

Journey of Ambition: Dr. Fariza and Me - A Tale of Perseverance and Inspiration at USIM University

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Dr. Fariza and I, my supervisor during my doctoral studies at USIM University in Malaysia, said, "When I was accepted to USIM University, my long journey began with a simple step after extensive research and efforts in multiple universities across several countries. Despite facing acceptance and rejection in various universities, my ambition and perseverance as a young, determined woman kept me focused on my childhood dream of pursuing a Ph.D. Despite life's challenges, criticism, and obstacles, I remained undeterred in achieving this lifelong dream. I worked diligently, crafted detailed plans, overcame obstacles, and initiated communication with Dr. Fariza by proposing a simple research idea via email. Surprisingly, she quickly responded, welcoming me and accepting to be my main supervisor at the university. After some time, I was accepted into the Ph.D. program in English Studies. This marked the beginning of my journey, fueled by a passion for learning and education that continues to this day. With the grace of God and support from friends, I received acceptance. I vividly remember that day, a Friday, when I saw the acceptance and danced with joy, shedding tears of happiness. It was a profound mix of hope, dreams, passion, and overwhelming love. I prepared for the journey, recalling my mother's inspiring words: 'The only person who never makes mistakes is the person who never does anything.' This became a powerful motivation for me to pursue my dreams relentlessly, overcoming any obstacles in my way. After a long and challenging journey, I arrived in Malaysia, the paradise on Earth. USIM University is located in Nilai City, a beautiful place where you can experience all four seasons in a day, with a warm and lovely climate. I prepared myself, brought my research proposal, contacted Dr. Fariza, and set up a meeting. The day I met her was a crucial moment in my life. Before

going, a friend informed me about the Malaysians' punctuality and the tradition of removing shoes before entering the supervisor's office. I arrived at the university, and the motto was 'Read.' The campus was incredibly beautiful and vast. I reached Dr. Fariza's office, where I also met the other supervisor, Dr. Susana. I felt a strange comfort. Dr. Fariza welcomed me with a beautiful smile, humble and friendly. She introduced herself, learned about me, and knew that I brought some sweets. To my delight, she loved sweets like me. She reviewed my simple research proposal and said, 'We need something more creative and robust.' I replied, 'Inshallah, Dr. Fariza.' The following dialogue between us changed my life and shaped my current passion for reading and research. Dr. Fariza : Tahani . The key to success in your studies is diligence, perseverance, overcoming difficulties, and not making excuses. You are a Ph.D. student now, and I've seen many students, Tahani. I don't want excuses; I want commitment from you, Tahani. Me: Inshallah, Dr. Fariza. I will. I've come a long way from Palestine to Malaysia, and I promise commitment and diligence. Dr. Fariza: Inshallah, make me proud, Tahani. But do you believe that your Ph.D. thesis will contribute to liberating Palestine from Israeli occupation? What will you offer to your country and yourself through your Ph.D. journey, Tahani Me: Dr. Fariza , after a year of intensive reading, research, and hard work, I can now confidently say that the Israeli occupation is like rocks and cucumbers. Either we carry the rocks on our backs or place them on the ground and strive to move forward. As Palestinian researchers, we bear the responsibility of creating change, making a difference in society, and helping our student's progress, innovate, and develop. With the grace of God, we are capable. Dr. Fariza: Well done, Tahani. I am proud of you. Successes continued, research flourished, and the

collaboration between Dr. Fariza and me thrived. I published over twenty papers, participated in numerous conferences, and even competed in a university-level competition where I explained my thesis in three minutes, earning the fifth position. Thank you, Dr. Fariza , for your support, love, respect, and belief in me

Getting my PhD was not an easy road at all. Money was very tight since incomes are low back home in Palestine. Paying the university fees and living costs in Malaysia was a huge struggle financially. Being so far away from Palestine to Malaysia was

also extremely difficult. I felt alone and isolated from my family and friends back home. Whenever I went back to Palestine during breaks, another major problem was the lack of useful books and research materials there. The libraries and resources are quite limited compared to what was available at USIM University in Malaysia. Not having access to the latest publications and research really slowed down my progress. But I didn't let any of these challenges stop me. I just dug deeper and kept pushing forward no matter what obstacles came my way. My determination to finish my PhD only grew stronger whenever I faced these difficulties.