**NEW VERSION**

1. **Some students have a background, identity, interest, or talent that is so meaningful they believe their application would be incomplete without it. If this sounds like you, then please share your story.**

Laying beside my mother, I would gaze into her brown eyes that brought me both comfort and strength; her warm smile; her whispered prayers: “*Terima kasih Tuhan.* Thank you, God.” Then came a time when my three younger brothers and I would sleep in her bedroom to keep her company, for her eyes rarely gleamed since my father’s passing.

Semarang, Indonesia. The city where everybody knows everybody. Growing up, I was sensitive to comments from those who view our family as incomplete. I would often be questioned, “is mom’s business going well, dear? I hope you and your brothers are eating well.” Although well-intentioned, ten-year-old me nearly teared up. I can only imagine the comments my mother had to endure.

I took a deep breath. “We’re fine, auntie.”

Perhaps we were seen as frail, but one thing came clear to me at an early age: we are undeniably products conditioned by society, made to think that women, like my mother, are incapable of being breadwinners in the family.

Sometimes, I fell victim to this very mindset, concerned for my mother who had no corporate background in the complex wood industry my father left behind. Yet, I witnessed love and great strength when she left for the office, in hopes of seeking greater opportunities for her children. She became the reason for my initiative to take on new responsibilities at home. From washing dishes to lifting heavy tables, I made sure to complete each task with determination. Meanwhile, my brothers were sitting on the carpet, recklessly eating chips with flecks of seaweed scattered *everywhere*. “Clean it up. It’s a mess!” I yelled, as they exchanged looks; the kind that scorned, “it’s not my responsibility, but yours.” It’s ironic how the cartoons they watch portray female characters doing chore-related tasks, while the male characters have the freedom to do whatever they desire. These are the societal ideals my brothers are exposed to everyday. Part of me felt enraged, but I did not retaliate upon their reaction. Instead, I took this opportunity to defy such practices, negotiating tasks for each of us in exchange for time to watch Netflix- a good trade-off if I do say so myself. My mother would come home seeing them lay exhausted on the floor, their cheeks flushed when they realized how demanding these household tasks are.

I told my mom, “for as long as I’m the big sister in the household, a share of tasks will be fairly assigned.” She smiled. Since then, we’ve learned to support one another regardless of traditional gender roles. My desire to continue this influence lies beyond the walls of our home.

After years of persuading my mother to bring me to the office, it finally paid off. The board room was filled with professional executives in their fancy attire; it wasn’t just any room anyone could participate in. My place in that room was long reserved since my father passed. But I refused this luxury; if I wanted to contribute, I had to *earn* it. I wondered if the company had Instagram, considering its importance to the public and the organization. Immediately, I offered to help by designing posters on Canva and collaborated with the marketing department to send information on weekly posts. Like negotiating with my brothers at home, I’ve learned to delegate tasks while focusing on the creative aspect to attract potential buyers. Eventually, I gained their trust to participate in upcoming projects and found myself in a supportive environment with mutual respect: the perfect setting for me to engage in conversations and ask questions.

Seeing my mother’s eyes sparkle, I am reminded of a woman who has faced adversity, yet persevered beyond the limits of gender roles set by her community. I hope to continue her legacy by disrupting the standards imposed on women in society, and look forward to echoing her prayers of gratitude: *“Terima kasih Tuhan.”*

***650 words.***

**OLD VERSION**

1. **Some students have a background, identity, interest, or talent that is so meaningful they believe their application would be incomplete without it. If this sounds like you, then please share your story.**

Laying beside my mother, I would gaze into her brown eyes that brought me both comfort and strength. Her warm smile and whispered prayers, “*terima kasih Tuhan.*” Thank you, God. Then came a time when my three younger brothers and I would sleep in her bedroom to keep her company, for her eyes rarely gleamed since my father’s passing.

Semarang, Indonesia. The city where everybody knows everybody. Growing up, I was sensitive to comments from those who view our family as “incomplete.” I would often be questioned, “is mom’s business going well, dear? I hope you and your brothers are eating well.” Although well-intentioned, ten-year-old me nearly teared up at the sight of my brothers watching me in worry. I paused and took a deep breath. “We’re fine, auntie.”Perhaps we were seen as frail, but one thing came clear to me at an early age: we are undeniably products conditioned by society, made to think that women, like my mother, are incapable of being breadwinners in the family.

Sometimes, I fall victim to this very mindset; concerned for my mother who had no corporate background in the complex wood industry my father left behind. Yet, I witnessed her love and great strength when she left for work, in hopes of seeking greater opportunities for her children. She became the reason for my initiative to take on new responsibilities at home. From washing dishes to lifting heavy tables, I made sure to complete each task with determination. Meanwhile, my brothers were sitting on the carpet, recklessly eating chips. “Hey!” I snapped. The carpet had flecks of seaweed scattered *everywhere*- in places I just vacuumed. I was furious. “Clean it up. It’s a mess!” Lionel’s tiny legs waddled over to my side, “boys don’t clean, girls do.” I flashed a menacing stare. However, I stayed calm. This very moment changed the way I responded to difficult situations. Even my brothers were shocked because I did not retaliate. Instead, I began to negotiate as a way to counter his response, assigning tasks for each of us in exchange for time to watch Netflix- a good trade-off if I say so myself. With every sweat, my brothers lay exhausted on the floor, their cheeks burning red when they realized the energy household tasks demanded. At school, we were taught that chores were meant for women. At home, I chose to dismiss that role when my brothers and I learned to support one another for every challenging task, regardless of traditional gender roles. My desire to continue this influence lies beyond the walls of home.

After years of persuading my mother to cure my curiosity of how the company works, it finally paid off. The “board room” was filled with professional executives in their fancy attire; it wasn’t just any room anyone could participate in. However, my place in that room was long reserved since my father passed. But I refused this luxury; if I wanted to contribute, I had to *earn* it. The room bustled with ideas about corporate social responsibility being essential to the public and the company. With this in mind, I asked, “do we have Instagram?” The whole room shook their heads. Being “new” in an old place never shied me away from engaging in conversations and approaching new ideas with curiosity. Like negotiating with my younger brothers at home, I’ve mastered delegating tasks from design to statistics with peers in the marketing department. Being appointed social media manager was an honor, but the influence I made as a woman in business is a privilege I hope to pursue.

Seeing my mother’s eyes sparkle once again made me smile. For the first time, I saw myself in her brown eyes and felt more content than ever. In the face of adversity, I've learned to adapt; to confront difficult situations with a little more gratitude, and challenge the limits of gender roles in my community. Today, I feel more complete than ever, as I look forward to moments of gratitude. *“Terima kasih Tuhan.”*

***NEW IDEA:***

***Same concept, but make it about YOU even more***

***Show how you are independent,***

***Although you are a big sister, don’t let your pride overcome you***

Hi Nicole,

I think that the old version is more compact and clearer. I believe you could make the essay even stronger by emphasizing more on the things you’ve learned (leadership, independence, initiative to take charge, willingness to learn, teamwork) and how they have helped shape your identity. Please look at the comments I have inserted.

All the best!