

Active volunteer driven by passion to help those in need

"My family wanted me to pursue business or law because they thought these were fields with more financially secure jobs. For me, I wanted to do something fulfilling," said Ms Norullayaley Mohd Ikbai, 23, who graduated from SMU with a Bachelor of Social Sciences, majoring in psychology as well as public policy and public management. She hopes to make a difference by working in healthcare. PHOTOS: COURTESY OF NORULLAYALEY MOHD IKBAL



Ms Norullayaley (middle, pink scarf), seen here with her grandmother and siblings, credited her family for their support.

Aqil Hamzah

Growing up in a single-parent home can be tough on a child but fresh graduate Norullayaley Mohd Ikbai said she was never hard done, with extended family, friends and neighbours all lending a hand.

Her mother, a therapist, always made time for her and her younger sister and she even found herself in a position to help others when she tutored underprivileged kids as a volunteer with Touch Young Arrows in secondary school.

The experience sparked a passion to help those in need and led Ms Norullayaley to study psychology at the Singapore Management University (SMU) to better understand the people she would help.

She recalled: "My family wanted me to pursue business or law be-

cause they thought these were fields with more financially secure jobs. For me, I wanted to do something fulfilling."

That drive was celebrated last Friday when Ms Norullayaley, 23, graduated from SMU with a Bachelor of Social Sciences, majoring in psychology and public policy and public management.

She said she has learnt a lot from her undergraduate studies, particularly as one of her projects focused on single parents.

The experience exposed her to those who had fallen through the cracks. "We had in-depth conversations with low-income single parents," she said.

"These interviews... took us deeper into the lives of single parents facing hardships."

Ms Norullayaley plans to work in healthcare with hopes of making a

difference by improving public health policy.

On weekends, she continues to volunteer, tutoring Primary 6 pupils over Zoom.

Ms Norullayaley paid tribute to her mother even as she celebrates being the first on her father's side to graduate from university. Her parents are separated, and she also has five half-siblings.

She described her mother, Madam Sarimah Soeradi, 55, as the "warmest, smartest, and most loving person" she knows, and said she often bounced ideas off her when stuck over schoolwork.

"She's very much involved and very supportive of me going on my own path."

"She's been there every step of the way," she added.

haqil@sph.com.sg