



EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW WITH USM VICE CHANCELLOR



Professor Dato' Dr Asma Ismail, the first female Vice Chancellor of Universiti Sains Malaysia has inspired many young scholars, students and women who would like to leave a positive impression on society that they live in. Despite all the challenges and provocations that women face on their way to success, we believe that this exclusive interview will have an impact for those who want to break the glass ceiling and make their way to have an impact on communities. Empowering a community encompasses not only men but also women who share half of the population. This featured interview will definitely shed some lights on the issues that women struggle with from Prof. Asma's perspectives.

higher position is not so promising here. Malaysian women should promote their achievements as a key factor in their career development in order to be successful. Employers must ensure that equal opportunities are given to all and recognise and extend their skills and ambitions irrespective of their gender.

3. IT HAS BEEN REPORTED THAT MALAYSIA HAS NOT ACHIEVED 30 % WOMEN IN DECISION MAKING POSITIONS YET, WHAT DO YOU PERSONALLY THINK ABOUT THIS?

I think the progress is slower in private sectors compared with the achievement made in the government sectors. This might be because of not having a firm law to support them and also to give the private sectors the enthusiasm to support women in decision making positions.

4. WHAT ARE GENDER INITIATIVE POLICIES THAT YOU THINK USM SHOULD TAKE?

USM has a female friendly environment as a work place and also as a place for students from a gender perspective in terms of gender equality. We have tried to tackle any unfairness if any exists. As for gender initiatives, it will be very useful to conduct awareness-raising activities on sexism and gender equality in order to give knowledge on sexual harassment for instance or violence against women and how to solve them. We also need to have programs to unveil female talents and guide them through a path which leads to their development. Only then, we can expect women to be equipped with enough courage to opt for leadership positions. Another activity which will help women is Career Coaching workshops. Women as wives and mothers may require different career guidance than men. They need proper career coaching to make sound decisions and support them in their career planning. The other important issue that I would like to mention is that in our committees, we never look at gender balance. Gender parity is not there. For instance in terms of R&D grants evaluation, we do not have a gender balanced committee. Because there is a difference in how women and men evaluate grant applications. Committee members usually look at merits; but, they are not looking at who is the person who has applied. Because if it is a women applying for the grant, nobody pays attention to what she has gone through to write this grant proposal. But if we had a gender balanced evaluation committee, then they would consider all these issues that women face to come up with a grant proposal. However, in many other countries, they give 50 marks to the applicants if they are women and then look at the merits. And the committee that evaluate grants has gender parity which enables them to look at the applications from different angles.

1. HOW DO YOU DEFINE EQUALITY IN A GENDER CONTEXT?

Equality in a gender context refers to the equal access to resources and opportunities regardless of being a male or a female. Gender equality does not mean that women and men are the same or must become the same. It means that women and men should enjoy the same status and have equal opportunity to realize their full human rights and potential to contribute to development. Eliminating gender-related discrimination is a cross-cutting issue that impacts all aspects of development. Gender equality is also an important element in sustainable development, human rights and also the fight against poverty. Nevertheless, achieving that equality is not a simple task because it requires eradicating all harmful practices against women and girls, like sex trafficking for instance. But, it is possible to achieve a satisfactory level.

2. TO WHAT EXTENT DO YOU BELIEVE THAT MALAYSIA HAS ACHIEVED GENDER EQUALITY SO FAR?

It is very promising and at the same time encouraging to see that in Malaysia almost half of all the researchers are female. The United Nations has acknowledged that Malaysia has achieved success in encouraging girls and women to participate in science. The percentage of Malaysian female researchers is higher than that of some countries in Asia and also in the world. Although Malaysia, among many other countries leads the path, we still need more women to aspire to top leadership positions in their career or politics for instance. The number of women in

5. IN TERMS OF LEADERSHIP, IS THERE ANY DIFFERENCE BETWEEN LEADERSHIP BY MEN AND LEADERSHIP BY WOMEN?

It is clear that women and men have different abilities and skills because biologically and psychologically they are born different. But it does not mean that they cannot hold the same leadership positions. All leaders share certain traits such as being ambitious, intelligent and organized regardless of gender. At the same time, women and men have different strategies of applying all these personal abilities in their management and leadership policies. That is why we do need both women and men in high positions to maintain a healthy balance in decision making. Moreover, having a balanced number of women and men in leadership positions, adds respected value to the leadership trend. Because they both have the ability to develop qualities and skills to transform as leaders via different strategies. However, there is a very prominent difference between leadership by women and leadership by men. Women as leaders, have motherly instinct and women believe in participatory leadership to discuss in order to reach a consensus. They do not follow dictatorship. We have dialogues and lots of counselling as well. In running of a university or any establishments it is very important to get buy in with the people. Because when you do that, then you will get consensus and majority will follow the idea what you need to do. Women per se, especially me when I do things, I believe in consensus. I believe in discussions with my top managements. And I have discussions and meetings every week so that to make decisions as a team. But, in many cases women when they become leaders they become manly. They try to follow men's style in their leadership in order to be accepted by other men which is totally wrong. You are able to be a successful leader through applying participatory discipline. That is what I strongly believe in.

