



INTERNATIONAL  
UNIVERSITY OF  
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2021

# RECENT READS

ARTICLE REVIEW COMPILATION  
BY IUMW ACADEMICS

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By Learning & Teaching Committee, IUMW

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Email: [enquiry@iumw.edu.my](mailto:enquiry@iumw.edu.my)

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**Editor-in-Chief:**

Nurul Nisa Omar

**Associate Editor:**

Shahril Efzueni Rozali  
Che Nur Amalina S. Che Zainal

**Contributors:**

Amina Syarfina Abu Bakar  
Zulfazli Rosli  
Aminuddin Baharudin  
Ong Chong Boon  
Nanthini Jayaram  
Shahril Efzueni Rozali  
Elilarasi Letshmanan  
Mahadi J Murat  
Safrena Noreen Abd Malek  
Asha Nair  
Muhammad Asri Ahmad  
Noorul Akma Mat Amin  
Muhammad Ridzuan Abdul Aziz  
Norizzati Bahsri  
Serene Yong Jing Yi

Muhammad Shawal Abdul Rashid  
Hafiz B Hassan  
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Murni Mohamad  
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Sharmila K. N. Sethumadavan  
David Tong Yoon Kin  
Tan Jian Heng  
Nur Raihan Abd Rahim  
Farah Hida Sharin  
Jasmine Ahmad  
Azbariyah Ajit@Abd Aziz

**Special Mention:**

Aminuddin Baharudin  
Communication Department, IUMW

## **PREFACE:**

We are pleased to present the first volume of Recent Reads.

Reading and writing is a requirement, not an option, to be a successful academician. Without good writing skills and a large reading repertoire, there is little chance for a lecturer to be established or to be known as an expert in their field.

Recent Reads is a compilation of article reviews that covers a variety of topics and genres written by the IUMW academicians. These articles were published in the university's bi-weekly newsletter, IUMW Pulse. It contains 34 article reviews from a broad range of materials; novels, books, journal articles, biography, etc, and across multiple disciplines; Business, Arts, Sciences, Communication, Psychology, etc.

I believe that all articles published in this issue will have a great contribution to the academic and professional field among the lecturers. It does not only provide knowledge and information about the materials but also authors' perception and reflection. I would like to say thank you to all academicians who have published their articles in this volume.

**Nurul Nisa Omar**

Editor-In-Chief

Head, Learning & Teaching Committee

International University of Malaya-Wales

Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

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# ART EXPRESSIONS: SPIRITUAL JOURNEY

Topic: Art Theraphy

Author: Amina Syarfina Abu Bakar

amina@iumw.edu.my

Faculty of Arts and Science

REPUBLIC OF INDIA! Always have a special place in my heart. One of the greatest countries that are truly infused in art and rich culture that makes India such an exceptional place. The journey from South to North of India is not your typical tourist luxury experience.

The highlight of my trip was visiting the superb iconic Mogul architecture which is Taj Mahal that is situated in the city of Agra, in capital of Delhi. Taj Mahal, amongst the most spectacular icons of saintly art in Asia, is equivalent to the expressions of Renaissance and Gothic architecture, seen in western continent. Historians in the city explained how magnificent the history of Emperor Shah Jahan built it for his wife Mumtaz Mahal, a Persian princess. The whole building is painted with calligraphy on the exterior wall on the black and white marble with one whole holy book of Al-Quran text. Beautifully sculpted with flowery thuluth script by over 20,000 artisans worked on the project including from Persia and Syria.

Seeing the art in India makes me realised how huge and spiritual the sacred sites and traditions of the world. I had the chance to experience the Holi Festival which is the festival of love and colour that celebrates the eternal love of sacred Radha Krishna. Deeper understanding of mysterious yet it was a wonderful celebration! Ancient culture of India is spectacular from the history of meditation, yoga, spiritual philosophy and traditional music becoming more aware of who we are and the purpose of beautiful life. How India's spiritual side may help you discover your own divine essence and far deeper experience on every level!

References:

Knapp, S. M. (2020). *Seeing Spiritual India, A Guide to Temples, Holy Sites, Festivals and Traditions*. The World Relief Network Publisher.  
<http://mylib.org/book/5211100/b60060>

# TO INFINITY AND BEYOND!

Topic: Astronomy

Author: Zulfazli Rosli

zulfazli@iumw.edu.my

Centre of Foundation, Language and Malaysian Studies

I would like to take this wonderful opportunity to share what my focus has been these past two years. So yeah, I do star-formation stuff, which means what it implies, studying how stars are born. To be more specific, I focus on massive stars at least ~5 – 8 times the size of our Sun which has their differences, and FYI, the sun is relatively a little star, or we call it a low-mass star. Let's look at how these magnificent giants of creation are born.

Twinkle twinkle little star, how I wonder what you are...

The absolute opposite! Stars are behemoth spheres of extremely hot gas predominantly made up of hydrogen and helium (the reason they get SO HOT). Hydrogen and helium are burned through nuclear fusion, which makes stars, yes even the “little ones” a fireball of nuclear explosions.

(1) A baby star or Protostar are born in stellar nurseries, which are Giant clouds of dust called nebulae. (2) The force of gravity pulls together all this dust and (3) increases at extreme temperatures and pressure forming a protostar. (4) And the process keeps on going until the core gets hot enough to initiate nuclear fusion and BOOM, (5) a star is born!

Depending on its mass, A stars life will either be short or long and there are also special conditions that lead to planetary formation. Yes, planets are formed as a spin-off from star-formation. But that is a story that I would share for another day. Cheers!

References:

*Stars / Science Mission Directorate.* (n.d.). Nasa Science: Share the Science. <https://science.nasa.gov/astrophysics/focus-areas/how-do-stars-form-and-evolve>

# THE SCIENCE BOOK: BIG IDEAS SIMPLY EXPLAINED

Topic: Biology

Author: Aminuddin Baharudin

aminuddin@iumw.edu.my

Centre of Foundation, Language and Malaysian Studies

I've always thought of myself as a science nerd. Despite bad memories of organic chemistry and everything related to electrical circuits, science has always fascinated me. This fascination tends to grow to unhealthy levels, sometimes Stockholm-syndrome unhealthy. Science has a way to make me feel so small in the universe, so ignorant, so insignificant, but it is, SO, COOL.

The Science Book is a compilation of key scientific discoveries across centuries that shaped our understanding of everything, from 585 BCE, when Thales of Miletus predicted the eclipse of the Sun that led to end of the Battle of Halys, to the discovery of the Higgs boson in 2012. For the purpose of this write-up, I'd like to highlight one of my favourite discoveries.

Over the past several decades, there has been some debate on the significance of life. Why are we brought here on the planet? Is it a miracle, or a result of complex and strict conditions, slowly taking place over the course of billions of years? Based on the number of words, you could probably guess it's the latter. In 1953, Harold Urey and Stanly Miller replicated Earth's early atmosphere in the laboratory, which generated compounds essential to life. Using better equipment than was available in 1953, scientists detected that Urey and Miller's experiment had produced at least 25 amino acids, more than what is naturally found around us. Subsequent experiments have further expanded on this experiment and created richer cocktails of organic compounds. The fact that the building blocks of life can be consistently created from a lab experiment shows that life is not simply a miracle.

This book is full of such wonders, simplified for the masses. Complex theories and concepts are broken down to their core into a somewhat fun and casual read. Apart from Biology, there are other fields of science such as Computer science, Meteorology, Cosmology. Being 352 pages long, you can imagine the number of discoveries jam-packed into The Science Book. I definitely recommend picking this up at your nearby book shops. I got mine from MPH book store.

## References:

Colson, R., Hallinan, C. and John, D. (Eds) (2015). *The Science Book: Big Ideas Simply Explained*. London, UK: Dorling Kindersly Ltd.

