Contributing Factors in Publications Among Academicians

Nasrudin Subhi, Nor Jana Saim, Salina Nen, Mastura Mahmud, Norulhuda Sarnon

Abstrak: Kecemerlangan ahli akademik di universiti pada masa kini ditentukan melalui beberapa indikator, antaranya bilangan penerbitan yang tinggi. Ahli akademik yang mempunyai bilangan penerbitan yang tinggi selalunya akan menjadi perhatian rakan sekerja dan majikan kerana mampu membawa reputasi yang baik kepada universiti. Pentadbir menggunakan penerbitan sebagai salah satu kriteria utama dalam mengukur kompetensi seseorang ahli akademik dan menentukan kenaikan pangkat. Kajian ini bertujuan untuk meneroka faktor-faktor yang menyumbang kepada prestasi penerbitan dalam kalangan tenaga akademik di UKM. Kajian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif untuk mengumpul dan menganalisis dapatan. Temu bual mendalam dengan menggunakan soalan separa struktur menjadi kaedah utama pengumpulan data. Kajian ini melibatkan seramai 10 orang informan yang terdiri daripada dua kumpulan sasaran iaitu kumpulan cemerlang menerbit dan kumpulan kurang menerbit. Analisis dilakukan secara tematik. Keputusan kajian mendapati tiga faktor utama yang menyumbang kepada kecemerlangan penerbitan iaitu (i) peribadi (ii) iklim tempat kerja dan (iii) hubungan interpersonal di tempat kerja. Kesimpulan, kejayaan dalam menentukan kecemerlangan penerbitan memerlukan keseimbangan dan kesejahteraan persekitaran sosial. Saranan daripada kajian ini boleh dijadikan sandaran sebagai usaha membantu pihak pengurusan universiti untuk melonjakkan penerbitan dalam kalangan tenaga akademik universiti.

Kata kunci: penerbitan, tenaga pengajar, kajian kualitatif, analisis tema

Abstract: The excellence of academicians in universities at present is determined by several indicators, including the high number of publications. Academicians with a high number of publications will often be attentive to colleagues and employers for being able to bring a good reputation to the university. Administrators use publishing as one of the key criteria in measuring the competence of an academician and determining promotion. The study aims to explore factors that contribute to the performance of publishing among academic staff in UKM. This study uses a qualitative app inroach to collect and analyze findings. In-depth interviews using semi-structured questions are the primary means of data collection. This study involved a total of 10 informants consisting of two target groups which are excellent in publishing group and less excellent in publishing group. Analysis was conducted thematically. The findings show three main factors contributing to the excellence of publications namely (i) personal (ii) workplace climate, and (iii) interpersonal relationships in the workplace. In conclusion, success in determining excellence in publications requires the balance and well-being of the social environment. The recommendations of this study can be used as means to assist university management to increase publications among the academic staff of the university.

Keywords: publication, academicians, qualitative study, thematic analysis

I. INTRODUCTION

Although it has been widely known among those in the higher institutions that publication is not the only criteria in evaluating a lecturer, it is a fact now that this is the main focus in the arena of higher education within the country and abroad. This opinion is supported by Roy [1], stated that this kind of urge has caused the occurences of scams in the delivery of research results, plagiarisms in publications and the rapid growth of new journals merely for the intention of gaining profits through high payments of publications.

It is not easy to create the culture of writing and publishing within a short period of time. However, various attempts have been conducted to achieve this goal including giving rewards for each produced publication. The question is that to what extent that giving financial rewards could produce results? Jahani et al. [2] finds that reward systems and leadership are two important factors in the process of sharing knowledge among academicians. Rewards intended here are those in the intrinsic forms such as appreciation and growth in working paths rather than financial rewards [3]. At the same time, Jahani et al. [2] also states that any organisation needs to give in-depth attention towards mentoring systems since leadership is identified as a factor able to stimulate towards knowledge sharing.

Although developing countries contributed 25 percent of the world scientists suprisingly the number of publications they shared are very minimal which consisted only about 3 percent [4]. In sub-Saharan Africa the issue or research and publication is even worst [4]. Research conducted by Dessie and Mesfin [5] in Ethiopia amongst those in the university which include senior professors, PhD and Master degree holders as well as PhD students found eight themes in regards to researching and publishing challenges: (1) lack of conducive infrastructure and environment, (2) shortage of time, (3) lack of research tailored policy, (4) lack of effective institutional research management system, (5) low academic remuneration, (6) publication challenges, (7) access to internet and (8) lack of senior expert for mentoring.

