

EDITORIAL

Unveiling Education's Uncharted Realms in a Troubled World: Our Beacons of Hope for the Muslim *Ummah*

Dear Esteemed IUM IJES Readers,

May peace be upon you.

Amid the Palestinian genocide in Gaza and the persistent murder of our Muslim brothers, sisters, and children in the West Bank, we at IUM IJES must continue to support the global Muslim *ummah* by offering insights into some of the uncharted realms in educational research. This is for the continuous benefit of the Muslim world and beyond. We offer these insights as a beacon of hope in the midst of a really troubled time for the Muslim world—especially after the systematic Israeli assault on Gaza’s learning institutions, among numerous other assaults.

Aided by the U.S., the illegal terrorist regime of Israel has obliterated all 12 universities in Gaza, including the Islamic University of Gaza, the Al-Azhar University, and the last standing Al-Israa University, which was detonated on January 17 2024 with 313 mines (The Chris Hegdes Report, February 10, 2024). Some 280 government schools and 65 UNRWA-run schools have also been destroyed since October 7, 2023, decimating all hopes for education and learning for Palestinian children and youth. A total of 94 university professors were killed in these indiscriminate bombings, in addition to 4,327 students and 231 teachers and administrators. Gaza is riddled with poverty; it is one of the most poverty-stricken places in the world, yet the people of Gaza cherish education. They have one of the highest literacy rates in the world despite being subjected to impossible conditions by the Israeli terrorist regime (Chris Hedges, 2024).

The hearts of man must have reached a dark, disturbing *nadir*, one so deep, so twisted and so unsettling that it drove them to orchestrate and execute this massive, unprecedented scale of destruction on an innocent human population. It is difficult to fathom how their hearts had come to this state and condition. We keep asking why—what are the motivation and true intentions of Israelis in perpetuating such unfathomable atrocities on Palestinians? In searching for a tenable answer to this troubling question, I am reminded of the following verses of the Qur’an:

“And Our messengers had certainly come to them with clear proofs. *Then indeed many of them, [even] after that, throughout the land, were transgressors.* Indeed, the penalty for those who wage war against Allah and His Messenger and spread mischief in the land is death, crucifixion, cutting off their hands and feet on opposite sides, or exile from the land. This penalty is a disgrace for them in this world, and they

will suffer a tremendous punishment in the Hereafter.” [Surah Al-Ma'idah: 32-33]

From Qur'anic verses, we learn of Israelis' (or Bani Israel as the Qur'an calls them) long-standing history of extreme disobedience and transgression. These were the people who killed the prophets sent to them. If they could kill God's prophets, what is a Palestinian life to them? For them awaits a punishment beyond measure.

وَلَا يَمُنُّ مِنْ قَرِيْبَةٍ إِلَّا نَحْنُ مُهْلِكُوْهَا قَبْلَ يَوْمِ الْقِيَامَةِ اَوْ مُعَذِّبُوْهَا عَذَابًا شَدِيْدًا كَانَ
ذَلِكَ فِي الْكِتَابِ مَسْطُوْرًا

“There is not a 'wicked' society that We will not destroy or punish with a severe torment before the Day of Judgment. That is written in the Record.” (Surah Al-Israa: 58)

It soothes the heart to know that justice, one day, will be delivered and that those guilty of the unspeakable evil against Gaza will, one day, be made accountable for their monstrosity.

In these troubled times, academic life for us Muslims must persevere, undeterred by the tragedies unfolding around us. Despite the dark evil descending upon our Palestinian brothers and sisters, our pursuit of knowledge remains a beacon of hope, and our commitment to scholarly publication endures as a testament to our resilience and unwavering dedication to academic excellence.

Hence, in this January issue, the IIUM IJES gives you six articles to learn from and ponder on. In each article, an important issue affecting Muslims and Muslim education greets the reader. We start with Alzabidi *et al.* (2024) who explain the influence of academic self-efficacy on learning performance, demonstrating how important it is for educators to shape not just students' cognitive abilities but also their confidence in their abilities, thereby empowering them to strive for academic success.

The second article, written by Nur Syuhada and Haniza (2024), is a phenomenological study that delves into the lives of six institutionalized Muslim adolescents who, upon reaching 18, must leave their respective welfare homes and begin an independent life of their own. Their stories are curiosity-driving anecdotes filled with the themes of self-discovery, inner strength, resilience and empowerment, qualities that are crucial for young Muslims to thrive and survive in the present age of conflict and crisis.

As we read Saiful Azlan *et al.*'s (2024) article on leadership at times of crisis, we are educated about the efforts and capabilities of our stalwart school leaders who guide our primary learning institutions through turbulent times like catastrophic flooding and the COVID-19 pandemic. In the face of crisis, their strategic leadership practices guide schools' decision making and problem solving, thereby serving as a beacon of resilience that illuminates the path forward amidst uncertainty and adversity.

Our *ummah's* research, learning and exploration do not stop here in Malaysia. They reach far and wide, transcending geographical boundaries and uniting the Muslim *ummah* in a persistent quest for knowledge. In neighbouring Indonesia, amidst the bustling streets of Surabaya, Windasari *et al.* (2024) writes about the emotional intelligence of teachers teaching at 19 Islamic private primary schools in the city, a soft skill crucial for the education of emotionally healthy Muslim individuals. These teachers emerge as a beacon of hope in shaping and nurturing an emotionally and psychologically healthy learning environment for Muslim children in Surabaya.

Across continents, in the vibrant English language learning classrooms of a Saudi university, educators embrace the transformative power of technology integration, guided by the SAMR model, to redefine the boundaries of teaching and learning. This article written by Buledi (2024), who is an English language educator himself, makes an interesting read, offering the reader a glimpse into the patterns of digital technology usage among Saudi English language instructors.

Turning our gaze back to Malaysia, we unravel the complexities of personality formation among university students as a function of sibling birth order. Chow and Amzat (2024) skilfully delve into the intricate web of sibling birth order effects—based on Sulloway's theory—on the Big Five Personality traits. Their report, which is the last article in the January 2024 issue of IIUM IJES, takes us through the intricacies of birth order effects and personality development, detailing how temperaments may differ among first-borns, middle-borns, last-borns and only children, while also taking into account the influences of family dynamics, childhood experiences, parenting styles and parental expectations of children.

Each article in this issue offers substantive knowledge in relevant fields which the reader will find beneficial. It is not just a collection of words. It is, in fact, a testament to the importance of empirical evidence in building our knowledge of the world and its phenomena. We hope the articles published in this issue will be one of our many steps towards academic scholarship and research excellence that will place the IIUM IJES in the ranks of reputable journals in Malaysia and the world.

Finally, we dedicate this issue to the martyred souls of Gaza's fallen academics—in honour of their undeterred dedication to knowledge, education and learning. Among these martyrs are Professor Sufyan Tayeh and Professor Mohammad Eid Shabir, President and former President of the Islamic University of Gaza; Dr Ahmed Hamdi Abu Absa, Dean of the Department of Software Engineering at the University of Palestine; and Dr Refaat Alareer, poet and Professor of Comparative Literature and Creative Writing at the Islamic University of Gaza.

May Allah S.W.T. place their souls in His highest paradise.

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