6. AND FOR THE LAST QUESTION, HOW DO YOU POSITION YOURSELF IN SOCIETY?

I believe that every successful leader did what he or she was afraid to do in the first place. But, instead of giving in to the fear, they just did it. If you acknowledge your fear which may range from the fear of a small insect to the fear of success, then you can step into making big decisions and make a change. A female leader should know that being in this position gives her a more responsible role that she needs not only to have superior performance, but also to make a positive impact and leave an inspirational impression. In order to do that, you, as a female leader, need to keep inspiring the other women and build their confidence.

GLOSSARY DISCIPLINE



Gender Parity

Gender parity concerns relative equality in terms of numbers and proportions of women and men, girls and boys, and is often calculated as the ratio of female-to-male values for a given indicator. <https://eige.europa.eu/rdc/thesaurus/terms/1195>

Gender parity is a statistical measure that compares a particular indicator among women, like average income, to the same indicator among men. Measuring gender parity, especially how it changes over time, gives policy makers and researchers a sense of whether we are progressing or regressing in any given area, and this is an important tool for anyone working toward gender progress. <https://www.newamerica.org/weekly/edition-174/what-gender-parity/>

Leadership and Women

Women appear less committed than men to climbing the leadership ladder due to some challenges that they face. Besides family considerations, there are gender biases that hinders women's success in leadership. Women who opt for leadership are seen overly ambitious or aggressive and some are evaluated as 'unfeminine'. The main reasons for women's limited access to authority and leadership are the important issues of gender biases and gender differences. For the first one, women should demand equality. And for the second one, they should ask for recognition of gender differences (Rosenbach, 2018)*.

*Rosenbach, W. E. (2018). *Contemporary issues in leadership*. Routledge.

Theme: '#PressforProgress' – International Women's Day 2018 Fun Costume Walk

On 19 March 2018, KANITA celebrated International Women's Day (IWD) at Padang A, Universiti Sains Malaysia, Pulau Pinang. This program has been officiated by Y. Bhg. Prof. Datuk Dr. Asma Ismail, Vice Canselor of USM. This year, KANITA celebrated International Women's Day through a different activity which was Fun Costume Walk. It was open to all USM staff and students and also to the public for free. This celebration was co-host by Pusat Sejahtera USM, Persatuan Wanita USM, Jabatan Pembangunan Wanita (JPW) and Students Representative Council of USM.

We started the program with a warming up session, conducted by Dr. A.S.Hardy, Dean, School of Arts and his team, followed by a speech from KANITA's Director, Professor Dr. Noraida Endut. Warming up session was also accompanied by the Director of Jabatan Pembangunan Wanita (JPW), Penang and also Nestle area Manager who was one of our sponsors for this event.

It was the first time that a total of 120 people participated in this celebration at USM. In this event, we also offered some prizes for the best outfit and in this category, three staff won by wearing their tutu skirts, village women's clothes and melons. Medals and roses were given to the first 100 participants who arrived at the finish line. The event ended around 11.30 am with joy in everyone's face.

KANITA HIGHLIGHTS 2018

Lactation Room in KANITA

On January 5th 2018, KANITA has officially taken the initiative to provide Lactation Room facilities aimed at providing convenience, comfort and support to nursing mothers and also encouraging breastfeeding. The Lactation Room was launched by the Vice-Chancellor, Professor Dato' Asma Ismail. The Room is a symbol of KANITA's support to ensure women and mothers continuously stay in service at USM and have access to a private space with adequate time to pump breastmilk at work. KANITA believes that providing a space for women to pump and express their milk will make happier and productive female employees. It is also a part of USM's gender initiative to look into the welfare of working mothers in USM. USM believes that this facility will help produce better female employees and ensure that their productivity is not affected when returning to work after delivery. The room is equipped with electrical connection facilities to charge pumping equipments, chairs, tables, curtains and a small fridge to store milk supplies that ensures the comfort of mothers. As mentioned in Vice-Chancellor's New Year speech, this initiative has to be taken by other faculties and departments so that women would feel that they are valued and their welfare is well-maintained in their workplace, USM.