As for the Malaysian context, publication has now become one of the most significant indicators for Malaysian researchers and academicians. In other words, publication count reflect research productivity, ranking of faculties and institutions, ascertain productivity of researcher/ academician and publication productivity of a research group [6]. In light of this Jusoff [7] was able to give a good representation of the current demands and responsibilities that an academician in Malaysia would have to partake; "Being an academician not only entails teaching, getting involved in students' affair and activities, but also conducting research, creating and innovating, providing professional services and up to this jucture, entrepreneurship" [6 p. 85]. Therefore, in constructing the relevant requirements and expectations for promotion in the

academic career path, writing and publishing are seen as one relevant way of tapping academicians' excellence. Nonetheless, this progressive effort of producing journal publications is dominated by academicians in public universities as compared to private universities, which means academicians in public universities published significantly more than their counterparts in private universities [8]. They found out that one of the main reason behind this was exclusion of publication as an indicator for performance particularly in these universities.

In UKM, generally all lecturers have a KPI divided into three main parts i.e. research (50%), teaching (30%) and community service (20%). For job promotion system, each fraction of the parts is known as track or path that needs to be chosen as the thrust of expertise. Therefore, when a lecturer wishes to apply for a job promotion, he needs to achieve 100 percent of the minimum achievement set within each track and in addition, needs to choose one of the three tracks mentioned previously as the thrust of expertise and obtain the minimum achievement of 70 percent within this track. For example, if a Senior Lecturer chooses the research track as his chosen track to escalate to the position of Associate Professor, then he needs to own 15 publications of journal articles indexed in ISI, Scopus or Era in which 10 articles need to be within the fields of his expertise and five of them need to have him as the main author or correspondent author.

II. STUDY OBJECTIVE

The objective of this study is to explore factors contributing to the performance of publication among academicians in UKM.

STUDY METHODOLOGY

Design
This study uses qualitative designs by adopting phenomenological approach to understand in greater depth the factors contributing to publications among lecturers. This approach is suitable to be used in finding themes that are able to explain the success of publishing by UKM lecturers in areas that are not yet explored by other researchers in great depth. Interviews are done until they reach the maximum level of saturation. Semi-structured questions suitable with the study objective are used as guidance when interviews are being conducted.

Sampling
This study involves ten informants who are giving service for more than ten years in Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia. The method of sampling is intended sampling which meets the set criteria. Informants are consisted of lecturers excellent in publishing for the first group identified through their personal publication track record managed by the university. Whereas the second group is consisted of lecturers who have not achieved the number of publications set by Malaysian Research Assessment (MyRA).

Data Analysis
This study of data analysis uses the thematic technique as proposed by Braun and Clarke [9]. This technique identifies themes by uniting components or fractions of ideas or experiences, which are less meaningful when perceived on their own [10]. The data collected by all researchers and completely transferred verbatimly, are analysed one by one after the interviewing sessions have been completely conducted. There are 48 early codes related to the success factors in publishing. From the results of these early codes, researchers start to develop suitable specific themes more systematically. Code theming reduces a lot of data into less categories but considered meaningful. In this study, researchers study the codes and there are some codes which can be clearly matched together to make up a theme. Following that, those themes are rearranged into wider themes which clearly show a meaning that describes the entire chosen themes by giving theme names that are more specific.

Usually, most themes are descriptive and describe data patterns that are relevant with the phenomenon of success in publishing. In the end, during the phase of polishing the themes, researchers give attention to the entire themes and themes' ability to answer the study's questions. The entire analysis steps are kept as audit trails to increase the credibility of this qualitative data study.

III. RESULTS

This study identifies three (3) main factors contributing to the excellence in publication i.e. personal, workplace environment and interpersonal relationships in the workplace. The following is the detailed description for the themes obtained.

