

Introduction

The NATRAH Organization is a non-governmental body established with the aim of forming a competitive community of Muslim women in line with current developments while firmly adhering to Islamic identity. Inspired by the story of Natrah, a Muslim woman of Dutch origin whose rights to practice Islam and her rights as a wife were violated. The background and profound impact of this story revolves around Natrah's three main principles: Islam, the empowerment of Sharia law, and the empowerment of Muslim women's identities. With the presence of Natrah in society, we aspire to cultivate the values of Islam among its followers, especially women. Understanding these cultural values is not only meant to shape one's identity, but also to correct society's misconceptions regarding the rights and responsibilities of women within the family, community, and country. Our organization is composed of young individuals between the ages of 20 and 35, and we specifically address issues related to young women in Malaysia. Our primary objective is to empower and support young women, providing them with the necessary tools, resources, and guidance to navigate the unique challenges they face in today's society.

Our Vision: To cultivate competent women whose Islam is their identity.

Our Mission: To become a platform for resolving the common issues faced by women and to serve as a source of inspiration in nurturing women of integrity, agility, and equipped with skills aligned with Islamic values.

1.0 Sexual Harassment in College Campuses

Sexual harassment has become an increasingly prevalent issue on college campuses, posing a significant threat to the safety and well-being of students. The lack of effective preventive measures and insufficient support systems in place contribute to the perpetuation of this problem. It is crucial to address sexual harassment on college campuses to create a secure environment that promotes equality, respect, and inclusivity for all students.

Sexual harassment in universities encompasses various forms, including cases involving lecturers and students, students harassing lecturers, as well as instances of student-to-student harassment (for more details please refer to Appendix H1). Among these, student-to-student sexual harassment is prevalent within tertiary institutions and affects more female students than male students¹. The consequences of sexual harassment have a profound impact on the mental and physical well-being of the victims, with health being a particularly significant aspect.

¹ Endut, N., Oon, S. W., Teng, L. W., Azmi, Z., Ali, S. H., & Hashim, R. (2011). Understanding and Experiences of Sexual Harassment amongst University Students: A Case Study of Undergraduates in Universiti Sains Malaysia. *International Proceedings of Economics Development and Research*, 20, 7-11.

Those who have experienced sexual harassment, victimization, or assault commonly suffer from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). Female students who are subjected to sexual harassment or assault may also face the risk of pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections (STDs), which not only affect their health but also has implications for their academic performance². Apart from these physical consequences, the psychological and emotional toll on the harassed individuals is extensive, with depression being one of the most prominent effects. The psychological and emotional imbalance experienced by students hampers their ability to concentrate on their studies, resulting in a negative impact on their academic performance.

Even though it has been a year since the Government in July 2022 had passed Anti-Sexual Harassment Act 2022, however to date there is no follow-up on some of the provisions of the Act including the publication of Guidelines on Anti-Sexual Harassment. Without a clear guideline on the steps to be taken to curb sexual harassment cases, we fear that incidences of harassment will persist.

Recommendation

1. Enforce stricter penalties for perpetrators of sexual harassment on campus
2. Publish Guidelines on Anti-Sexual Harassment soonest possible
3. Implement mandatory training and education programs on sexual harassment for government officials and campus administrators
4. Develop a reporting standardized system for sexual campus harassment on incidents
5. Integrate comprehensive sexual prevention harassment education into high school and college curricular
6. Promote awareness campaigns workshops and on campuses to educate students about sexual harassment
7. Engage organizations national and local dedicated to combating sexual harassment on campus

2.0 Issues with underemployment – calling for reasonable living wages

With current conditions whereby inflation hits, Malaysians suffer from an insignificant increase in wages, thus forcing them to do other part-time jobs to survive with the rising cost of living. There is a gap in the labour market where underemployment is high, especially among younger workers between the ages of 25 and 34. Labour market mismatch is also an issue, as most tertiary-educated workers are doing jobs that only require a lower level of qualification. It is worrying if this situation leads to an end where low-pay jobs are normalized³.

² Mohamed, A. A. (2015). Sexual harassment in Malaysian educational institutions: Causes and solutions. *IJASOS-International E-journal of Advances in Social Sciences*, 1(1), 17-26.

³ Aisyah, T. (2021, February 25). Labour Market Gaps: More than just unemployment. *Khazanah Research Institute*

https://www.krinstitute.org/assets/contentMS/img/template/editor/20210209_Views_LMGaps_FINAL4.pdf

A thematic report from MIDFR also mentioned that underemployment happened due to misalignment between the skill set provided by education institutions or required in the labour market and the local economy, which failed to create jobs that match the skills set of certain individuals⁴. Another study proved that mismatch incidence studies in Malaysia have concentrated on graduates, and between 31% and 35% of graduates take up jobs that do not conform to their respective fields of study⁵. In one of the cases also reported, a Mass Communication student had to work as a substitute teacher due to the lack of work in the same field available⁶ (for more details, please refer to Appendix H2).

This is alarming as guaranteed job opportunities for the youth in the future remain uncertain, which undeniably affects how recent graduates think. It is reported that 72% of them were not interested in continuing a higher level of education⁷. They are prone to just work and attain fast money from existing gig platforms like Food Panda and Grab, which do not even give a promising future, especially in terms of intellect and social benefits or protection, to our youth.

Recommendation:

1. Enforce higher national minimum wages on a differentiated basis, based on the cost of living in the areas and states.
2. Revisit the issue of mismatch between current subjects offered and future industry demand between the Ministry of Higher Education, the Ministry of Human Resources, the Ministry of International Trade and Industry, the Ministry of Development Entrepreneurs and Cooperatives, and industry related.
3. Develop an effective system of unemployment benefits or social protection for gig workers due to uncertain returns and risky jobs.

⁴ Muizz, M & Zafri, Z (2023, February 15). Improving Labour Market Yet Structural Issues Remained. Thematic Report MIDF Research <https://www.midf.com.my/sites/corporate/files/2023-02/Thematic-2022%20Employment%20Patterns-MIDF-150223.pdf>

⁵ Ting, Lim et al (December 28, 2020). Underemployment in Malaysia. *Asian Journal of Research in Business and Management* <https://myjms.mohe.gov.my/index.php/ajrbm/article/view/11572/5541>

⁶ Yusainy, Y (June 24, 2021). Belajar bidang lain kerja bidang lain. *Sinar Harian* <https://www.sinarharian.com.my/article/146029/belajar-bidang-lain-kerja-bidang-lain>

⁷ Suara Sinar (August 30, 2022). *Sinar Harian* <https://www.sinarharian.com.my/article/218895/suara-sinar/lidah-pengarang/tak-minat-sambung-belajar-isu-serius>

4. Promote the importance and significance of higher education and enrollment in TVET to youth.
5. Implement reasonable education fees in every educational institution, especially the government.
6. Provide wide incentives and scholarships, including technological benefits, for youth participating in skills-based courses.
7. Regulate more social welfare programs for low-wage workers, which include covering part of housing, healthcare, and childcare costs.