

AGE is JUST a NUMBER:

a Sharing Experience of Living and Studying in National Cheng Kung University, Taiwan.

◎文 /Anastasia Anna (塔安娜)



圖：Taking a picture with Tainan Government and awardees

In my country, Indonesia, some people think that high education is not necessary. They think graduate from senior high school is enough. Many parents did not send their children to higher school because of not enough money. Their children would be better to get a job as soon as possible than continuing their studies to higher education. Indonesian Ministry of Education (2020) reported only 34.58% of students in Indonesia to continue their study to higher education compared to Malaysia (50%), Singapore (78%), and South Korea (98%). However, in my mind, higher education is not only for getting a lot of money but also for improving the mindset about life itself. So, I think and work hard about how to get a good education for me and my children, here I will share my experiences of studying in Taiwan.

My name is Anastasia Anna; I am 58 years old, a single mother with two children. I work as a lecturer in the Faculty of Nursing of Universitas Padjadjaran in Bandung West-Java Province, Indonesia. At this moment, I am a Ph.D. student in the Department of Nursing in Medicine College of National Cheng Kung University, Taiwan. I enrolled in the fall semester of 2018 and am an abundant blessing that I have a very kind advisor- Hsing-Mei Chen, RN.,

Ph.D. - who supports my study until this phase.

There are so many reasons why I am so proud to be a Ph.D. student at NCKU; the first and foremost reason for me is I want to make my mother proud and happy in heaven, and I want to prove to others (especially my father's family) that my mother, as a nurse, is the greatest mother who raised me to be like this. The second reason is I want to be a good role model for my children, I want them to feel proud to have a single mother like me. The third reason is at NCKU I find many bright and outstanding nursing scholars who give me a lot of knowledge, I believe that after I graduate from NCKU, I will be a good nurse, good lecturer, good researcher, good writer, good thinker, good decision-maker, and good leadership with the best professional attitude/behavior. The next reason is that I had the opportunity to study Mandarin at NCKU freely for 2 semesters, it was also a big opportunity for me because the cost of learning Chinese is very expensive in my country. The last and very important reason, I want to prove to everyone that age is just a number, even though in November I was 58 years old, but most importantly my enthusiasm for learning is like a 25-year-old student, hopefully, it can inspire others.

Many people often make excuses for their age when asked to continue their studies, even though they are less than 40 years old. I understand why they are like that, and I also realize the physiological process of aging. So, to anticipate all those aging problems that I can face in my study, I made these strategies.

The first strategy when I came to Tainan was choosing a safe place to live. I live in Taiwan without my children, so I think the NCKU dormitory is the safest place for me. This place is safe from any kind of disasters such as typhoons and earthquakes. I occupy a room with other international students, so every day I can practice speaking English with my roommate. Sometimes, we talk without using good grammar, but we still can understand each other. I can learn about many cultures from them either, and until now, I have learned some cultures from Vietnam, Bangladesh, India, and Eswatini. It is a very interesting experience.

In the first semester, I was very excited to become a student at NCKU, so I worked very hard to achieve my targets. Until one day, I could not sleep well for about one month because many problems came; including I got crisis hypertension, till I got two medications to release it; I should get physiotherapy for my neck and left arm three times a week, and I changed my glasses. All of those happened because I stared at the laptop screen for many hours and I did not manage myself appropriately. I realized that at this moment, my capabilities and my body health were different than I was twenty years ago. Then, every



圖：My little booklet

month I create a schedule for all of my activities as my second strategy. I learn, read, and prepare for all assignments earlier than my friends. I also go to bed before 12 am, even though my work has not finished yet. To keep my body healthy, I do exercise either, I do it three times a week in 15-30 minutes. Every day I never forget to consume fruits. Every Sunday is my break time, I do any kind out of my school job such as going to the church, talking with my children, and do many other activities to refresh my mind. I always try to commit to my schedule, so day by day my anxiety and stress decrease, and I never get sick anymore. Nowadays, I always feel happy doing my study.

Sometimes I feel bored doing the same activities everyday then to solve it my third strategy was finding activities that make me happy and enjoy. Besides learning, reading articles, and finishing my assignments, I also do my hobbies. I like taking care of plants, so I asked the dorm manager to allow me to have some plants on the balcony of my room. Taking care of plants also can release my stressor. Further, I also like making scrapbooks from secondhand kinds of stuff or I create from any stuff around me. This activity is also making me happy and enjoy, but I need to set my alarm because if I have engaged with my scrapbook, it is very difficult to stop. I always make birthday-card using scrapbook for my advisor's birthday. I have attended a competition from the Tainan government to promote Tainan. I made a small booklet and put it in a small old box, which previously contained Turkish-made cookies. I promoted Tainan as a friendly city with a focus on "Halal" food, and I received an award from the Tainan government.

Another thing that makes me happy living and studying in Taiwan is conducting service days at the NCKU Hospital as an interpreter for both English and Indonesian. I do it twice a week for three hours in the afternoon. By doing this job, I learned something from some women my age who work

as volunteers; they open my mind that even though we are old, we must still be useful to many people. Their spirits encouraged me to finish my study according to the target I set. Moreover, by helping the patients and talking with the volunteers twice a week at the hospital, I also can improve my Chinese. This is a very interesting experience and sometimes so funny either.

By sharing my experience, I want to encourage everyone who wants to continue her/his studies and think her/his age is a burden. Regardless of your age, you can do your best. The most important thing is always to keep your spirit to achieve your goal. Before it, you better recognize your strengths and weaknesses properly. Then, when you set the schedules to maintain your physical health, mental health, social and spiritual needs, you set it regarding your strength and weakness, so that you can really commit to the schedule you have set. For example, to maintain a healthy body, I do not prefer monotonous exercise, I like dancing as my exercise. So in my schedule, I set the right time that I can dance without disturbing my roommate. Another thing, to keep my blood pressure stable, I both write in my schedule and use an alarm so I can take the medication regularly.

All in all of my experiences studying in Taiwan, I believe that age is just a number. I enjoy my study by maintaining my physical, psychological, social, and spiritual health comprehensively, based on the schedules I set according to my toughness and weakness. I enjoy my life by thinking: this is not the time to get everything I want, but this is the time to appreciate everything I have. Hopefully, my experiences can inspire many people, especially those who still doubtful to study because of age.



圖：My picture with volunteers, information-desk staffs, and an interpreter from Vietnam.