Theme	Sub-theme
Personal	Internal Motivation
	Positive thinking
	Sense of responsibility
	Not affected by personal commitments
	Discipline and management skills
	Likes challenges
	Past experiences
Workplace environment	Clear work objectives
	Comfortable work space
	Good Administration
Interpersonal relationships at the workplace	Teamwork spirit
	Solid student supervision

Table 1: Themes and sub-themes

Personal
Personal themes contain seven sub-themes i.e. (1) internal motivation, (2) positive thinking, (3) sense of responsibility, (4) not affected by personal commitments, (5) discipline and management skills, (6) likes challenges and (7) past experiences.

Internal Motivation
Internal motivation can be perceived as the main factor that enables a researcher to publish prolifically. It has been identified from this study that within the internal motivation there are three main elements i.e. passion, satisfaction and craving to publish.

Passion is perceived as important because without passion an effort could fail to be executed successfully or could not be done at all. The passion itself needs to be in great depth so that any work could be executed successfully although with the presence of various challenges. For example, respondent C stated that a lecturer needs to have in-depth passion towards the job that he is doing to ensure success;

> Owh… I think there are no… no factors that could prevent publication, because to anybody, the important thing is, he must have, what we call it in English, passion for work. They will execute the work properly although

they need to do various tasks.

For some lecturers, they think that satisfaction is able to increase their internal motivation in the writing and publishing of journal articles. The satisfaction is felt after all challenges have been braved successfully in the effort of publishing a journal article. Satisfaction will be felt at greater length if the effort is done by oneself. This issue, as shared by respondent E4 in which he personally stated that he felt more satisfied when he published as single author; "But for me, I think I am still unsatisfied. I want to write my own stuff. But this year, I've had written two [journal articles] and these are mine. I feel like I'm relieved."

Several informants stated that their wish to write based on certain studies was so deep that it created joy to them when it was successfully executed.
These people have always owned the desire to write. If they don't write, they live as if life is not complete and perfect. This was admitted by respondent C6 who stated that writing, based on studies and has been nurtured since he started his PhD journey, is considered as 'blood and tears' in his life as a lecturer in a research university;

"It's all about research... and our true job is to teach… So, I don't know… I develop it since I did my PhD. Went home [after completed my PhD]… I am indeed hooked into writing. I like solving problems and I think if I don't write… I feel like there's something wrong with me. So, I don't know how… whatever it is I must write."

Positive Thinking

This is the second sub-theme. Someone who wants to succeed must always have a positive way of thinking. Without it, it would be impossible for anyone to excel. Lecturers in the university often complain about the burden and work pressure that they need to fac. However, for those who have experienced working in the private sector before continue work in the university, stressed out that they faced much higher pressure when working in the private sector; "…just ask our friends who had worked in the private sector and entered the government sector, all of them would agree with me, stating that private KPI is much more terrible" (R espondent C2). Having said that, university lecturers need to change their mindset to be more positive about the work load that has been put on their shoulders. This positive mindset is hoped to be able to help oneself in achieving the objectives given by the university for each of their lecturers.

Sense of Responsibility

Sense of responsibility is the third sub-theme. When someone receives a job offer, it means that individual is ready to shoulder the entire pertinent responsibilities. For a UKM staff, his true responsibility is towards the university, and at the same time he needs to adhere to the rules set by the government upon each of its staffs. For example, respondent C2 stated that as a university lecturer, that individual must adhere to each rule set by the university; "I have increased [the number of publications that need to be completed] because I see it that we have to adhere to the university… because the university pays us the wages… if we do not want to adhere to the university, who will adhere to the university." Each category of the staffs has been given its own KPI and it needs to be completed annually.

Not Affected by Personal Responsibilities

The element of personal responsibilities is the fourth sub-theme. For this factor, it has been heard more from male respondents whom housechores are handled completely by their wives. In this situation respondents are able to give their entire attention to their career. For example, respondent C1 shared about this matter whereby the housechores were completely managed by his wife. This gave him the freedom to manage matters related to his career to the fullest extent; "Well, we're talking about family, isn't it? I don't have any problems. Okay. So, it means I can come anytime. At what time I want to go to office. At what time I want to go home. I don't have any problems."