# GREEN TEA: A FAD OR A REAL HEALTH BOOSTER?

Topic: Food Biotechnology  
Author: Ong Chong Boon  
ongchongboon@iumw.edu.my  
Faculty of Arts and Science

Green tea is a popular leaf usually consumed as infusion with pleasant taste. There have been numerous health-benefit claims for almost everything, from weight loss to cancer prevention. Some of them are misleading, but the main reason why green tea has been a great interest in recent years is that most have been scientifically proven!

Green tea is anti-aging. Green tea polyphenols in cosmetic formulations for skin care are able to protect against UV irradiation-stimulated skin photoaging such as hyperpigmentation and wrinkling. Green tea improves dental health. Drinking of green tea infusion has valuable effects on oral tissues and it prevents oral diseases such as dental caries, periodontal disease and halitosis. Green tea is calming. Green tea consumption could influence psychopathological symptoms (e.g. reduction of anxiety), cognition (e.g. benefits in memory and attention) and brain function (e.g. activation of working memory). Green tea may lower your risk of Alzheimer's and Parkinson's. Green tea catechins have the potential to be used in the prevention and treatment of neurodegenerative diseases such as cognitive dysfunction and memory loss. Green tea may help you live longer. High consumption ( $\geq 5$  cups/day) of green tea is associated with lower risk for all-cause mortality in men and women, especially for cancer, heart and cerebrovascular diseases.

These are only a few of many health benefits of green tea. If you have not been drinking green tea for its pleasant taste, unawarely, the benefits far outweigh the taste.

## References:

Mhatre, S., Srivastava, T., Naik, S., & Patravale, V. (2021). Antiviral activity of green tea and black tea polyphenols in prophylaxis and treatment of COVID-19: A review. *Phytomedicine*, 85, 1–8.  
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.phymed.2020.153286>

# CLOVES AND CLUES TO ITS ANTI-COVID-19 UTILITY

Topic: Biotechnology  
Author: Nanthini Jayaram  
nanthini.jayaram@iumw.edu.my  
Faculty of Arts and Science

It was Saturday noon, and I was ready to get my weekend groceries as usual. Just as I was about to get into my car, my mother ran up to me and handed me a few cloves, saying, "Chew this and it might help you stay safe from that virus." I simply did as she asked, but my mind began to wonder about it.

As soon as I got home, I started reading about cloves and their benefits. Some studies are being conducted to investigate the potential role of cloves in the prevention of Covid-19. The majority of my attention was drawn to a review article written by Vicidomini and colleagues (2021) on the 'Molecular Basis of the Therapeutical Potential of Clove (*Syzygium aromaticum* L.) and Clues to Its Anti-COVID-19 Utility.'

The researchers began this paper by discussing different corona virus variants and the severity of infections. In this paper, the origins of clove, its nature as an herbal medicine, and its active constituents were discussed further. Clove has long been used as a traditional remedy for respiratory problems. Previous research on cloves' anti-inflammatory, immunostimulatory, and antithrombotic properties was presented in detail. Cloves have also been studied for their well-known antiviral properties.

Cloves are currently being studied extensively in the fight against COVID-19 due to the aforementioned properties and effects. Because cloves are common spices that can be found in most of our homes, there is no harm in including them in our diets from time to time as a preventative measure!

## References:

Vicidomini, C., Roviello, V., & Roviello, G. N. (2021). Molecular Basis of the Therapeutical Potential of Clove (*Syzygium aromaticum* L.) and Clues to Its Anti-COVID-19 Utility. *Molecules*, 26(7), 1880. (<https://doi.org/10.3390/molecules26071880>)

# IN VITRO RED CARROT CELLS AS POTENTIAL NUTRACEUTICAL SUPPLEMENTS

Topic: Biotechnology

Author: Shahril Efzueni Rozali

shahrilefzueni@iumw.edu.my

Faculty of Arts and Science

Plants cells have become of great interest to the cosmetics industry as a source of novel polyphenol-based anti-ageing ingredients. The sustainable production of these bioactive compounds from the *in vitro* grown plant cells offer many advantages over conventional agricultural production, according to a tissue culture study in red carrot published on October 2020 in *Frontiers in Bioengineering and Biotechnology*.

The industrial potential of carrot cell extract to be utilized as safe and sustainable sources for the development of cosmetic ingredients and nutraceutical supplements has led the author to compare their red carrot cell line R4G with the natural red carrot extracts available on the market. The R4G cell line was selected based on high accumulation of polyphenols with known antioxidant and anti-inflammatory activities.

In this study, they focused on the suitability of the extract produced from the pigmented carrot cell line as a cosmetic ingredient and nutraceutical food additive. The mouse monocyte/macrophage cell-line J774A.1 were exposed to R4G extract to evaluate the antioxidant and anti-inflammatory activity of the extract. They found evidence for antioxidant and anti-inflammatory activity in mouse J774A.1 cell as it protected the cells from oxidative stress triggered by exposure to bacterial lipopolysaccharides and hydrogen peroxide.

The reconstructed human epidermis and human microdermal endothelial cell from a donor aged 60 years were used as *in vitro* human skin models to further investigate the anti-inflammatory mechanisms of R4G extract, for anti-ageing activity. They found that the treated epidermis cells demonstrated the suppression NF- $\kappa$ B translocation while significant upregulation of VEGF-A gene expression was observed in the treated microdermal endothelial cell. This indicates that the topical application of R4G extract may slow the ageing process and promote angiogenesis.

The researcher readily acknowledges that the plant cell biomass used as food or for the preparation of nutraceutical supplements must be safe for human consumption. Thus, it is important to compare the cell culture extract composition with plant extract.

Another analysis to survey the metabolome of R4G cells line and compare it with the commercial products revealed that the extract is richer in anthocyanins than the other sources but the levels of other metabolites are similar in the R4G and commercial extracts. Hence, the researchers concluded that the R4G extract is safely consumed by humans as a nutraceutical supplement.

Overall, the authors suggested that this plant biomass cultivated in bioreactor could provide a safer and more standardised approach for production of ingredients used in the cosmetic, nutraceutical and food sectors.

#### References:

Bianconi, M. et al., (2020). Red Carrot Cells Cultured in vitro are Effective, Stable, and Safe Ingredients for Skin Care, Nutraceutical, and Food Applications. *Front. Bioeng. Biotechnol*, 8, 575079

# HOW COVID-19 GAVE THE WORLD A LESSON IN TACKLING AIR POLLUTION

Topic: Chemistry

Author: Elilarasi Letshmanan

elilarasi@iumw.edu.my

Centre of Foundation, Language and Malaysian Studies

Our current world has been largely affected by the Covid-19 virus that has killed more than 3 million people to date worldwide. This article written by Katrina Kramers deals on how the pandemic unintentionally reduced air pollution worldwide. The strict lockdown measures during this pandemic proffered a golden opportunity for researchers worldwide to study the relationship between human activity and air pollution. Here are some of interesting facts from this article.

While most of our lifestyles are adversely affected by this pandemic, the Covid-19 caused a 7% drop in global carbon emissions as reported by Corinne Le Quere, a professor of climate change from UK. In another research, with the data attained from two different satellites, Fei Liu and her team at Nasa's Goddard Space Flight Center in the US were able to observe large reduction of nitrogen dioxide and other nitrogen oxides (NO<sub>x</sub>) over China especially along the major motorways as well as steel, iron, fossil fuel power plants and oil industries dominated areas. The reduced air pollution is attributed to the strict lockdown measures which largely reduced air pollutions from vehicles, planes and factories.

