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Women in Multiple Roles: Study and Motherhood Combined

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ABSTRACT

This qualitative research project aimed to explore the experiences of women who were actively involved in both studying and motherhood roles. Interviews were conducted with twelve women who were involved in formal tertiary study, either on a full-time or part-time basis, and had a pre-school aged child. One semi-structured in-depth interview was conducted with each woman over a three month period. Interviews were audiotaped, transcribed and later analysed using thematic analysis practices.

Through analysing the experiences of these women, eight organising themes arose signifying areas of importance to the participants. The eight themes described how their children influenced their decision to study at this time in their lives, what they personally derive from their role as student, their satisfaction and difficulties with childcare, the support they receive from both family and friends, the benefits they experience from combining these roles, the spillover experienced from combining these roles, the impact they believe this has on their children and their own health and well-being and the feelings of support they experienced from other students in similar circumstances.

The common view shared by these women is that although occupying multiple roles does indeed bring additional stressors and strains to their daily lives, it also provides rewards which would not be enjoyed through each role individually.

Suggestions are presented from which tertiary institutions can work to further assist and accommodate the changing nature and needs of their student population, namely women with young children.
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