

# #PhDLIFE

Reflections of Women  
in Graduate School



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# Preface

This book is a compilation of PhD reflections from different female academics from Malaysia, the United Kingdom and New Zealand. It describes the journeys taken during our PhD studies. The uniqueness of this book is that it shares stories and reflections from different backgrounds of academics, from the experienced ones to the newbies and those in between. We believe that this book will appeal to many people especially women from various backgrounds who are currently pursuing their PhDs or who are planning to pursue one. We hope that you enjoy a little glimpse into our PhD lives where we reflect on our experiences. Happy reading!

# **Navigating the Academic Odyssey: Thriving as a Postgraduate Scholar – Strategies to Feel Empowered Throughout Your Journey**

By: **Tengku Elena Tengku Mahamad**

## **Introduction**

**I**n this chapter, I invite you to join me on a journey down memory lane, reflecting on the highs and lows of my PhD experience. I will candidly share what worked wonders and what posed challenges during this intellectual expedition. Whether you are gearing up for your master's or PhD, preparation – both mentally and physically – is key. Anticipate a roller coaster ride of the best and worst times and get ready to navigate the academic landscape with resilience.

“ A PhD is more than a degree; it's a crucible of self-discovery and resilience. As a woman in leadership married to a PhD in Public Health, I've seen firsthand the extraordinary dedication and perseverance required to navigate this academic journey. Supporting my husband's pursuit has deepened my admiration for the immense effort behind every milestone. For women balancing academia with caregiving, the journey is even more profound. This book is a tribute to the remarkable strength of women in academia, a source of inspiration for those considering a PhD, and a reminder that together, we can achieve extraordinary things. ”

**YB Puan Teo Nie Ching**  
Deputy Minister of Communications, Malaysia

“ For women pursuing the demanding path of a PhD, this book provides a thoughtful and compassionate guide. Through a blend of personal experiences and practical advice, the authors provide support and encouragement to help readers navigate the ups and downs of their academic journey. It emphasizes the importance of resilience, self-compassion, and creating a support system, reassuring readers that with dedication and focus, they can reach their goals. This is a must-read for anyone starting or already on their PhD path. ”

**Dr. (H.C) Prita Kemal Gani, MBA, MCIPR, APR, FIPR**  
Founder and CEO of London School of Public Relations, Indonesia

“ Juggling academia and doctoral studies while balancing life abroad can be particularly challenging for women. #PhDLIFE Reflections of Women in Graduate School brings together the diverse and inspiring personal journeys of a group of gritty female academics, whose voices resonate with resilience and determination. Through the power of perseverance, collaboration and unwavering belief in oneself, they enlighten newcomers to graduate school on how to navigate the complex landscape successfully. This book celebrates women who dream big and redefine themselves through their personal academic journeys. ”

**Professor Beena Giridharan**  
Curtin University Malaysia

“ An individual's growth is shaped by life experiences, often gained through challenging journeys. Women, in particular, face unique challenges, such as balancing careers and family life. Each woman's journey differs based on her background, making every story in this book distinct. This book describes the women who completed their PhDs in powerful examples of determination, showing that they overcame challenges without relying on excuses. ”

**Professor Datuk Azizul Halim Yahya**  
Universiti Teknologi MARA

“ PhDs and journey of a thousand words, demystified. Enjoy! ”

**Mr. Jaffri Amin Osman**  
CEO of World Communication Network Resources Sdn Bhd and  
President of Institute Public Relations Malaysia (IPRM)

**THIS  
book  
describes  
and tells  
stories of PhD  
journeys  
from different  
culture and  
backgrounds.  
It shares  
intimate  
experiences  
in the years  
leading up  
to a PhD  
degree.**