Discipline and Management Skills

Discipline and management skills are the following elements in the fifth sub-theme. Discipline and the skills to manage oneself towards publication are perceived as important. Among the important things to a lecturer in terms of increasing publication is to have involvement in the academia group at the global level such as being involved in the Research Gate and Academia group. A lecturer's profile should always be updated so that the academia community in the whole country could know what we are doing. This can be perceived as an important platform to market oneself and a research that is being conducted. For example, respondent C2 states that he is active in the Academia and for almost every day he opens the website, check it up and update it. From there he gets the opportunity to become a guest speaker on subjects related to his field of expertise;

Publishing is good because we become popular, like myself, I like the idea of Prof TNC [deputy Vice Cancellor] when we join ResearchGate and GoogleScolar… we get a lot of network, I've got a lot of network, sometimes they invite me as a guest speaker.

Apart from that, discipline should be present especially in completing certain matters including the writing of journal articles. This is important to ensure the target that has been set up is achieved. For example, respondent C5 states that when he is on a writing job, he comes home late. This might go on for four days in a week until the writing is completed; "Coming home late depends on the situation, if I say I am writing on something. For instance, when I am in the middle of completing a writing, here I usually come home at night. Usually in a week, maybe four times."

Likes Challenges

This is the sixth sub-theme. In every organization there must be its own challenges. The same scenario goes with a research university like Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia. One of its challenges is that it needs to compete in the ranking of world's best university. In UKM, a lecturer's KPI is divided into three sections, i.e. research, teaching and community service. For example, respondent C2 states that he likes the ranking because it determines the quality of a university in the eyes of the community. Therefore, quality needs to be taken care of so that it stays relevant;

If you ask me, I like the ranking because just like in

the privates, they look at the ranking as well, for instance if we want to deal with investment we need to look at the company's track record…if the university's rank drops who wants to send his child to the university. That's why these days many people prefer overseas… it's because of the ranking.

Past Experience

Past experience is the last sub-theme for the big theme –personal. Sometimes past experience could also give an impact to an individual after he moved into a new place. Past experience could give an impact either positive or negative to the current work scenario. For those who worked in the private sector before, they feel that the pressure and challenge at that workplace was much higher. Thus, when they enter the arena of education, although there are unique challenges, these are still considered less burdening compared to the private sector. For instance, respondent C2 stated that he had experienced working in the private sector for about three years before he joined the university. He stated that the challenge and pressure in the private sector was much higher than what he experiences at the moment;

Thus when I enter the semi-sector [semi-government], I am used to it because it's the norms in the privates. We've got a lot to deal with KPI. That is normal. Therefore, when I jump [change] into a university lecturer, I have the experience already.

Workplace Environment

Workplace environment is the second theme under the factors contributing to the excellence in publication. Workplace environment has four sub-themes i.e. (1) clear job objective, (2) comfortable work space and (3) good administration.

Clear Work Objective

Having clear work objective is the first sub-theme. Universities especially UKM have specified the KPI that needs to be fulfilled by each lecturer based on an annual target. This KPI target is meant to ensure that the ranking of the university is placed at a good level and that its function stays relevant. Apart from that, if every lecturer has his own KPI, this is perceived as something that is very good and advanced. For instance, respondent 1 makes his own KPI in which every year he needs to publish at least one publication with the ISI status whereby he becomes the main author;

I think each lecturer should have his own KPI… That, at least to publish one ISI a year by myself. Meaning, I am the one who does the writing. Not someone else who writes it. I can put other people's names. But I am responsible for one paper. So, at least, in one year you try to finish the paper and get it published.

Comfortable Work Space

Conducive work space is the second sub-theme. Comfortable work space is a very needful element in ensuring the quality and productivity of the work that is being carried out. Sometimes lecturers feel more comfortable to do or complete certain assignments in the office because the place is considered more comfortable and able to bring about the work productivity. To them, home is the place to rest and forget about work matters. This is shared by respondent 5:

It's because I don't like bringing home my work. If I am here, I just continue until the evening. So, if I write here

in the evening, the feeling remains the same. From daytime, to evening, night. So when I go home, I don't have to think about anything. When I go home, I just rest.

Apart from work space in the physical form, this sub-theme could also mean the support obtained from co-workers and the management team. Co-workers who are able to provide the needed support are perceived as important in the effort to move forward. This was voiced out by respondent 2 whereby he stated his gratitude for having support from co-workers who are able to work in a team as well as support from the management team in helping the implementation of the university's intention;

The co-workers must be those who share the same view point, great people who are not only good in talking… secondly I see the support coming from the management team because up until now they have helped a lot… for instance the CRIM… so my perception is that I don't have any problems with work environment, I even enjoy that kind of environment.

