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RISING ABOVE CHALLENGES: MY JOURNEY OF STRENGTH AND SUCCESS

Nur Ayu Syuhada binti Amiluddin

Pusat Pengajian Biologi, UiTM Cawangan Negeri Sembilan, Kampus Kuala Pilah, Pekan Parit Tinggi, 72000 Kuala Pilah, Negeri Sembilan

nur.ayu.syuhada96@gmail.com

EDITOR: AMIRUL ADLI ABD AZIZ

Assalamu'alaikum wbt and greetings to all, dear friends. At the outset, I extend my gratitude to Allah, the Most Merciful, for the opportunity to share my story with you. While my journey may not be as extraordinary as some of my peers, I hope it brings a bit of inspiration, Insha'Allah.

In 2014, I was accepted as a Diploma in Microbiology student at UiTM Kuala Pilah. The joy was immeasurable as I entered the university, because I have declined offers from Universiti Pertanian Malaysia (UPM) and Selangor Matriculation as my father was ill in the same year.

During the Minggu Destini Siswa (MDS) orientation week, Pemimpin Mahasiswa (PM) as facilitators shared various insights about UiTM. We were introduced to the coveted 'pink sash', awarded to students achieving the Vice-Chancellor's Award, essentially the Dean's List students for every semester. The emotional impact of witnessing the 'UiTM di Hatiku' official music video, in which a student receives kisses from their parents while being adorned with the 'pink sash' left an indelible mark on me. Throughout the orientation week, I resolved, committed, and aspired to ensure I would attain the 'pink sash' and be a catalyst for my family's success.



Image 1: My Komander Kesatria members (Source: author's own collection)

The journey began. For your information, my Semester 1 was an enjoyable exploration of university life. Academic challenges were met with ease as the materials closely resembled my SPM study back then. I set my sights on achieving the Dean's List, studying diligently, and burning the midnight oil every day. Alhamdulillah, I achieved a remarkable 3.89 as my final Semester 1 grade point average (GPA).

Moving on, Semester 2 marked the beginning of challenging experiences. My decision to join the Komander Kesatria UiTM Kuala Pilah added an extra dimension to my university life. However, academically, I struggled with more in-depth Microbiology subjects. My motivation waned, and I even contemplated quitting. The semester felt purposeless, and I considered transferring to a polytechnic for a course more aligned with my interests. However, before I made a final decision regarding quitting the study, I made a deal with my mother that, if I still received the Dean's List award for this second semester, I would continue with the Microbiology Diploma studies until the end. Surprisingly, I successfully achieved a GPA of 3.65, once again securing the Dean's List. So, I must keep my promise with my mother, right? No choice, I must continue to stay in UiTM Kuala Pilah for the rest of my Diploma. Semester 3 marked a renewed determination to pursue excellence. Transitioning to a

disciplined routine, including becoming a 'morning person,' proved pivotal. I diligently adhered to my study routine, balancing between late-night reviews and early morning study sessions. With a disciplined approach and unwavering commitment, I achieved a GPA of 3.76, receiving the Dean's List award once more.

Meanwhile, during Semester 4, my enthusiasm for academic excellence increases. Maintaining the same routine, including being a 'morning person,' I felt a sense of fulfilment and gratitude. Semester 4 proceeded smoothly, and I cherished many joyful moments. Despite challenges, I continued to target the Dean's List, as the completion of the Diploma in Microbiology was drawing near. In Semester 4, I embraced a morning routine with drinking goat's milk, eating dates and raisins for breakfast and implemented short midday naps, known as 'qaillulah'. At the same time, I maintained good physical health by doing weekly exercise by myself, adding on to Komander Kesatria physical training. By maintaining excellence in quizzes, assignments, and presentations, I approached my final exams with determination. The semester results reflected my efforts with a GPA of 3.83, securing yet another Dean's List award. In the same year, I was honoured with the "Best Student Award for Diploma in Microbiology" for my batch. Joyful moments continued to fill my life. In 2016, I unexpectedly

