them to harness the potential of positive thoughts and beliefs, it is necessary for us to seriously consider incorporating affirmations into our daily routine. It does not matter if we are seeking to boost our confidence, manifest our dreams, or simply nurture a greater sense of gratitude, affirmations offer a simple yet profound pathway to personal growth and fulfilment. Therefore, always choose to speak kindly to yourself. Choose your words wisely to bring out the best in you and in others.

## THE TRADITION OF THE HARI RAYA CELEBRATION IN MALAYSIA

Fauziana Fauzi @ Mat Rawi  
*Fakulti Pengurusan Perniagaan,  
Universiti Teknologi MARA Kampus Puncak Alam*

Eid Ul-Fitr, also known as Eid al-Fitr or simply Eid, is a significant religious celebration observed by Muslims around the world. In Malaysia, it is known as **Hari Raya Aidilfitri** and is sometimes referred to as **Hari Raya Puasa** (with "puasa" meaning fasting). This day marks the end of the holy month of Ramadan, during which Muslims fast from dawn until sunset.

Hari Raya Aidilfitri is typically celebrated on the first day of Syawal, the tenth month of the Islamic calendar. It is a time for Muslims to seek forgiveness from their relatives and friends for any wrongdoings, fostering a spirit of reconciliation and unity. Additionally, Muslims are required to pay **Zakat al-Fitrah**—a form of almsgiving that is one of the five pillars of Islam—at the end of Ramadan, ensuring that those in need can also partake in the festivities.

Before Hari Raya Aidilfitri, Muslims living or working in cities often travel back to their hometowns and villages to celebrate with their families. This period is marked by national holidays, allowing schoolchildren and working professionals to enjoy time with their loved ones without the burden of their usual responsibilities.

As the celebration approaches, the festive atmosphere becomes increasingly palpable, especially at public transport terminals where many people take the opportunity to travel home for Hari Raya using buses and trains. While some prefer to drive home to benefit from toll-free offers, public transport remains a popular choice for those seeking a break from the congestion and stress of highway traffic. This year, over two million vehicles are expected to be on major highways during the Hari Raya holidays, representing a 15 percent increase compared to the usual daily traffic volume of 1.82 million.

During Eid, one of the most common things you'll hear people say to one another is "Eid Mubarak!" This literally means "blessed Eid" and is a way of expressing celebration. You might also hear "Eid sa'id" which means "happy Eid". In Nigeria, people are likely to say "Balla da Sallah", which is happy

Eid in Hausa. In Malaysia, Eid is called Hari Raya, so to wish someone a happy Eid, you would say “Selamat Hari Raya”.

This year's celebration day was officially announced by the Keeper of the Rulers' Seal, Tan Sri Syed Danial Syed Ahmad, shortly after the Maghrib prayer. Following the announcement, the sound of "takbir raya" echoed through mosques and musollas across the country. The recitation of the takbir begins at Maghrib on the eve of Aidilfitri and continues until the sunnah Aidilfitri prayer the next morning.

On the day of the celebration, around 8AM, Muslims filled mosques and suraus nationwide to perform the Aidilfitri prayer. It is a sunnah to bathe in the morning, apply perfume, eat a small meal, wear the finest and cleanest clothes, and walk to the mosque for the prayer. After the prayer, Muslims traditionally seek forgiveness from family members and friends for any past wrongdoings. Many families also visit the graves of departed loved ones to offer prayers for their souls.

Women typically dress in traditional attire such as **baju kurung** (a traditional Malay dress), **baju kebaya** (a traditional blouse dress), or **jubah** (a long one-piece dress). In contrast, men usually wear a **songkok** (a traditional hat) and **baju Melayu** (a traditional men's gown). Many families choose a specific color theme for their outfits, creating a vibrant and unified appearance.