Good Administration

Good administration is the fourth sub-theme. Good administration is perceived able to stimulate the environment at the work place in which it is able to stimulate productivity. Good administration is rooted from leaders of caliber. For instance, respondent E4 stated that integrity is an important characteristic in ensuring good administration. In other words, a leader with integrity will always be accountable towards all affairs that he is involved in;

First, from the aspect of leadership, what is needed is someone with integrity. Integrity means when something comes up… we need to return to rules and avoid from doing something due to personal gain. What I mean is upon someone's interest especially the leaders. Based on my experience, when a leader is appointed, if he is someone with integrity, plus humanity, I think he will enormously provide a good environment.

Interpersonal Relationship at the Workplace

This is the third theme under the factors contributing to the excellence in publication. Interpersonal relationship at the workplace consists of two sub-themes i.e. (1) teamwork spirit and (2) solid student supervision.

Teamwork Spirit

This is the first sub-theme. Teamwork spirit is thought to be something that is needed in the effort of researching and publishing. This kind of spirit is able to support members of the group in the effort of helping each other. For example, respondent 2 admitted that he has a group consisting of several co-workers who support each other whereby the group was formed based on the trust of the members; "So the important thing is to create a team based on trust or in Chinese term… Guan Xi [close relationship and network]… So if there is a good team we can move forward… The dean's job is only to supervise and assist in the affairs."

Solid Student Supervision

Student supervision is one important aspect in ensuring the quality of future graduates. As graduate students of research, apart from completing the thesis, they also need to have

skills in publishing a journal. Due to that, a good supervisor needs to have the ability to guide students under his supervision to complete this assignment. In addition, the current requirement for students to graduate includes this skill. This was shared by respondent 2 who is experienced in supervising PhD students to publish in journals;

> For instance, a good PhD student is someone who is trainable, we can train him to take an easy article, for example the Sociological Journal… ask him to print out the format and start writing… ask him to follow the structure… at first just write in Malay Language… and then I will check and add points… he will need to repair it and when the article is complete, I will send it to my friend to be translated… just pay around one thousand plus and you can claim it from CRIM [Centre for Research and Instrumentation Management].

If a lecturer succeeds in supervising his students, the results from the effort could be able to bring in more new student candidates in the future. For example, respondent C6 informed that through word-of-mouth promotion by his students, there was a time when he had 15 students under his supervision; "Through word-of-mouth… among students… students kept coming in. By the end of the day, there was one time when I had 15 students at a time. So, the number kept increasing…"

IV. DISCUSSION

Discussion of the theme finding for the study above identified several factors influencing the performance of publication among academicians in UKM. The finding of the data is interesting due to two factors i.e. (1) factor clarification has a role in increasing the performance of academicians in publication and (2) similarity of these factors with the study that influences the academic performance in the university. Fulfilling the needs of publication is one of the performance criteria of an academician in its entirety the performance of publication is indeed influenced by individual interaction with his work environment.

Personal factor in this study is closely related with job satisfaction i.e. it refers to the attitude towards a job whether it fulfills the individual needs. It was clear that respondents in this study thought that the academicians' scope of work fulfills the needs of those really like to work in an environment that requires them to get involved in publication, research, writing and teaching. When these needs and wants are being fulfilled, the motivation and satisfaction increase. There are various motives determining the involvement of employees in work activities. Generally, workers work to fulfill their material and psychological needs. There are four categories explaining the involvement of workers in work activities: salary needs, leisure needs, promotional needs and desire to work. The time and effort put into the implementation of certain jobs are based on the attitude towards salary, leisure needs, promotion and desire to work [10]. Work motivation is determined by internal and external factors moving the work attitude, direction, duration and intensity. In other words, respondents of this study have internal motivation suitable with the objective of the university that is to emphasize on publication.

Workplace environment is also stated as the contributing factor towards publication including having clear work objectives, enough facilities and good administration. Past studies show that two-way interaction between employees and management, and the opportunity for academicians to involve in decision making can enable them to increase their work experience in terms of teaching, publishing and researching. It can't be denied that the process of decision making and way of implementation can give impact to the level of employee motivation. On the contrary, clear personal and/ or organization objectives is obviously having a potential to increase the organisation's productivy [11].

