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Sixth Formers' advice to students

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Umesh Rajan
KOTA KINABALU: Faris Iskandar Chung Hermey Chung faced a steep learning curve due to a lack of early exposure to the public pre-university system as he finished his secondary level education in a private school.

The former SM Tshung Tsin student said that he would have chose matriculation after obtaining 8As and 2Bs for his Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia (SPM) examination but due to exposure limit about pre-university education at private high schools in Malaysia, he opted for STPM but did not regret his decision.

"It would be ideal if I was told about matriculation as the other option to enter IPTA here in Malaysia, unfortunately private high schools here just did not get any exposure.

When thinking back, I did not regret choosing to enter form six as three semesters of learning compared to two (for matriculation) give breathing room to cope with the learning as well as maturing required before entering university," he said.

The science stream student who achieved an impressive 3.75 CGPA in his recent STPM result, admitted that his internal fuel was his own ego, a quiet, fiercely private desire to be the best and command attention.

"Anyone who tries to maintain a very high standard in the rigorous science stream requires an intense mental sacrifice, like having a 'very imaginative mindset' to fully grasp subjects such as physics, chemistry, and engineering, where we could only rely on imagination to conceptualise invisible forces like gravity, for example.

"Science isn't something you can just memorise, you need an imaginative mindset to understand things you can't even see, like physics forces or how two chemical atoms interact with one another. So, when my brain couldn't imagine anymore,

"It is my default and necessary tactical retreat to have an off day once in a while, not only to refresh my mental state but also my physical and emotional well-being.

"Then once I feel better already, I keep my head down and catch up what I have missed by not only asking my coursemates but also chasing down my teachers. An advice to my STPM and SPM juniors out there, please never disrespect your teachers as learning from experience, to succeed in these two major exams, requires a strong bond with your teachers, you can not survive it alone," said Faris.

He set his eyes to be a chemical engineer, however he does have a secret dream to be a chef which he probably will pursue

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KTEKK top achievers in their respective streams (from L to R) Sim, Faris and Myzarah showing their STPM certificates.

if he retires from engineering early.

Myzarah Izzatul Akmah Mustapa, a social science student majoring in economics, her SPM achievement track record of 8As and 1B sets as her profound sense of filial duty en route to attaining a perfect 4.00 CGPA score.

Coming from an underprivileged background, she carried the heavy weight of financial hardship on her shoulders where instead of using it as an excuse to underachieve, she used it as the driving force to push herself to overachieve.

To cope with the overwhelming fear of failure, the 20-year-old lass adopted what she candidly describes as a 'toxic motivation'; a high-pressure mindset where she constantly pushed herself to the absolute limit in her pursuit for excellence.

"When you come from a poor family, you don't have the luxury of failing. Every time I sat at my desk feeling completely defeated, I would close my eyes and see my parents' faces. I forced myself to be stressed because that stress was the only thing loud enough to drown out my exhaustion. I told myself I had to be the best, no matter," she said.

Whenever she faced disappointment or felt her efforts falling short of the high expectations set by herself, it was the thought of making her parents proud that anchored her. Now aiming for a career in the banking sector, Myzarah has set her sights on major public universities including Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM), Universiti Pendidikan Sultan Idris (UPSI), and

ing the steep mountain of STPM which against the odds, he achieved a flawless 4.00 CGPA.

His struggle was deeply tied to the tough childhood environment he experienced at home where his father, a manual labourer, spent his days lifting heavy bags of cement at construction sites, returning home completely broken by fatigue.

"I used to go to work with my father, and watching him lift those heavy bags of cement broke my heart every single day. When I felt like giving up in class, I would tell myself I am crying over a book, but my father is bleeding over cement.

"Motivated by my father's determination to continuously provide for his family, I was determined to change our family's story. I want my father to grow old spending time playing with his future grandchildren, not with cements," he said.

To overcome the crushing burnout of the fast-paced form six syllabus, he turned to what he called 'Islamic motivation' where he prayed daily, asking for the strength to keep on going with his studies.

"When the exhaustion became too heavy, I cried to Allah at night. That was my escape. I would take a nap for a whole day

if I had to, pray for strength, and then get right back to study. Time is your biggest obstacle during STPM, so you must manage it wisely, but never forget to ask God for help when your own strength fails," he added.

Driven by empathy and a love for storytelling, he has dedicated his future to molding the next generations by pursuing to be a teacher and has placed UPSI as both his first and second choices to pursue further the path of education as his career.

Despite their completely different backgrounds, academic streams, and motivational triggers, all three achievers share a unified message for future Form 6 juniors: do not be afraid.

Whether driven by the need to escape poverty, a quiet personal ego, or deep spiritual faith, these three students prove that STPM is not just an academic exam, but a profound test of character.

Their journeys serve as a powerful narrative for the nation, a reminder that while talent may be distributed unequally, the power of resilience, strategic rest, and small daily steps can move mountains and lift families out of the hardest circumstances.



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SUMMARIES

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