No Hari Raya celebration is complete without its signature dishes, lovingly prepared by the elders. These include **ketupat** (rice dumplings cooked in a palm leaf pouch), **rendang** (meat stewed in rich spices), **dodol** (a sticky, toffee-like sweet), **satay** (skewered, grilled meat), **lemang** (glutinous rice cooked in bamboo), **nasi minyak** (fragrant rice cooked with ghee), **nasi dagang** (rice steamed in coconut milk), **tapai** (fermented sticky rice), **sayur lodeh** (vegetable stew in coconut milk), **soto** (a fragrant soup), and many more.

During Hari Raya Aidilfitri, it is customary for homeowners to give “**duit raya**” to their guests. This is a monetary gift often presented in green packets, known as “**Sampul duit Raya**,” since green is a color traditionally associated with Islam. The amount of money given varies depending on what the host can afford, with amounts typically ranging from RM2, RM5, RM10, or more. While green is the preferred color, the envelopes come in various sizes and colors, adding to the festive atmosphere.



One of the most unique aspects of Hari Raya in Malaysia is the long-standing tradition of '**open houses,**' where families open their homes to friends and relatives throughout the month of Syawal. These gatherings are marked by an abundance of delicious and indulgent food, reflecting the spirit of generosity and togetherness.

A hallmark of these celebrations is the sight of cookie jars brimming with a variety of biscuits, cookies, and cakes, collectively known as '**Kuih Raya.**' Among the favorites are **tart nenas** (pineapple tarts), **cornflakes madu** (honey cornflake clusters), **sarang semut**, **biskut suji**, and **biskut dahlia**. These treats come in different shapes and flavors, adding a sweet touch to the festivities.

Another integral part of the Hari Raya celebration in Malaysia is the festive music that fills the airwaves, shopping malls, and bazaars starting from the middle of Ramadan. These songs, which have become timeless classics, resonate with generations of Malaysians, evoking a sense of nostalgia and joy.

Tunes by legendary artists like **P. Ramlee**, **Sudirman Haji Arshad**, and **Dato' Sri Siti Nurhaliza** are among the most beloved, with their catchy choruses and soulful melodies eagerly anticipated each year. This year, contemporary hits such as "**Alamak! Raya Lagi**" by De Fam, "**Balik Kampung**" by Nabila Razali, and "**Ketipak Ketipung Raya**" by Aisha Retno have dominated the airwaves, becoming the most played songs of the season.

However, today's Hari Raya celebrations differ significantly from those of the past, largely due to technological advancements. Smartphones have made it easier to communicate through platforms like Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram, and other social media, making it more convenient to wish "**Selamat Hari Raya Aidilfitri**" digitally rather than through traditional greeting cards.

Before the advent of these technologies, sending greeting cards was a cherished tradition. We would take the time to write heartfelt messages and post the cards to friends and family members. Although buying cards and visiting the post office was time-consuming and costly, the excitement of receiving these cards was unmatched. Many of us would keep the cards as mementos and sometimes even display them on the wall as decorations.

Before the rise of advanced gadgets, Hari Raya was a time when people gathered to chat and share stories, creating a lively and boisterous atmosphere, especially in homes filled with family members. The joy of exchanging experiences and catching up with loved ones was a central part of the celebration.

Today, however, some people find themselves spending more time on their phones than mingling with relatives. Despite this shift, advanced technology and fast internet connections allow us to share our Hari Raya moments on social media, keeping our friends and family updated. Additionally, we can now connect with relatives who are far away in real-time, bridging the distance and bringing loved ones closer, even when they're miles apart.

This year, Raya bazaar traders have expressed concern over dwindling sales as customers increasingly turn into window shoppers due to the rise in online retail. The shift towards online shopping has led to a noticeable reduction in foot traffic at bazaars, as more people opt for the convenience of shopping from home. Online platforms have capitalized on this trend by launching targeted campaigns for the festive period, such as Shopee's **"Raya Bersama Shopee,"** Lazada's **"Jualan Raya Fantastik Lazada,"** and Zalora's **"Zaloraya 2024."**

The appeal of online shopping lies in the ability to take one's time to browse, compare prices, and discover hidden gems without the hassle of moving from shop to shop. It also allows shoppers to avoid the burdens of carrying heavy items, standing in long queues, and dealing with traffic jams. However, it's important to start shopping early to ensure timely delivery.