Apart from that, based on the data attained from approximately 500 air monitoring stations located in 34 countries, there was a 34% NO<sub>x</sub> and 15% particulate matter (PM) reduction during strict lockdowns from January to the end of April 2021 globally, compared with 2015 to 2019 averages. Another interesting fact, during the strict lockdowns in most countries, carbon dioxide levels fell by 27% compared with the previous year. This article clearly shows how the global actions induced by Covid-19 pandemic can help us to plan future policies and actions on reducing air pollution worldwide.

## References:

Krämer, K. (2021, May 18). *How Covid gave the world a lesson in tackling air pollution. Chemistry World*. <https://www.chemistryworld.com/news/how-covid-gave-the-world-a-lesson-in-tackling-air-pollution/4013495.article>

# LITERATURE, DIGITAL MEDIA AND THE YOUTH

Topic: Digital Media and Literature

Author: Mahadi J Murat

profmahadi@iumw.edu.my

Faculty of Arts and Science

The phrase “Digital media can be instrumental in reviving the literary heritage of our region” from an article written by Jamila Hasmi in The Express Tribune Pakistan recently, makes me want to reflect on our own.

In her article “Literature, Digital Media and The Youth”, Jamila stresses, there should not be any denial of the fact that this is the age of the digital revolution, which has its unique dynamics.

Instead of making the Internet and digital media a scapegoat for our lack of constructive efforts, to integrate the young generation into the rich literary heritage of the subcontinent, the focus of our academics, the curriculum designers, filmmakers, and writers should be to find creative ways to not only introduce the young with the multifaceted past of this region, but to enable them to engage with it in new ways.

Jamila’s writing brought my mind back to a program I remembered reading a few years ago, a program spearheaded by the UK’s former Minister of State Jim Knight in 2008, called Shakespeare for All Ages and Stages (SAES). SAES was introduced to 700 schools for students in year 1 to 11, initially. The program uses the technique of performing arts and digital media appreciation and production, now becoming a popular national program for primary and secondary schools throughout the UK.

If Malaysia could emulate the UK concept of teaching and learning, the elements could be an added value to our national education system that help instil local value through schools.

## References:

Ijaz, A. (2016). *Literature, digital media and the youth*. The Express Tribune. Retrieved from <https://tribune.com.pk/story/1067708/literature-digital-media-and-the-youth>

# INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS ADAPTATION STRUGGLES

Topic: Intercultural Communication  
Author: Safrena Noreen Abd Malek  
safrenanoreen@iumw.edu.my  
Faculty of Arts and Science

After giving a deep thought about what to write in the last edition of Recent Reads for the year 2021, I have chosen something that is very much close to my heart. I am currently in the midst of collecting data for my Ph.D. journey and my topic related to international students. Since then, my reading focuses to know more about the international students' struggles and how they learn to adapt themselves in a country that is far from their home country and loved ones.

Different people go through different life struggles and phases. Throughout my interviews with the international students, they have shared great stories. For recent reads, I pick one of the earliest journals that I read during my first year of the journey, which is "Adaptation and The New Media Technology: A Study on Malaysian Students in Australia And United Kingdom."

This journal focuses on the Malaysian students that went abroad for studies and look at their adaptation processes and to see whether new media such as Facebook, Instagram, Skype, has created an impact on the student adaptation process. The existence of new media technologies and social media has played a vital role in the student adaptation process and this can be seen when one of the students mentioned that they spend at least 40-45 minutes scrolling up their social media pages just to see their friend updates back in Malaysia. It's like their breakfast routine before they start their daily activities.

One of the famous models of adaptation would be the U-Curve model. This model explains that people who migrated to a new place will go through stages of adaptation, which are the honeymoon phase, culture shock, adjustment, and recovery phase. The Malaysian students in Australia and UK confessed that social media helps a lot in adapting themselves to a different country and they could still remain close with their family members and update each other every day. Some of them felt homesick for the first two weeks and months.

The culture shock was also a big part of their adaptation process, they shared the little things from the different food tastes to religion, language barriers due to different slangs, weather to transportation issues. This was the struggle that they had to face during their study. Different people will have different perspectives and struggles that they have to deal with, but these issues are similar to the ones that international students in Malaysia are facing now.

This is the main reason why I pursue to study this topic. It is quite motivating to learn about how they overcome those challenges and issues. Till then, I will share more once I finish this journey.

#### References:

Lysgaard, S. (1955). *Adjustment in a foreign society: Norwegian Fulbright grantees visiting the United States*. International Social Science Bulletin

# THE POWER OF HABIT STACKING

Topic: Self Help

Author: Asha Nair

asha@iumw.edu.my

Centre of Foundation, Languages and Malaysian Studies

You might have developed strong habits like waking up early morning or brewing a cup of morning coffee. Those habits can be reutilised to create more new habits, and the process is summed up under the name “Habit Stacking”.

Habit stacking is about grouping small habits together for keeping a regular follow-up. People can have more consistency in maintaining regular habits as well as increase their productivity with this approach. Instead of starting a new habit, it adds new habits to the existing habits, just like stacks. I recently read a book on habit stacking by Scott (2017), reflecting its utility in developing new habits by taking advantage of the existing ones. All that one needs to remember is a complete checklist that consists of both current and new activities. Adding up small changes in regular habits can make a significant difference in work and life. Habit stacking works well in professional life since it makes individuals to get rid of tackling huge tasks or changes once at a time. Imagine you decided to wake up at 7 A.M. After 3 days, you add one more habit; doing freehand exercise after waking up. In this way, you can add up more new habits and at the same time continue the existing ones.

For children, it is high time to practice this habit stacking since they are at the dawn of physical, cognitive and emotional development. It will give them a huge benefit in the future by enabling them to balance work lives and doing self-care.

In a nutshell, success is always a process. The more you be consistent in your goals, the better it will be to accomplish those goals. As the quote said, “The key to lasting change is sticking with small things every day.”

## References:

Scott, S. J. (2017). *Habit stacking: 127 small changes to improve your health, wealth, and happiness*. Oldtown Publishing.

# THE SUMMARY OF ABDULLAH AL-HARARIYY ENSURING THE PERSONAL OBLIGATORY KNOWLEDGE OF THE RELIGION

Topic: Islamic Education

Author: Muhamad Asri Ahmad

asri@iumw.edu.my

Centre of Foundation, Languages and Malaysian Studies

I recently read a book written by Shaykh Abdullah al-Harariyy on “The Summary of Abdullah al-Harariyy Ensuring the Personal Obligatory Knowledge of the Religion”. This book is a summary of most of the Obligatory Knowledge every accountable person is obligated to know. This comprises the Obligatory Knowledge pertaining to belief, issues from Purification (Taharah) up to Pilgrimage (Hajj), and some rules of dealings according to the school (madhhab) of Imam ash-Shafi’iyy. The sins of the heart and of other organs, such as the tongue, are also included.

The original book was written by the Hadramiyy faqih (scholar): ^Abdullah Ibn Husayn Ibn Tahir. Many precious issues were added to the book; what was mentioned about Sufism was omitted. Some sentences were changed in such a way that it would not change the subject.

In a few cases the author mentioned what some Shafi’iyy scholars, like al-Bulqiniyy, preponderated in an effort to expose what was weak in the original book. One must pay due attention to this Obligatory Knowledge in order to have one's deeds accepted.

Praise be to Allah, the Lord of the Worlds, to Him belong the endowments and proper commendations. Allah revealed to Prophet Muhammad, sallallahu ^alayhi wa sallam, to praise the status of knowledge, its teachers and its students. Ibn Majah related the Prophet said: <<O Aba Dhar, if you go and learn a chapter of the knowledge, it is more rewardable for you than praying one thousand rak^ahs of the optional prayers.>>

## References:

Abdullah A.H (2013), *The Summary of Abdullah al-Harariyy Ensuring the Personal Obligatory Knowledge of the Religion*, Darul Mashari’, Beirut - Lebanon.