Entering 2017, during the final semester, unfortunately, I faced an unforeseen challenge. On January 15, 2017, while traveling back to UiTM Kuala Pilah, I was involved in a severe accident with a lorry

received numerous awards and sweet memories. Entering 2017, during the final semester, unfortunately, I faced an unforeseen challenge. On January 15, 2017, while traveling back to UiTM Kuala Pilah, I was involved in a severe accident with a lorry. My car was deemed a total loss, and I was rushed to the hospital, where I stayed for 33 days in the orthopaedic ward. I was in a coma for three days, and it was confirmed that I had fractures in my right arm, left arm, right leg, and the right side of my forehead. I couldn't eat, drink, bathe, or perform activities independently, relying on my family for assistance and could only move on a wheelchair. I was saddened, but in that moment, I came across a verse from the



Image 2: The state of my car following the road accident (left), Classmates visited me in the hospital (right) (Source: author's own collection)

Holy Quran, Surah Al-Ankabut, verse 2, which translates to, "Do the people think that they will be left to say, 'We believe' and they will not be tried?" This verse has since become my source of strength, urging me to persevere despite all the challenges. I had to take a special leave from UiTM and postpone my studies to focus on recovery. As scheduled, I attempted to resume the next semester, but I wasn't ready. So, I decided to take another special leave to regain my composure. Consequently, I deferred my semester twice, equivalent to about a year.

Continuing the journey, I returned to resume my studies for the completion of my Microbiology Diploma in 2018. However, this time around, I didn't set high aspirations or

ambitious goals to achieve the Dean's List once again. My sole commitment was to finish my diploma. Due to health considerations, I couldn't exert the same level of effort as before. I simply enjoyed the final semester with my friends, studying to the best of my ability. I had consoled my mother that I couldn't guarantee the Dean's List, and I am glad that she understood. Her only wish was for me to complete my studies and stay healthy.

I vividly remember a moment during the 'Medical Microbiology' subject for final examination for that semester. Feeling bored with studying, I decided to indulge in a three-hour Tamil drama before the exam. After all, my focus was on completing the diploma, not

necessarily achieving top honours. So, when the exams concluded, the semester break started, and eventually, the results were released. I was working at a restaurant when my mother called, urging me to check the exam results. Unexpectedly, I had achieved a GPA of 3.71, earning myself the "Vice-Chancellor's Award". At that moment, the emotions overwhelmed me as I looked at the results – a mix of joy and a hint of tears. I couldn't believe it at first, but it was indeed true. The dream of donning the prestigious 'pink sash' during the convocation has transformed into a beautiful reality!

Subsequently, in 2019, I received an offer to pursue my studies in the Faculty of Medicine (MBBS) at UiTM Sg

Buloh, Selangor. However, shortly after, I had to make the difficult decision of deferring my medical studies as my father's health took a critical turn, leading to his admission to the Intensive Care Unit (ICU). Being the eldest of six siblings, I had to prioritize my family. After careful consideration, I decided to discontinue my medical studies and instead, enrolled in the Bachelor's degree in Applied Microbiology at UiTM Shah Alam. The journey through my degree and life,

in general, has been a formidable challenge, filled with valuable experiences I'd very much love to share. Alhamdulillah, I've recently achieved the significant milestone of completing my Bachelor's degree. I am now happily married and employed for a full-time position. To conclude, life's trials serve as a testing ground where we must persist no matter the obstacles. Oprah Winfrey had said, "Where there is no struggle, there is no strength." So, let's continue to strive, maintain

hopeful, take breaks when needed and continue to resume the journey.

Reflecting on this journey, I humbly request your prayers and well wishes for my future aspirations. The dream of pursuing postgraduate studies is on the horizon, and your support and encouragement are invaluable to me. All in all, I acknowledge that my motivation, spirit, and strength remain unwavering due to the full support provided by my beloved parents, dedicated lecturers from my first semester to the last at UiTM Kuala Pilah, cherished siblings, friends, and everyone around me who believes in me. Your prayers and positive energy have fuelled my journey, and for that, I am truly grateful. Thank you for being an integral part of my story.

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Image 3: Convocation Day donning the pink sash
(Source: author's own collection)