**Describe the most significant challenge you have faced and the steps you have taken to overcome this challenge. How has this challenge affected your academic achievement?**

Ever since my first biopolymer experiment in G9 with cornstarch and vinegar, science has dissolved in me and polymerized in my brain. Experiments become my reason for learning and going to school. Unfortunately, C-19 (not C the carbon) hit and experiments had to stop as everything turned online. It felt like a switch in me was forced to be turned off as I started to lose motivation in school.

To motivate myself, I turned my mom’s kitchen into a lab: I used her oven for drying glassware and mixtures, her blender sticks to whisk banana peels, her Pyrex measuring cups as beakers, her strainer as filter, etc. in an attempt to do perform biopolymer experiments. It most definitely annoyed my mom because of the messes.

Continuing on to my biopolymer venture, I realized how much crab shell wastes were produced as I finished my favorite steamed crab dishes. There was some kind of waxy texture inside the shell. “Is wax kind of polymeric?” I thought to myself. So I did some research to validate my hypothesis and found that crustacean shells contain chitin that enhances bioplastic properties.

“It is possible to make biopolymers from crab shells!”

I immediately wanted to perform this experiment in my “lab.” However, it wasn’t feasible because the experiment would require the use of strong acids and bases. My mom would be furious. Plus, it is not safe.

Trying to realize my experiment plan, I contacted the school asking for permission to do the experiment, but they did not approve. To convince them, I did more research on Design of Experiments, detailed the step-by-step procedures, and wrote a proposal with timelines and safety measures. It wasn’t until several months later that they approved my experiment under strict conditions. Once more, I was able to continue my passion in science.

Although my learning motivation and journey weren’t smooth because of the sudden change of learning environment, it definitely didn’t stop me from pursuing my passion: Science. Something that started off as a reason to not lose motivation, had just given me more reasons to fulfill my passion.