# THE CHALLENGES: BEFORE TEACHING AND LEARNING PHASE

Topic: Teaching and Learning

Author: Noorul Akma Mat Amin

akmaamin@iumw.edu.my

Centre of Foundation, Languages and Malaysian Studies

March last year, due to the sudden closure, all educational institutions shifted whether we were ready or not, to start online synchronous and asynchronous remote teaching.

I found a paper– Teaching in the Time of Covid-19: The Challenges Faced by Teachers in Initiating Online Class Sessions. The paper focuses on the Before Teaching and Learning phase to determine the challenges faced by teachers and they hope this study will help in the future planning for online learning. In the early stage, the use of suitable pedagogies in online teaching and learning to continue education from home was one of the obstacles. The main part in the planning of online learning to cater students with different learning styles and levels is the integration of technology, contents including the course design, knowledge and skills to deliver effective lessons. Time is another challenge faced by teachers to learn and upgrade new skills. We have introduced blended learning (asynchronous learning) on a few topics/lessons previously before the Coronavirus disease pandemic happened, and then the synchronous and asynchronous learning is fully implemented during the pandemic.

The next challenges are communication and environment. Teachers and students are working to improve on online interactions. Two-way communication between students and teachers is important to create positive experience and effective learning. Home environment is another influential challenge to teachers and students to focus on teaching and learning, including house chores, family matters, internet connectivity and technology access.

“We don’t grow when things are easy, we grow when we face challenges.”  
Keep going.

## References:

Izhar, N. A., Al-dheleai, Y. M., & Na K. S. (2021). Teaching in the time of COVID-19: the challenges faced by teachers in initiating online class sessions. *International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences*, 11(2), 1294-1306.

# PERSONAL FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Topic: Self Help

Author: Muhammad Ridzuan Abdul Aziz

ridzuandba@iumw.edu.my

Faculty of Business

The COVID-19 pandemic has caused unexpected economic conditions, away from the expected economic cycle. In this uncertain economic condition, individuals must manage their personal finances wisely to avoid from facing financial difficulty in meeting their daily financial needs and financial commitment mainly to the banks. Individuals must only spend on their needs and postpone their spending on what can be considered as just their “wants”. They should increase their savings if possible, and refrain from making risky investments.

Borrowers who are facing difficulty in meeting their loan repayment commitment can obtain assistance from an agency under Bank Negara Malaysia, the Credit Counselling and Debt Management Agency (AKPK). AKPK can provide repayment assistance and free financial advice to individuals.

Borrowers can also opt for the loan moratorium granted by the bank as a temporary solution to their difficulty in meeting the loan repayment to banks. However, the total cost of borrowing of the customer will increase as interest or profit for the loan or financing will continue to accrue on the deferred repayment. Borrowers can also discuss with their banks to reschedule or restructure their loan in accordance to their financial circumstances.

Under the i-Citra initiative, Individuals can make a withdrawal from their account with the Employees Provident Fund (EPF) not only if their income is affected, but also to increase their liquidity. Individuals with no immediate need for cash are urged to save the money withdrawn from their EPF account in Tabung Haji and Amanah Saham Bumiputera (ASB) which can be withdrawn freely if the need for cash arise.

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3. *i-Citra*. (n.d.). I-Citra KWSP. <https://icitra.kwsp.gov.my>

# THE JOBS OF TOMORROW - UPSKILLING AND RESKILLING

Topic: Human Resource, Management

Author: Norizzati Bahsri

izzatibahsri@iumw.edu.my

Faculty of Business

The COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in a huge loss of human life around the world, and it creates an unprecedented threat to public health, food systems, and the workplace. According to the Future of Jobs Report 2020, COVID-19 has accelerated the future of jobs. A shift in the division of labour between humans and machines is expected to eliminate 85 million jobs by 2025. However, new jobs will emerge, requiring new skills and protections for workers and this is what we consider as “the jobs of tomorrow”.

The report also stated that in the rank in demand for the jobs of tomorrow, number one goes to Data Analysts and Scientist. So, what are the required skills needed for our future jobs demand? The top 5 emerging skills identified as being high demand in Malaysia are: Emotional intelligence, creativity, originality and initiative, analytical thinking and innovation, technology design and programming, and complex problem-solving.

In Malaysia, the government's upskilling and reskilling project, introduced as part of the Economic Recovery Plan (Penjana), has boosted the drone economy, which has a lot of potential in terms of building skilled employees. There are many agencies involved, such as SOCSO, MDEC, and HRDF. This initiative is expected to equip the employees with the right skills needed by the “jobs of tomorrow”.

With these movements and revolution going on, we should be asking ourselves, ‘Am I future proof? Do I have the necessary skills to be in-demand for the future?’.

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<https://www.weforum.org/reports/the-future-of-jobs-report-2020>

# WHY EMPLOYEE UPSKILLING AND RESKILLING IS SO IMPORTANT RIGHT NOW

Topic: Strategic Human Resource Management

Author: Serene Yong Jing Yi

serene@iumw.edu.my

Faculty of Business

“Am I able to get a job after graduation?” – one of the most common questions raised by students. I am not surprised by this anxiety, even I myself have similar doubt. With this concern in mind, I recently read this article, and I believe it is very important for us to understand the current labour market and recognize the changes we need.

Globalization and technology advancement are among the few terms that are very popular in the business world, these forces have led to the increasing use of global business services as well as the emergence of Industry 4.0, robots, automation and artificial intelligence (AI). While everyone is pressured by these changes, we are facing another worrying event – Covid-19 pandemic, people all over the world are struggling with viruses and new ways of living. In the labour market, countries around the world report that the unemployment rate remains high, also evident for graduates who have difficulty finding jobs in difficult times. On the other hand, in response to Covid-19 crisis, companies have accelerated the adoption of technology in business development. All these changes are alarming to every one of us: it is time to upskill and reskill!

Businesses are recently hit by the pandemic and the devastating impact of Covid-19 on the workforce is also explained by the author. Most companies are in a dilemma: should we lay off employees to cut cost? Or should we retain the employees? However, if we keep the employees, it will be a huge expense considering the business has been severely hit by the pandemic. I am sure you are also puzzled about this, and I believe this doubt will be cleared after reading this article.

In this article, the author emphasizes the need to shift to a distributed workforce model and the need to upskill and reskill. If any of you have doubts about the effectiveness and approaches used, do not worry, this article also provides some insights on the benefits of the upskilling and reskilling programs and their implementation methods. Although this is a short article and not comprehensive, it serves as a good read to increase our awareness of labour market changes.

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<https://www.forbes.com/sites/forbestechcouncil/2020/12/21/why-employee-upskilling-and-reskilling-is-so-important-right-now/?sh=300ae73f3302>

# ACADEMIC SERVANT LEADERSHIP DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC: A REFLECTION FROM INDONESIA

Topic: Leadership  
Author: Jasmine Ahmad  
profjasmine@iumw.edu.my  
Faculty of Arts and Science

I was browsing for new articles for the MBA class and happened to stumble upon this title. The word academic servant leadership caught my interest. It reminds me of the days of engaging in leadership research and interviewing several eminent leaders in the country, recognizing various leadership styles including servant leadership.

The style and philosophy of servant leadership was advocated by Robert Greenleaf in 1970, in his essay entitled “The Servant as Leader”. The goal of servant leadership is to serve, using persuasion rather than authority to encourage people to act. Implicit in this meaning is an ultimate concern for the individuals, closeness and empathy in the relationship between leader and followers.

This article was written by Ricky Wang, the Dean of Faculty of Business and Economics at Petra Christian University, Indonesia, highlighting the challenges in leading and managing a faculty in a private university during the pandemic. Funding is one of the challenges. On one side, students and parents are requesting a reduction in fees and on the other hand, the pressure from the university management to give more to the students.

