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# FROM UNCERTAINTY TO UNFORGETTABLE PHD JOURNEY: THE INSIGHT

Nurul Asyikin binti Abdul Rahman

School of Biology, UiTM Cawangan Negeri Sembilan, Kampus Kuala Pilah, Pekan Parit Tinggi, 72000 Kuala Pilah, Negeri Sembilan

[asyikin1945@uitm.edu.my](mailto:asyikin1945@uitm.edu.my)

EDITOR: DR. MUHAMMAD AIDIL IBRAHIM

I embarked on this postgraduate journey with mixed emotions of excitement and fear, unsure of what will happen in the future. The beginning of my journey coincided with the COVID-19 pandemic, which made the first year very challenging due to many restrictions, especially the movement control order (MCO). Despite these obstacles, this adventure has finally come to an end. As I approached the end of my PhD, I looked back with warmth and thanks for the memories and friends I had made. My path had been tough, but it was also heartwarming, thanks to the kind and supportive people who surrounded me throughout the whole process. In the end, I realised that my success came not only from my effort and focus, but also from the friendly and helpful people who made my PhD journey memorable. Thus, in this article, I would like to share tips for anyone who plans to pursue postgraduate studies soon. Although I may not be the best person to offer guidance, I feel a responsibility to share insights based on my humble experiences.

## Strong support system

First and foremost, it is important that you receive blessings from your loved ones, especially your parents, spouse and children. These are the important people who will pray for your success and continue to encourage you along the way. There will be difficult times during this journey, but love, unwavering support from those close to you and their presence at every turn will make a big difference in your postgraduate life.

## Outstanding supervisory committee

Find a supervisory committee that shares your vision and objectives. A wonderful supervisory team is made up not only of brilliant researchers, but also of compassionate mentors who guide you with wisdom and encouragement at every step of your journey. They will always be ready to help and offer advice during difficult times.



Image 1: My alma mater, the Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences, Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM)  
(Source: Author's own collection)

## Excellent teamwork

Seek a strong team that will accompany you throughout your PhD journey. Being part of a team means that you are never alone in navigating the ups and downs along the way. It is a mutual exchange; you give and take; always reaching out to each other when the going gets tough.

## Be kind, be genuine and be bold

The postgraduate journey is challenging and demanding. Treat everyone with kindness, regardless of their position, as you never know who might support you in difficult times. These people will be with you through both failures and successes. Be bold and genuine to face challenges and pursue your goals with determination and integrity. Do not fear taking risks and remain resilient to obstacles. When you feel like you have hit a wall, do not give up; instead, bounce back with renewed determination. Adjust your strategies and approaches as necessary, but always stay true to your values and beliefs.

## Time management

Time management skills are important in the postgraduate journey. Establish short-term and long-term goals, breaking tasks into smaller, manageable parts to avoid feeling overwhelmed. Set deadlines for each task, even if they are self-imposed. To maintain a healthy work-life balance, schedule regular breaks and downtime to prevent burnout. Additionally, practice flexibility to adjust your schedule when unexpected challenges arise.



Image 2: With my wonderful research team and supervisor, Prof. Ts. Dr. Mohd Nasir Mohd Desa (front right)  
(Source: Author's own collection)



Image 3: With my friendly and supportive friends  
(Source: Author's own collection)

## Believe in yourself and never lose hope

Remember that this postgraduate journey is your own journey and will differ from others. Setbacks and failures are part of the journey, not the end.

Have faith in your skills and the knowledge you have gained to navigate obstacles with determination. Finally, develop a mindset that sees challenges as stepping stones to improve, not as impossible barriers.