World Breastfeeding Week 2018

Date: 1-7 August 2018 | Venue: USM, Penang



Every year, countries around the world celebrate World Breastfeeding Week and this year's theme is 'Breastfeeding: Foundation of life'. For the first time, KANITA has celebrated the World Breastfeeding Week 2018 with the help from co-organizers: Pusat Sejahtera; Persatuan Wanita; Pusat Islam; Universiti Sains Malaysia and WABA. Several programs were held throughout the week including meeting with Heads of Departments in USM Penang discussing the importance of lactation rooms in strategic places in campus, aiming to cater the needs of USM staff returning to work after confinement; Baby Wearing Walk where a group of mothers and their children and also other women and men took part in a short walk around USM Penang hoping to raise awareness on breastfeeding among USM staff; Tuck Shop where people donated foods (such as pasta and cakes) for charity food sale to raise funds to equip lactation rooms; and two seminars on: Intercultural Breastfeeding Experiences, a sharing session on breastfeeding experiences from Iranian, Bangladeshi, Malay, Chinese and Indian culture; and in Getting Dads Involved,

targeting USM male staff especially fathers and fathers-to-be in motivating them to be involved in and support breastfeeding practices.

JOURNAL CLUB KANITA 2017-2018

The first Journal Club (JC) meeting was held on 28th of August 2017. Coordinated by our visiting scholar Dr Courtney Welton-Mitchell, the meeting was attended by KANITA postgraduate students and lecturers to share their insights and knowledge about research-related topics. The general purpose of this academic meeting was to facilitate the review of journal papers and discuss its ideas for scientific practice. Besides providing an opportunity to keep abreast with recent literatures on methodologies or theoretical frameworks, the club also encouraged students to speak up and learn to critique academic papers. The members of the JC were assigned journal articles based on specific area of research or methodology for presentation and discussion. JC members who volunteered to present the articles were given 15-20 minutes to complete their presentations. Following that, the members engage in a Q&A and discussion session. The sessions were able to stimulate participants to explore and evaluate new or past research and its applicability to their own studies by sharing their ideas. JC was a good platform for students and scholars to critically analyse research papers in order to gain a better understanding of the research process.

Date	Time	Presenter	Topic
28/8/2017	9.30- 11.30 am	Dr Courtney Welton-Mitchell	Feminist Approaches to Multimethod and Mixed Methods Research: Theory and Praxis
19/09/2017	9.30-11.30 am	Dr Courtney Welton-Mitchell	Benefits of mixed methods research Considerations in adapting surveys cross-culturally
10/10/2017	9.30-11.30 am	Senutha PRatthinan	Reflections on Researcher Identity and Power: The Impact of Positionality on Community Based Participatory Research (CBPR) Processes and Outcomes
14/11/2017	9.30-11.30 am	Dr Leila Mohajer	Questionnaire Design from a Cross-Cultural Perspective: An Empirical Investigation of Koreans and Non-Koreans
21/2/2018	2.30-4.30 pm	Farah Aziz	Gender and the Construction of Authenticity and Hospitality: A Study of Homestay Pulau Aman, Penang
7/3/2018	2.30-4.30 pm	Goo	Work Intensification and Turnover Intention in Academia: The Mediating Role of Work-life Balance
15/5/2018	9.30-11.30 am	Mazidah	Innovation in entrepreneurship from a gender perspective: A case study of student entrepreneurs at USM.
28/6/2018	2.30-4.30 pm	Haja Mydin	Representations of Masculinity & Patriarchy: Exploring Malaysia's TV Advertisements Data
12/7/2018	2.30-4.30 pm	Dr Courtney Welton-Mitchell	JC Summary & Report on Intimate Partner Abuse intervention research with Rohingya communities in Gombak district

HARPSWELL ASEAN PROGRAM IN WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP

24 JUNE – 5 JULY 2018

Harpswell ASEAN Program in Women's Leadership is an annual two week Program in women's leadership. This is a collaboration training between Harpswell Foundation and KANITA. After a successful pilot training program in 2017, the 12-day training was scheduled 24 June-5 July 2018 and attended by 22 accomplished young women from all ten ASEAN nations, plus Nepal. We also welcomed back four alumnae who helped us throughout our Program to build out the alumnae network.

In this Program, the participants participate actively in different classroom activities and give short talks about the issues that women face in their countries and throughout the lectures, the trainers give them the insight on how to tackle the barrier that gender discrimination has created. They also share their experiences and talk about notable leaders in their home countries who have inspired them.