The necessity to lead and teach from a distance was synonymous to teaching-learning and leadership in a crisis. The article further reflected on the concept of academic servant leadership and how it was utilised in leading colleagues, students, and oneself. To quote from the article, “Academic leadership demands academic example and academic execution. Academic example explains the roles of the academic leader, while the latter explains the management of the academic activities”. In leading (serving) his colleagues, he launched a performance system which is both flexible and fixed.

Flexible means that it would be possible for every lecturer to work from home or at the office with flexible working hours. Fixed means that they would also need to know their performance targets in the form of students' satisfaction, quality of their published papers, and the excellence of their community service. In serving his students, he designed appropriate individual tasks and group projects through listening to their stories. Finally, servant leaders should be concerned with their personal growth and self-leadership too in order to serve others. It is an interesting read where we can relate to his concerns and difficulties, as all of us went through similar hardship.

We are not alone in facing these difficult times. All of us are adapting to the new requirements in leading and managing education. Perhaps servant leadership is a viable alternative, or we may have been implementing it without realizing it is servant leadership. Do we have these characteristics of servant leadership - listening, empathy, healing, awareness, persuasion, conceptualization, foresight, stewardship, commitment to the growth of the people and building community? After all, great leadership is about humility and serving.

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# SUSTAINABILITY IN MALAYSIA

Topic: Corporate Accountability for Sustainability  
Author: Azbariyah Ajit@Abd Aziz  
azbariyah@iumw.edu.my  
Faculty of Business

In recent years, interests in sustainability have been partly contributed by the increased awareness on corporate accountability. The commitment of Malaysia in sustainability can be portrayed by an initiative undertaken in corporate organization. Moreover, the Malaysian regulatory body issued a new code on corporate governance in 2012 (first introduced in 2000, then revised in 2007) to increase awareness towards accountability of Malaysian listed companies. Furthermore, the Environmental, Social and Corporate Governance (ESG) index was introduced in December 2014 with the intention to measure the performance of companies with good ESG practices that are aligned with leading global ESG frameworks.

With the introduction of Millennium Development Goals and Sustainable Development Goals in Malaysia, our government is moving ahead with the corporate awareness agenda to show a full commitment to SDGs to ensure all parties are able to execute the 17 SDGs in more systematic and measurable manner.

Thus, the involvement of private corporations in community-based activities, specifically those involving in sustainability practice is necessary not only to create a more competitive market and improve the economic status of the needy but also to contribute to community development where may help government in achieving the SDGs by 2030. Many private corporations have ample resources to contribute to the betterment of the community.

Sustainability practice also strengthens collaboration between the government, government-linked companies (GLCs), non-governmental organization (NGO), academia and the private sector to achieve all those goals and to ensure economic sustainability in the long run.

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# THIS SONG WILL SAVE YOUR LIFE

Topic: Communication

Author: Muhammad Shawal Abdul Rashid

shawal@iumw.edu.my

Faculty of Arts and Science

Since the pandemic started last year, I took a chance to restart my reading habit. Being at home for what it feels like 26 hours a day, there's a need for me to escape the current reality and redirect my brain into something that is not numbing me down (yes I'm talking about television). Enter: the book.

*This Song Will Save Your Life* is a YA (young adult) book written by Leila Sales and to be honest, it is a splendid book for those who want a light read. Well, somewhat "light". This novel deals with strong mental health depiction layered with contemporary music selection that goes with what is happening within the plot. As a huge music buff, this is one of the reasons why the book got my attention when I saw it in bookstore.

Wanna know why I find this book interesting?

Aside from the standard YA trope, such as teen romance and quickly overcoming issues, the characters are realistically well-written. The main star of the novel, Elise Debowski, is one interesting character. Unlike most YA, this main character is not likable but throughout the novel, you're drawn to her story and why she is the way she is. At some point you really want to grab her by the shoulders and snap her out of it. But that's what makes this book good; it's honest and doesn't sugar coat the issues; bullying, self harm, depression, etc.

Honestly, I would rate this book 3.5 over 5 stars: Enjoyable read even though on some parts it feels a little dragged out. Pick it up if you're into *The Fault in Our Stars*, don't pick it up if you're into *Angels & Demons*.

References:

Sales, L., Herre, A., & Kosmos Verlag. (2015). *This Song Will Save Your Life* [E-book]. Kosmos.

# THE DISASTER ARTIST: MY LIFE INSIDE THE ROOM, THE GREATEST BAD MOVIE EVER MADE

Topic: Motivation and Entertainment

Author: Hafiz Hassan

h.hafiz@iumw.edu.my

Faculty of Arts and Science

The Disaster Artist is a 2013 non fiction book about the behind the scenes of the Internet's beloved "Worst Movie of All Time", The Room and the person responsible for it, Tommy Wiseau. It was told by Wiseau's longtime collaborator and a co-star of the movie, Greg Sestero.

Tommy wrote a 500-page script for a play which evolved into a movie script named "The Room". His pitch was rejected by many production houses due to its nonsensical writing. Undeterred, Tommy announced to Greg that he would make the movie on his own and assembled an actual film crew with actors and an actual green screen setup funded by a mysterious source of money. The problem is, he had zero knowledge in filmmaking. Film crews and fellow actors on set were insulted by Tommy's lack of professionalism and many quit in the middle of production.

The \$6 million film earned only \$1,800 at the box office and closed after two weeks. Over a decade later, The Room is an international cult phenomenon, whose legions of fans attend screenings featuring costumes, audience rituals, merchandising and thousands of plastic spoons. Thus, The Room gained its cult status for being a movie which was so bad it became funny instead.

What I learned from this book is that success can come to anyone despite being born and raised in unfavorable conditions, if they believe in themselves and never let go of their hopes. Tommy Wiseau knew nothing about filmmaking and could make a movie which was famous and celebrated worldwide.

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Sestero, G. & Bissell, T. (2013). *The Disaster Artist: My Life Inside The Room, the Greatest Bad Movie Ever Made*. United Kingdom: Little, Brown Book Group.

# LOVE UNSCRIPTED

Topic: Literature

Author: Nurul Nisa Omar

nisaomar@iumw.edu.my

Faculty of Arts and Science

It took me a while to decide which book to write a review on, I read at least 3 books per week and one can imagine the number of books I have in my Kindle. This should be easy, but I find myself stuck as all my books are fictional and truth to be told, NOT USEFUL at all to my academic career. Nevertheless, I am after all known to be good with words and as I told students in my PR Writing class; it is all about the angle that you chose to present to your readers. So here I am, reviewing a romantic novel, but making it educational from the angle of Public Relations and media publicist for the benefit of my fellow academicians.

Love Unscripted, from the title alone you can tell that it is a romantic novel. It is about a famous actor falling in love with an ordinary girl who works in a bar. Cliché, isn't it? But who cares? It is fun and you cannot stop smiling while reading it. What's interesting in this book is that it features the life of an actor where paparazzi and publicists define your world. They tell you what to do, what to say, what to wear, and even the littlest of things that you do (such as buying groceries) are all scripted. If any of you have any experience in PR, you at times feel like nothing is authentic anymore. It is funny that we are teaching our students to be great journalists and publicists, and in the book, from the eye of the publicist, they are doing all the right thing – their objective is to present the best public image for their client.

But is it truly the right thing when it crosses boundaries as you craft the client's personal life? In the perspective of the actor, how can one choose who to love when it matters not one's happiness? The happiness of a famous actor should depend on whether your fans or the media love you. Even for your love life, you should let the media, or your publicist decide who you should fall in love with; and an ordinary girl working at a bar is not it.

But my kind of books will only have HEA (for the none romantic readers, HEA stands for Happy Ever After). A little spoiler here, love prevails, and hearts want what it wants. Even the best publicist or PR expert cannot fake real love. Because Love is Unscripted.