In this study's finding, comfortable work space has also been stated. Work environment that is not safe, and lack of facilities may influence the attendance, motivation and work effectiveness.

On the contrary, comfortable work environment with enough facilities and opportunities to interact may increase the motivation at the workplace. Brailsford [12] proposed that the university needs to prepare multimedia facilities for lecturers to be used in teaching. Training of the skills to use and conduct multimedia materials is needed to increase the motivation of academicians so that they can increase productivity. Physical working environment (tools, furniture), technological environment (work process, workplace arrangement, machine), social environment (worker attitude, behavior, rules, support, reward), political environment and workplace economy are elements identified to influence motivation, work satisfaction level, and performance [13]. To increase motivation among academicians, it is important for the university to determine work environment factors which could stimulate academicians to achieve the organisation's objectives. In this contex of study, it is clear that intrinsic and extrinsic factors influence the attitude and positive adjustments of academicians towards their job.

To increase publication, the university needs to understand the factors influencing academicians in publication. If the university still wishes to achieve excellence in publication, aspects that contribute to the efficiency of academicians need to be given attention. Apart from that, motivation to publish must always be applied within the academicians themselves. Motivation of academicians in publishing is very important because it provides impact to students and performance of the university. Academicians who fail to publish will influence the quality and performance of the university and after that the university's reputation. This study also succeeds in showing the strong factors of academicians. Thus, these facts can be used to improve the university's objective and prepare organizational development plans which are parallel with the needs of the organization and its workers.

TRIBUTE

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AUTHOR'S PROFILE

Nasrudin Subhi is a senior lecturer at Pusat Kesejahteraan Manusia dan Masyarakat (Centre for Human and Societal Well-Being), Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities, UKM. He completed his PhD in the field of Psychology from The University of Queensland, Australia. He is a registered counselor and obtained a certification of counseling practice from the Lembaga Kaunselor Malaysia (Board of Counsellors (Malaysia)). He is also the head at the Pusat Pemerkasaan Remaja (Centre for Youth Empowerment), Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia. Nasrudin involves in a lot of cross discipline research. Among his inclination of research are issues of LGBT, counseling, Orang Asli and at-risk youth. He is actively publishing in various forms of publications. In Google Scholar he has 267 quotes with the value of h-index 8.

Dr Nor Jana Saim is a Sennior Lecturer at Pusat Kesejahteraan Manusia dan Masyarakat (Centre for Human and Societal Well-Being), UKM. Graduated in Bachelor of Social Work (Medicine), Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities, UKM and Doctor of Philosophy in the field of Social Work from Umeå University, Sweden. She is a social worker and certified stress analyser based on voice. Her field of research is focused on unmarried mothers and families.

Dr. Salina Nen is the Senor Lecturer at Pusat Kesejahteraan Manusia dan Masyarakat (Centre for Human and Societal Well-Being), Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities, UKM. Graduated in Bachelor of Psychology (Counseling), UKM and Doctor of Philosophy in the field of Psychology from Victoria University of Melbourne, Australia. She is a practitioner in counseling and is a licensed counselor. Her field of research is focused on risky teenagers, sexual, rehabilitation and matrimonial.

astura Mahmud is a Professor at the Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM). She was the Deputy Dean of Research and Innovation for the faculty from 2014 until 2019. Before that she was the Head of Centre for Earth Observation, a centre of research excellence in the faculty. Her specialization is meteorology. She is also appointed by Department of Environment as expert member in developing ambience quality air standard in 2012. She is also the team member involved in preparing the green house gas inventory for Report of the National Communication to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC).

Dr.Norulhuda Bte Sarnon@ Kusenin is a Senior Lecturer at Pusat Kesejahteraan Manusia dan Masyarakat (Centre for Human and Societal Well-Being), Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities, UKM. Graduated in Bachelor of Developmental Psychology, UKM and Doctor of Philosophy in the field of Social Work from Universiti Sains Malaysia. Widely experienced in handling various intervention upon teenagers, children and families as well as contemporary crisis. Her latest research is in the field of risky teenagers and dysfunctional families.