

#PERSPECTIVE

STUDYING ABROAD IN YOUR 30S: The emotional rollercoaster of a mother



In the tranquil town of Växjö, Sweden, where the weather often shifts from serene snowfall to crisp, clear days, I embark on a journey that few might understand. In my late 30s, I am an older student navigating the complexities of higher education, far from my homeland of Bangladesh, managing a home and business remotely, and most heartbreakingly, away from my beloved children, Amayra and Azaan.



Each morning, I wake up to a silence that is both comforting and disconcerting. The stillness of my villa contrasts sharply with the lively chaos of home. As I sit down with my morning coffee, I brace myself for the day ahead — a day filled with classes, assignments, and the omnipresent struggle to belong in a foreign land. The weather in Växjö can be as unpredictable as my emotions, a metaphor for the turbulence within.

Everyday life here feels like a tightrope walk. Balancing academic responsibilities with business management leaves me drained. Anxiety and panic attacks have become unwelcome companions, creeping in during quiet moments. The fear of failure looms large, a shadow that darkens even the brightest Swedish day. It whispers incessantly, “What if you don’t succeed? What if you fail?” But the most haunting question is, “What if staying back home

In addition to my academic and business responsibilities, I am also working on a joint venture project with my friend Dennis. His unwavering support during these difficult times has been a pillar of strength for me. Along this challenging road, I have met wonderful friends and acquaintances who have gone beyond their limits to stand by me. It amazes me how some people, whom I didn’t even know a year ago, have become my constant support system in such a short time.

The decision to study abroad at this stage in life was not taken lightly. It was driven by a desire to better provide for my family, and to secure a future that holds promise and opportunities. However, the reality of living it is far more challenging than anticipated. The emotional toll is immense. I cry often, a release of the pent-up frustration, loneliness, and longing.

Despite the hardships, there are moments of resilience. There are days when I manage to pull myself up, fuelled by a sense of determination and the faint hope that this struggle will eventually pay off. I remind myself that this is a temporary phase, a stepping stone towards a brighter future. The resilience that comes with motherhood also drives me forward. If I can bring Amayra and Azaan into this world, I can surely navigate this difficult journey.

Sometimes, my coffee gets colder and colder as I forget to drink it, lost in the whirlwind of tasks and thoughts. My life away from home, away from my comfort zone, is something I never imagined. It is tough, especially knowing that I cannot take on any job that is available here. Financially, I am often broke, a situation I have never faced since I started working.

This financial strain adds another layer of stress to my already challenging circumstances.

The Swedish weather, with its unpredictable changes, mirrors my fluctuating emotions. There are days when the sun shines bright, casting a hopeful glow on my path. On such days, I feel invincible, ready to conquer the world. Then there are days when the grey skies and relentless rain echo my inner turmoil, making every step forward a struggle.

Being a mother away from her children is an emotional and physical trial. The guilt, the sadness, the anxiety—all form a part of my daily existence. Yet, every night as I lay down to sleep, I remind myself of my purpose. I think of Amayra and Azaan, and I find the strength to face another day.

In sharing my story, I hope to reach out to others in Bangladesh who may be considering a similar path. I want to say this: pursuing education and career goals away from home is not a failure. It is a testament to our strength, our resilience, and our love for our families. It is okay to cry, to feel overwhelmed, and to miss home. What matters is that we rise each day, despite the challenges, and keep moving forward.

As I continue this journey in Växjö, amidst the fluctuating weather and my emotional storms, I hold onto the hope that one day, the sacrifices will lead to a better future for my children and myself. Until then, I take it one day at a time, fuelled by coffee, technology, and unyielding love for my children.

By Tahmina Tasnitm Nitu
Photo: Courtesy



The routine begins: checking emails, attending lectures, and making business decisions from afar. Technology has been my saving grace. Through the screen, I can see my children’s smiles, hear their laughter, and share in their daily lives, albeit virtually. Yet, as the video call ends, mummy guilt sets in, a heavy weight on my heart. I question my choices, wondering if pursuing this degree is worth the sacrifice of being away from Amayra and Azaan.

would have been better for my children?”

The struggle to fit in is real. Despite the friendly and inclusive atmosphere of Linnaeus University, I often feel like an outsider. My classmates, most of whom are much younger, seem to glide effortlessly through their days. Meanwhile, I grapple with feelings of inadequacy and the overwhelming urge to return home, to where my heart truly belongs—with my children.