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Reber, T. (2010). *Love Unscripted*. CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform. <https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/8204005-love-unscripted>

# MANAGING FAVOURITISM IN THE WORKPLACE

Topic: Management  
Author: Abdul Basit  
abulbasit@iumw.edu.my  
Faculty of Business

In the current situation, favoritism topic is being widely discussed in all sectors – covering from education to manufacturing. The inspiration behind this writing is to assess how to manage favoritism in the workplace. Favoritism concept has been widely observed in modern business as one of the challenges to employee commitment and satisfaction.

In the last era, this concept was openly discussed in the Malaysian context where work opportunities are not filled in light of worker's capability and working background but instead by personal recommendation from management and powerful individuals within the organizations (Sadozai et al., 2012). Favoritism promotes negative perception and represents impression of favored exchange between two parties, while other hardworking employees are ignored, leading to high turnover.

It is common to see that employees in the organization show goodwill to employees who share their social identity. For example, if employees are asked to give suggestions and recommendations of promotion in the organization it is more likely they will intend to endorse ingroup than outgroup members.

This article could benefit Leaders and Human Resource departments to be proactive in dealing with internal policies and procedures as they have the relevant knowledge and decision power to be fair-minded. This includes to implement guidelines when it comes to hiring friends & family members into the organization and to look into the promotion of internal staff based on work performance rather than on based on personal likings.

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# AN INTRODUCTION TO PROPERTY MARKETING

Topic: Real Estate Property  
Author: Murni Mohamad  
murni@iumw.edu.my  
Faculty of Business

This semester, I have been giving a new subject to teach, Real Estate Marketing. There are so much to talk about, so many things crossing my mind. One thing I am sure, I need a very good book. I continue doing my search online until I found one of the books published by Universiti Teknologi Malaysia (UTM) by Abdul Hamid Mar Iman.

What interesting about this book?

This book covers three main aspects of property marketing: fundamentals of property marketing, property marketing mix, and marketing implementation. The best part is, it focuses on project-based carried out by a marketing team, either in-house or agent. Besides that, it covers marketing and blends economics, management, and business applications to ensure the reader understands the property market and can achieve the business's goals. The author also explains how property marketing is implemented in companies involved in the property business in this book.

This book is a must-have for real estate background students and anyone who have zero knowledge in real estate marketing but is interested in this sector. Let me bring you more details of the book. In the first chapter, the books cover marketing functions, the marketing department, the role of each member, and the characteristics of real estate property. It pulls you to more excitement in chapter 2, where the book illustrates how the marketing team carried out the actual situation by presenting an example of a real estate project's project and sales cycle. By giving a real scenario, the reader will understand better the marketing activities required for the real estate project. Now, this book is a must before my bedtime reading book! I will share my reading for the next chapter in my following writing, ok. Stay Tune!

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# ROLE OF EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE IN NAVIGATING THE INTERNET

Topic: Technology and Mental Health  
Author: Che Nur Amalina S. Che Zainal  
chenuramalina@iumw.edu.my  
Faculty of Arts & Science

As an adult, I always believe that whatever you do in life relates to your emotions and habits. Even during my study years, I see how my colleagues are emotionally attached to their smartphones, with their excessive usage of the internet. These lead them to having insomnia, excessive daytime sleepiness and sleep-wake behaviour problems and even anger issues! These are just the initial symptoms that lead to them constantly coming late to class, unable to send assignments on time, and bad quality of assignment due to last minute work, all leading to them not performing in their studies! A question that I constantly ask myself, who should be blamed? The university who are giving pressure to the students or the student themselves?

I wanted to find out more on how high internet usage can relate to suicide ideation.

This article written by researcher from Spain stated that the high emotional intelligence by adolescent make them aware and able to evaluate their actions through the information they read on the internet, for example information about suicide. The high emotional intelligence also links to high self-esteem of a person. It is very important for a person to have good emotional intelligence to prevent them to have suicide ideation that is associated with problematic internet and smartphone usage. Additionally, emotional intelligence interventions can help adolescent to cope with psychological distress and suicidal ideation.

So, take control of your emotions and do not let the internet get control of you!

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# THE MANY FACETS OF HAPPINESS

Topic: Self Help

Author: Chan Li Chuin

chanlichuin@iumw.edu.my

Faculty of Arts & Science

One way to define happiness is through life satisfaction. Masuda, Williams, and Tallis (2020) investigated the relationship among free time, income, and life satisfaction of over 5000 US respondents. Their research looked at whether more time and money were associated with higher levels of life satisfaction. Additionally, the researchers were interested in whether life satisfaction varied with different levels of time within different levels of income.

Their results supported the idea that people who have more of both are happiest. Yet, findings also showed that there was lower than expected life satisfaction beyond the usual income poverty threshold. Furthermore, there is evidence that the amount of discretionary time (i.e., free time beyond work and household requirements) plays a significant role in a person's life satisfaction.

Before taking this at face value, consider that happiness can have different meanings across cultures (Gardiner et al., 2020). Generally, the Western perspective of happiness takes on a more independent meaning, emphasizing personal achievement whereas the Eastern perspective of happiness depends on positive connections in social relationships. Interdependence and balance are seen as key.

To further complicate matters, a study by Oishi and Westgate (2021) has shown that some people value psychological richness when considering happiness and well-being. A psychologically rich life is one where you are able to experience a multitude of interesting and perspective-changing experiences.

What is happiness to you? In these challenging times, the above definitions might seem grandiose, and difficult to achieve. Perhaps, another concept might be more appropriate: 소확행, sohwakhaeng, a phrase which means small but certain happiness (Park, 2018). Living in a stressed and fast-paced lifestyle, taking a small amount of time for yourself, to live in the moment, might be just what you need.

Examples of 소확행 for you to try out:

- Eating freshly baked goods
- Enjoying a cup of coffee
- Finishing a book you've always wanted to read
- Talking to a loved one
- Watching your favourite series on Netflix

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# TECHNOSTRESS AND US

Topic: Education

Author: Tan Jian Heng

[jianheng@iumw.edu.my](mailto:jianheng@iumw.edu.my)

Centre of Foundation, Languages and Malaysian Studies

Before COVID-19, a majority of education establishment was on its way to adapt a blended learning pedagogy for studies that are deemed suitable for implementation. However, a nationwide implementation of Restriction of Movement Order; Malaysian education establishments; primary, secondary and tertiary alike was thrown into a limbo for an overnight change of pedagogy to deliver knowledge to the students. This has triggered the stress within themselves that led to technostress.

Technology was not considered to be an inducing source of stress at work although it has been coined back in 1984 by American psychologist, Craig Bord as technostress; which can deliver a consequence of non-acceptance of ICTs or excessive identification with the new technologies, resulting in both anxiety and stress for the user.

The ongoing digitalization for delivery of education with the addition of COVID-19 pandemic at hand, it is noted that there is an importance to investigate whether if the integration of technologies into education drastically has impaired mental health of academicians due to technostress. Additionally, recent studies showed that technostress has led to specific psychosocial demands such as higher workload and conflicts between work and other life domains such as family which results in psychobiological stress reaction.

Thus, technostress investigation associated with mental health can be explored further as there is a delay between the implementation of new technologies and reporting of systematic research of its effect on health, especially mental health. This can be credited to the hasten incorporation of technology into pedagogy delivery for courses by educational establishments.

Thus, it is hoped that the positive and negative consequences of technostress can be established through research to design interventions and work processes that will be directed to prevention and management of technostress among academicians.

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# 100 WAYS TO SIMPLIFY YOUR LIFE

Topic: Self Help

Author: Ashley Ng Sok Choo

ashleyng@iumw.edu.my

Faculty of Arts and Science

While browsing through the leisure reading in MPH, the title “100 Ways to Simplify Your Life” caught my eyes. This book was written by Joyce Meyer, the #1 New York Times best Seller author.