This year, decorative LED lights have emerged as one of the most sought-after Hari Raya products, alongside cosmetics, dendeng, sambal, Raya money packets, **baju kurung**, and gold jewelry.

Hari Raya holds deep significance for all Malaysians. Whether it's braving traffic jams, gathering with family, performing Hari Raya prayers, seeking forgiveness, visiting relatives, enjoying authentic foods, dressing in the finest Raya attire, or listening to a mix of modern and classic tunes, the celebration is full of meaningful traditions. For many, simply enjoying the long holiday with loved ones makes Hari Raya the most memorable celebration in Malaysia.

## **THE POWER OF EMPATHY IN LEADERSHIP**

Nur Syazwani Zulaikha Safwan, Mohamad Firdaus Ahmad, Muhamad Hafiz Hassan

*Fakulti Sukan dan Rekreasi & Fakulti Seni Kreatif  
Universiti Teknologi MARA Cawangan, Negeri Sembilan & Sarawak*

Recently, the significance of empathy in leadership has often been overlooked. However, empathetic leadership possesses the profound capability to shape organizations, fostering environments where people experience valued, comprehended, and inspired to gain their quality. By prioritizing expertise and connection, empathetic leaders can cultivate a culture of collaboration and support within the organization.

Primarily, empathy in leadership encompasses genuine emotional connection. When leaders showcase empathy, they convey genuine concern for their team members as unique individuals, as opposed to mere components of a system. This fosters trust and psychological safety in the group, wherein individual's sense empowered to voice their thoughts, issues, and demanding situations without fear of reprisal. Consequently, empathetic leadership not only improves morale and employee satisfaction but also fosters an experience of belonging and loyalty amongst them.

Moreover, empathetic leaders possess a keen ability to discern and respond to the needs of their team members. Through active listening and observation, they perceive instances wherein individuals may be grappling with issues, whether professional or personal. Instead of disregarding these concerns, empathetic leaders extend support and guidance, aiding their team members in overcoming obstacles and developing personally and professionally. This not only strengthens the bond among leader and team member but also cultivates a culture of empathy and cohesion in the organization.

Besides, empathetic leaders excel in building numerous and inclusive groups, wherein individuals from various backgrounds and perspectives are valued and respected. By actively searching for diverse expertise and fostering an inclusive place of job, they harness the collective energy of numerous reports and ideas, riding innovation and flexibility inside the organization. This fortifies the organization's ability to navigate complex

challenges and guarantees its relevance and competitiveness in a diverse marketplace.

In conclusion, the efficiency of empathy in leadership cannot be overstated. By nurturing connection, understanding, and support within their teams, empathetic leaders create environments conducive to individual growth and it involves empowering and uplifting those we lead, ultimately driving sustainable growth and organizational triumph. As we navigate the complexity of the working environment.

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REFLECTIONS FOR REAL-WORLD INSIGHTS

e ISBN 978-629-99065-8-2



UNIVERSITI TEKNOLOGI MARA (UiTM) SABAH BRANCH

(online)



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**Words in Action II** combines real-life stories, case studies, and personal reflections. It shares practical insights and valuable lessons for readers. Drawing on a wide range of experiences, this book explores key concepts in human behaviour, decision-making, leadership, and problem-solving, all illustrated through accessible, everyday examples. Whether you're a student, professional, or lifelong learner, this book offers meaningful reflections that help bridge theory with practice, making complex ideas easier to understand and apply in real-life situations. Readers are invited to reflect, learn, and gain a deeper understanding of how words, actions, and decisions can influence the lives of those around us, including our own.

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