We have interesting topics including gender studies, Southeast Asian government and society women's health leadership skills critical thinking, , debate, , civic engagement, , and communications and technology. We had an amazing group of professors, scholars and business leaders as our trainers. The aim of the program is to bring about positive social change in Southeast Asia through the action and equal participation of women.

This year, we welcomed notable guest speakers, including former Chief Minister of Penang Tan Sri Dr. Koh Tsu Koon, former Minister of International Trade and Industry Tan Sri Datin Paduka Rafidah binti Aziz, and entrepreneur Paul Flowerman. The Participants had a visit to Pulau Aman to have contacts with local female entrepreneurs. They also had a fruitful visit to the Women's Center for Change (WCC).

KANITA International Conference on Gender Studies (KICGS 2018)

The 4th KANITA International Conference on Gender Studies (KICGS 2018) with the theme "Press for change: reimagining and co-creating women's empowerment" was held on 27th – 28th November 2018 in Universiti Sains Malaysia, organized by the Centre for Research on Women and Gender, KANITA. This conference aimed to be an opportunity to press for change, discuss issues regarding women's empowerment, reimagining and co-creating women's empowerment in this challenging time. Students, young scholars, experienced researchers, and gender activists locally and internationally from more than ten countries presented and shared their research, knowledge and experiences in relevant subjects via interdisciplinary approaches. KANITA was proud to have Prof Emeritus Saparinah Sadli from Indonesia and Prof. Aurora Javate de Dios from the Philippines as the inspirational keynote speakers who kindly took the time to share and add some of their wisdom and insight into KICGS 2018.

Workshop on Researching Women and Society (RWS 2018)

The Researching on Women and Society (RWS) workshop was held in Dewan Persidangan Universiti on 29 November 2018, to bring together students and young scholars all over the world to share insights and experiences in researching women and gender issues. This workshop aims at an understanding on how a gendered approach to research enhances our understanding of how society works. It also offers practical insights into doing social research, as well as a platform for discussion on related gender issues.

Dato' Dr. Wazir Jahan Karim, the 1st KANITA director was invited to give a keynote address entitled "Engendering Research and Advocacy (era): Methodologies for the Advancement of Gender Equality (4ge)". This workshop continued with the panel discussion, on "Sharing Research Experiences: From the Eyes of Women Researchers". The panellist are Dr. Radziah Adam (USM), Dr. Sharifah Syahirah Syed Sheikh (KUPTM) and Dr. Wan Zumusni Wan Mustapha (UiTM).

For the afternoon session, three concurrent workshops were held. The first workshop was on Gendered Perspectives in Community-Based Participative Development Research, by Dr. Ahm Belayeth Hussein; the second workshop was facilitated on How to Publish in Scholarly Journals by Prof. Dr. Shakila Abd. Manan and but not least, the third workshop by Assoc. Prof. Dr. Nor Hafizah Selamat on Developing Grantsmanship Skill: Proposal Writing for Grant Applications.




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KANITA FAMILY NEWS



Prof. Dr. Noraida Endut

KANITA took the opportunity to congratulate Prof. Dr. Noraida Endut for appointed as Professor, beginning December 2017.



Dr. Ahm Belayeth Hussain

KANITA hereby welcome Dr. Belayeth back to the Centre for Research on Women and Gender (KANITA) as a Teaching Fellow.



Dr. Reyhaneh Bagheri

Congratulations to Dr. Reyhaneh Bagheri for being appointed as a Teaching Fellow for the Centre for Research on Women and Gender (KANITA). We hope that your contribution to KANITA and Universiti Sains Malaysia will be inspiring for everyone.



Dr. Vimalaswari Ramasamy, Dr. Montawadee Krutmechai & Mr. Goo Chuan Chiew

We would like to take this opportunity to congratulate Dr. Vimalaswari, Dr. Montawadee and Mr Goo Chuan Chiew for their graduation on October 2018. KANITA wishes you all the best in your future undertakings.



Associate Professor Dr. Magdalene Ang Chooi Hwa

KANITA would like to take this opportunity to express our heartfelt gratitude to Dr. Magdalene Ang who retired as KANITA Lecturer on 10th September 2018. She has served as KANITA Lecturer since 1st July 2015. Dr. Magdalene contribution towards KANITA during her journey with us is much appreciated. KANITA thanks her for all her contributions and may she be well and healthy always.



Mr. Ahmad Yasri Yahaya

Congratulations to KANITA's Operation Assistant, Ahmad Yasri Yahaya and his wife, Nurul Sakinah on the birth of their son, Ahmad Yafiq Ayaz on 16th June 2018.

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