Joyce started with the truth that most of us are fighting a constant battle in life of balancing our work, family, friends and other demands which could easily cause us to be weary and burn out if we do not guard our heart consciously. Limited resources of attention, time and energy, unprepared change of norms in life due to the pandemic lead us to frustration and confusion, resulting in a complicated life.

But Joyce brought out an important message: “unless you are determined not to, you will do what everyone else does.”. She emphasized that when a person spends his life in frustration trying to change the world and everyone at surrounding, he fails to realize that it could be him who just needs to change his approach to life. I would like to highlight two approaches from the book which I am benefitted from: (a) do one thing at a time (b) be a prisoner of hope. Staying focus on the one thing that we are doing on a particular moment, we will find it much easier to do.

On a last note, a positive attitude makes life simpler. It relieves stress and put a smile on our face. I wish you a life of simplicity, fruitfulness, fulfillment, peace and joy.

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Mayer, J. (n.d.). *100 Ways to Simplify Your Life*. Amazon.Com.  
<https://www.amazon.com/100-Ways-Simplify-Your-Life/dp/1455538116>

# MIND HACKING: HOW TO CHANGE YOUR MIND FOR GOOD IN 21 DAYS

Topic: Self Help

Author: Mimi Fitriana

mimifitriana@iumw.edu.my

Faculty of Arts and Science

The powerful brain hack we can do in our everyday life as techniques to give a positive impact to our mental state, cognitive processes or even level of our work functioning. This is the technique to enhance our personal development, to enhance cognitive functions, to optimize our efficacy and the most important thing is to gain happiness.

Hey! be the Psych-Comp ‘mind hacking’ specialist once done with the book! But don’t blame the book if you are NOT the MENTALIST! The recipe in coding, recalling, retrieving your emotion-thoughts-actions is all your own business. Read it at your own risk! So be mindful! Hehe.

The “Mind Hacking: How to Change Your Mind for Good in 21 Days” written by Sir John Hargrave does not promote Psychology as the study to read people’s mind, it rather gives us some techniques through numerous mind game which will help us establish healthy patterns of concentration and meta-thinking ability. Meta-Cognitive capacity will help us have a proper plan, monitor and access our understanding and performance, aware of what we think and learn, thus develop our ‘positive loops’ with regular reminders will help our ‘mental loops’ retained through repetitive patterns. Our “Emotion-Thought-Action” pattern is our mental simulation to train our cognitive ability and to remind ourselves that our emotion, fear and all other negative thoughts arise from our faulty mental loops.

This wonderful book is so significant to us in this current situation, bombarded with a variety of news in our social media, our mental health with the issues of emotion irregulating and disruptive thoughts, fluctuates. Using the techniques, the “practice Sheet” set up a 21-day schedule of mind games, recording the results, reprogramming our thinking and rewarding our progress. To me the 21-day schedule affects the effectiveness of my daily activities although limits in its function. It certainly depends on everyone’s metacognitive ability to function. Some people might do all the techniques and others occupy with some limited use of the schedules.

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# ***SHINRIN-YOKU*: A SUSTAINABLE WAY OF URBAN FOREST THERAPY FOR HEALTH AND RELAXATION**

Topic: Self Help

Author: Shahril Efzueni Rozali

shahrilefzueni@iumw.edu.my

Faculty of Arts and Science

I believe most of us are aware that in recent years, especially during this current pandemic, stress-related diseases have become a social problem on a global scale. We are over-stimulated and stressed by various external factors in the modern world. One of the sustainable ways to alleviate this problem is practicing *shinrin-yoku* a Japanese way for forest therapy or literally translated to “forest bathing” that has been practiced since the 1980s. A book written by a forest therapy researcher from Chiba University, Professor Yoshifumi Miyazaki has described in detail the natural and low-cost way of practicing *shinrin-yoku* for human’s health and wellbeing. Simply put, *shinrin-yoku* is the practice of walking slowly through the woods, in no hurry, for a morning, an afternoon or a day. In 2003, he proposed the term “forest therapy” to describe *shinrin-yoku* supported by scientific evidence.

Forest therapy is significantly different from a usual walk in the park, a hike or a nature walk that require physical exercise or work out to increase cardiovascular activity. Forest therapy focuses neither on identification of the plants and living species, nor reaching an end point or completion of a trail. It focuses on simply being in nature, using our senses to connect with nature, and acknowledging our affiliations to nature.

With the idea to calm overstimulation from artificial and urban environments and promote relaxation, we can practice meditation, yoga, stretching, hammock time, stargazing or direct contact with physical surroundings like trees, waterfalls, rice fields, flowers and autumn foliage. We can even organize programmes to include music concerts, aroma workshops, horse riding, dog therapy and courses for children, elderly citizens, involving catching fishes and other activities. The author also described various easiest ways to bring the forest closest to home where we can harness the benefits of *shinrin-yoku* on a regular basis like having wooden objects and décor, ornamental plants in the house or garden, a vase of fresh flowers or even the aroma of essential oils derived from plants.

In his research, forest therapy was shown to effectively reduce stress levels, as measured by the increased activity of parasympathetic nervous system and decreased activity of sympathetic nervous system. Pulse rates and salivary cortisol levels which were used as indicators of stress, were also reported to decrease due to forest therapy. Forest therapy was also demonstrated to boost the immune system reducing blood pressures, improving sleep patterns, reducing blood glucose levels and evoking more creativity, reasoning skills and better moods.

The author believes that, in the modern world, forest therapy and other nature therapies are the most practical way to reduce our stress levels and increase relaxation. It can be a considerable help in reducing the strain on healthcare services all over the world.

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Miyazaki, Y. (2018). *Shinrin-yoku: The Japanese Way of Forest Bathing for Health and Relaxation*. Octopus Publishing Group Ltd, Great Britain.

# THE DARK SIDE OF POSITIVITY

Topic: Self Help

Author: Sharmila K. N. Sethumadavan

sharmila@iumw.edu.my

Faculty of Business

I believe in the positive vibes. Everything in life can be achieved in looking at things in a positive light. And so, you were more often than not told, to focus on the positivity throw, suppress and avoid at all cost the negativity that comes to you. Avoidance of suffering is a form of suffering, said Mark Manson in his book, The Subtle Art of Not Giving a F\*ck. As such the denial of failure is failure in itself.

And so is born the term positive toxicity. This is defined as an excessive and ineffective perspective of happiness, across all situations. This will result in denial and invalidation of your emotional experience. So, this is the way to cover up your pain, silence, by disallowing certain kind of pain, anger, resentment and unhappiness.

How do you recognise this toxicity?

“Don’t worry; be happy”

“If I can do it, so can you”

“Look for the silver lining”

“Everything happens for a reason”

If you have heard all these lines and many more and feel invalidated – You are right to feel so!

Let’s practice to be healthy human beings and be conscious of how we present ourselves in this society. If you are dishing out toxic positivity; it’s time to think of stopping. Be mindful of the environment around you and don’t be the transmitter of all things positive or what you may deem as positive. If you are hurting and you find the people around you using these monochromatic statements; aim for a balance between acceptance of your feelings whilst ensuring you know the next step forward.

Set healthy boundaries and do not allow anyone to impose their perspective on you. Speak your truth; and like I said have a plan.

Have an imperfect, beautiful life everyone. Embrace and enjoy! It may be painful but worthwhile!

Toxic Positivity; you think? Yes, I think so too!

#### References:

1. Manson, M. (2016). *The Subtle Art of Not Giving a F\*ck: A Counterintuitive Approach to Living a Good Life*. Harper.
2. Edwards, V. (2020). *Toxic Positivity: Why Positive Vibes are Ruining You*. Science of People. Retrieved from <https://www.scienceofpeople.com/toxic-positivity/#5-dangers-of-being-too-positive>.

