

Power of perseverance

A STUDENT'S life will always be a roller coaster of ups and downs with unavoidable setbacks and problems.

Some will cave under the pressure and quit but there are others who would rather stick it out and continue working towards getting that scroll in their hands.

In the case of Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM) Bachelor of Communication graduate Rahmawati Nurdin, she fought the odds and never gave up.

The 23-year-old from Tawau worked part-time as a teacher and a product promoter to support her living expenses during her university days.

"I'm not from a rich family and was never able to get everything I wanted," she said.

Her dogged determination and independence, thanks to her father, prompted her to take on part-time jobs from the time she was in secondary school.

However, striking a balance between studying and managing two part-time jobs was no burden at all as the benefits far outweighed the toll it took on her time, said the beaming graduate. "It was rewarding as a teacher to help out students with their Bahasa Malaysia (BM), and equally fulfilling to be a promoter as it taught me how to effectively communicate and convince people," she added.

Rahmawati said the biggest challenge was managing her time as she had more on her plate than most other undergraduates.

She was thankful that her lecturers and employers were understanding about her situation and were there to motivate and support her all the way.

While their peers could concentrate on studying and getting involved in campus activities, student athletes had to contend with training sessions and competitions. Such was the predicament of 26-year-old Nurul Nadia Mahamud from UPM who had to extend her course by another three years.

The Business Administration graduate competed in the Asian Games 2010 in China, and the World University Games 2007 in Bangkok, Thailand, during her varsity days.

She was also sent for the World Taekwondo Federation Asian Taekwondo Qualification Tournament at the 2012 London Olympics in the United Kingdom, but did not get through.

Admitting that it wasn't easy dividing her time between being a student and an athlete, Nurul Nadia spoke of her daily regimen when she had to wake up at 5am to attend training in Bukit Jalil



Family pride: Jing Liang sharing his joy with the family after receiving his award.



That's my boy: Proud mum Lim Ngin Sio gets a kiss from Chan Siang.

before rushing to lectures at the university's campus in Serdang.

There were times when she did slip through the cracks though. It was simply impossible for her to prepare for exams or attend lectures when she was way at competitions.

Attributing her success to the support of her family, friends and lecturers, Nurul Nadia also thanked her coaches for "pushing her to achieve her dreams".

For national long distance runner, Karthik Jayaraman, juggling between training sessions and studying seemed much easier because he lived on campus, which was where

the training was held.

The Malacca native graduated with a Bachelor of Education (Physical Education) from UPM.

Keeping busy by being involved with varsity activities including UPM's Hindu Society, the sportsman credited his success to sheer determination and hard work.

"It's not easy to balance both studies and sports ... not everyone can do that," he added.

Karthik shared that he trained in the mornings, went to classes and resumed training in the evenings, sometimes skimming on sleep in order to complete all his tasks.

"It was challenging because most physical education subjects require vigorous activity that add on to the exhaustion at the end of the day," he shared.

Karthik said that it was possible to strike the right balance with proper time management skills.

Even with the right recipe for success, there are some who are dealt a severe blow as was the case with Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM) postgraduate student Dr Abd Aziz Sabran. He died of an illness about four months before his convocation.

His widow Nur Adila Md Jamil accepted the Doctorate in Public Health (Occupational Health) on his behalf, with her four children in tow.

She was eight months pregnant with their youngest child when Dr

Abd Aziz passed away.

Nur Adila said: "My husband would have wanted my children to aim for the stars and the scroll will be a constant reminder to them to attain their academic dreams."

She also shared her husband's views that knowledge paved the way for a better and brighter future.

Having a bosom buddy around helped medical graduates Ho Jing Liang and Kan Chan Siang survive their years in medical school.

In fact, both of them bagged top awards from UKM during the convocation ceremony held recently.

Jing Liang received the Vice-Chancellor's Award while Chan Siang received the Tun Abdul Razak Award.

Both claimed that their most memorable episodes, though sometimes unpleasant, were the times they were

ticked off by their superiors during their clinical years at the UKM Medical Centre.

"It actually toughened us up" said Jing Liang.

It wasn't a bed of roses either for Public Service Department scholar Chan Siang before he was accepted into the varsity.

Chan Siang's father suffered a stroke and could not work leaving the responsibility of managing the family's finances to his two older sons.

Both brothers took it upon themselves to partially support their sibling in varsity.

Chan Siang also shared how a patient he met during his stint at the hospital told him not to lose sight of his purpose in becoming a doctor.

"While I was clerking a patient, I let slip about my financial difficulties and my desire to work so that I could earn and make ends meet to support my family."

"She said that I must not just think of making money alone as my main purpose in taking up the profession was to care and treat people.

"It was a reality check and reminded me about why I chose to become a doctor in the first place," he added.

The beaming smiles on the faces of their loved ones was also a part of the reward for these graduates who put in countless hours of hard work.

"My family here is proud of me as I am the only doctor in my extended family," gushed Jing Liang

Graduate sportsman:

Karthik says he had to strike a balance between studies and sports.



Daddy's legacy: Adila (left) showing her late husband's degree to their young sons after the ceremony.