# THINKING, FAST AND SLOW

Topic: Self-Improvement  
Author: David Yoon Kin Tong  
davidtong@iumw.edu.my  
Faculty of Business

This fantastic self-improvement book written by Prof Kahneman, the winner of the Nobel Prize in Economics. This book has enlightened me on how and why some students can answer some questions fast and slow. It has provided me with an insight of how our mind functions, reacts and decides when some questions are posed to us. We tend to think fast and decide on the answers which we think are easy, although not necessarily the answer is correct. The author termed this fast thinking process as System 1. If someone searches for a math answer to the question on square root of negative 49, this question requires us to think deeply; if at all an answer can be provided by us. Prof Kahneman called this slow thinking process that requires concentration as System 2. System 1 is associated with our memory and experience and can construct coherent interpretation at an instant. Whereas System 2 allocates attention to the effortful mental activities that demand it and is a subjective experience of agency, choice, and concentration.

It is said that System 2 can change System 1 work by programming the normally automatic functions of attention and memory. For example, when we are driving, we sometimes talk to the person sitting next to us. System 1 tends to guide the driver automatically to the destination, assuming the road is empty. System 2 can override System 1 and force the driver to stop talking when he or she realizes a reckless driver is fast approaching with a high speed. System 2 consciously cautions the driver, instructing the driver to be mindful, stop talking, and to hold on the steering wheel firmly until the reckless driver passes.

Prof Kahneman probed on to explain how System 1 and System 2 work together on small numbers, illusion of understanding, illusion of validity, Bernoulli's error and others. Interestingly, the book is easy to read and follow and suitable for non-technical readers, a must-read book for all to understand why we sometimes provide answers that do not sound logical or convincing to others.

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Daniel Kahneman, (2011). *Thinking, Fast and Slow*. Farbar, Straus and Giroux, New York

# HABITS - A VOTE FOR FUTURE YOU

Topic: Self-Improvement

Author: Aminuddin Baharudin

aminuddin@iumw.edu.my

Centre of Foundation, Language and Malaysian Studies

Once in a blue moon, a movie, a song or in this case a book, will truly affect me to my core. People have echoed nothing but good things about this book and sometime early this year, I decided to give it a chance. Atomic Habits by James Clear, and oh boy.

The word habit is often mentioned together with good or bad. The former being actions that benefits you, and the for the latter, detrimental or at least, wasteful. We rarely talk about habits in the context of behaviours that are potentially life-changing.

In the book, James referred to habits as the compound interest of self-improvement. Often do we convince ourselves that huge success requires huge effort. We pressure ourselves to make mind-blowing improvements that is news-worthy. In most cases, it's the small changes every day that leads to life-changing outcomes in the future.

The thing with habits that many people find difficult to stick to is that you don't see the effects immediately, or how James put it, your outcomes are a lagging measure of your habits. Your weight is a lagging measure of your eating habits, the size of your bank account is the lagging measure of your financial habits, and your CGPA is the lagging measure of your study habits.

Time amplifies the difference between success and failure. Good habits make time your friend. Bad habits make time your enemy. Whatever habits you decide to form today, is a vote for future you.

## References:

Clear, J. (2018). *Atomic Habits*. London: Cornerstone. Get it at <https://malaysia.kinokuniya.com/bw/9781847941831>

# YOU CONTROL YOUR LIFE

Topic: English Language & Social Studies

Author: Tan Jian Heng

[jianheng@iumw.edu.my](mailto:jianheng@iumw.edu.my)

Centre of Foundation, Language and Malaysian Studies

There are always people around you whom say that be the master of your own life. You can even find the similar quote expressed by Napoleon Hill in his book 'Think and Grow Rich' which goes like this, "You are the master of your destiny. You can influence, direct, and control your own environment. You can make your life what you want it to be."

In reality, many things are out of our own control like deciding on future career before enrolling into a degree, wanting a dream house, or as simple as deciding where to have a meal. All of the decision making aforementioned is somehow influenced by external factors that are not of your control or favour. This what I call the tragedies and dysfunctions of the generation that we inherited from, and naturally will pass down to coming generations.

Despite having the motivation to control your own life, you have various known and unknown intercession in life which you are shackled to. But you are still in control of your own life by demonstrating perseverance and challenging yourself, knowing that you will end up stronger than you were before by just having the thought alone that you, will succeed.

This read will be a self-help for anyone who wants to know more of power of thought and the brain in the process of further exploration for your career where the world steps aside to let you pass and generate monetary and personal growth satisfaction.

## References:

Hill, N. (2015). *Think and Grow Rich*. Van Haren Publishing.

# POPULATION AND DEMOGRAPHIC STATISTICS

Topic: Statistics

Author: Nur Raihan Abd Rahim

nurraihan@iumw.edu.my

Faculty of Arts and Science

Development and growth of population in Malaysia occurs since the 1850s to the present. Among the important issues related to the growth and development of population are the change of age structure, growth population, fertility, mortality and migration that occurs throughout duration. The increase of development growth is important in focusing on the population issues that are expected to happen in the future, especially new issues that will arise as a result of change.

The size of the population in Malaysia is 32.7 million in 2020 and is expected to increase in the next 20 years. The proportion of the population of Malaysia below the age of 15 years decreased to 27.6 percent compared with 33.3 percent in 2000. In contrast, the proportion of working age population (15 to 64 years) increased to 67.3 percent from 62.8 per cent. The proportion of the population aged 65 years and over also increased to 5.1 percent as compared with 3.9 percent in 2000. The fall in fertility and mortality rates have led to an improvement in the life expectancy of the population which has resulted in an aging population in Malaysia.

Population in the older age group (65+) increased significantly due to increase of life expectancy. In terms of the economy, there is a financial burden on individuals, members of the family as well as the government. Malaysia will achieve the status of an aging nation in 2030 and it is expected to be 15 percent of the country's population at the time it consisted of those in their 60s upwards and is categorized as senior citizens i.e. group a population that does not make a significant contribution to national productivity especially from an economic point of view.

## References:

Rashid, S. A., Ghani, P. A., & Daud, N. (2014). Population trends in Malaysia: 1970–2010. *AIP Conference Proceedings*, 1635(875).  
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# NATIONAL TOURISM POLICY 2020 - 2030

Topic: Tourism

Author: Farah Hida Sharin

farahhida@iumw.edu.my

Centre of Foundation, Language and Malaysian Studies

Recently, in order to gain input for my current research paper on sustainable rural tourism, I read and analysed the National Tourism Policy 2020-2030 produced by the Ministry of Tourism, Arts and Culture in 2020. Surprisingly, it demonstrates that our tourism sector was 'sick' even before the Pandemic Covid -19.

As summarized in that policy, there are indications that Malaysia's tourism industry has seen a real or perceived decline in service quality in comparison to its ASEAN neighbours.. Existing tourism products are becoming 'weary' and unattractive as a result of a lack of creativity and innovation caused by an excessive reliance on the government and a silo mentality.

In response, the government has created a tourism transformation blueprint based on three key pillars: sustainability, competitiveness, and inclusiveness, in order to strengthen Malaysia's tourism industry. Six strategies have been established in order to achieve transformation. Of course, I can't go into detail about all of the strategies, but one in particular piques my interest: transforming Malaysia's tourism industry into Smart Tourism. Several actions are required to implement this strategy, including tourism players optimizing e-marketing usage by increasing synergy between government and tourism industry players, innovating in the informal tourism sector and rural tourism, leveraging big data analytics to support data-driven decision making and future planning, and, finally, increasing the visitor economy in rural areas through digitourism.

Whether or not the COVID-19 pandemic has ended, the show must go on. Let us support our local tourism industry in order to help our national economy recover.

## References:

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