

Student Parents or Parent Students in Lockdown Pandemic? A Third Space approach

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Abstract

The pandemic has affected families in many ways. Parents, who at the same time are studying, tend to be an under-represented cohort of adult learners, and in this study, their experiences and reflections, on how they navigated through their dual identities during lockdown, are explored. Through an online survey, 91 student parents from 20 different higher education institutions in the United Kingdom shared their views as to how they balanced their parenting and studying responsibilities during lockdown in early 2021. Findings indicate how student parents felt both their roles were impacted rather negatively, but also how the pandemic provided them opportunities for bridging and resisting binaries, through the emergence of a Third Space (Bhabha, H. K. (1994). *The location of culture*. New York, NY: Routledge; Soja, E. W. (1996). *Third space: Journeys to Los Angeles and other real-and-imagined places*. Malden, MA: Blackwell). The study shows how student parents re-positioned their identities, identified ways to manage disruptions caused by the lockdown and acknowledged family time and family relationships as very important.

Keywords

child care, education, family health, parent/child relations, power dynamics

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Introduction

The COVID-19 crisis has created monumental changes and challenges throughout the globe. Most families with children had to adapt, adjust and cope with this novice reality in many ways. Family structures and processes altered with an increased sense of negative emotions and sensitivity to social risk (Prime, Wade, & Browne, 2020), with substantial tandem impacts on both parents and children (Patrick et al., 2020). Thus, everyday life for every family member has been re-directed and re-positioned at a micro- and macro-level since the pandemic.

In some families, the disruption of the lockdown came hand-in-hand with the shift to home working (for some parents) and home learning (for most children) (Andrew et al., 2020). Thus, this disruption would be evenly complex in families with student parents. Student parents, as a particular cohort of adult learners, traditionally engage in a balancing act between their roles of parenting and being a student where they negotiate their time, needs, responsibilities and aspirations (Moreau & Kerner, 2015). Through the pandemic and the lockdown this balancing act was affected and embodied through varied personal life stories.

To this end, the aim of this study is to explore how parent students experienced, navigated and acted upon their dual roles during the pandemic lockdown. Through their personal narratives student parents in the United Kingdom share how they envisaged their role of parent, their role of higher education student and their combined identity through the challenging moments, uncertainty as well as opportunities that the lockdown elicited. The Third Space Theory (Bhabha, 1994) is considered in understanding how the binary conceptualisation of both roles has been bridged through the transformative and fluid 'both-and-also' (Soja, 1996) sense of being a parent student, despite the restrictions deriving from the pandemic.

Literature Review

Student Parents

Under the premises of lifelong learning and widening participation in higher education, student parents form a population of increased interest over the last 15 years. Thus, their voices and experiences have gradually become a matter of study that informs policy, practice and theory (Brooks, 2012; Gerrard & Roberts, 2006; Marandet & Wainwright, 2010; Moreau & Kerner, 2015). Student parents often describe their experiences as a 'balancing act', where they aim to distribute time to the needs of their family, to their studies and to other activities and people that matter in their lives (Moreau & Kerner, 2015). In doing so, student parents navigate through their fluid dual status, which

frequently, but not always, may cause dilemmas and contradictions (Estes, 2011).

When parenting and student are paired there is the emergence of a new identity, that of the student parent. Being a parent and being a student continually intersect and reshape each other, through a dynamic process of continuous reinterpretation and rearticulation (Estes, 2011). According to Holstein & Gubrium (2000, p. 99), student parents draw from 'culturally recognisable discourses' to understand, define and refine their identities as student parents. They value their identities as parents and students separately and aim at being a 'good parent' and a 'good student' through their dual identities. Furthermore, the institutional and cultural norms and ideals associated with being a parent and being a student influence how student parents try to balance these intersecting identities (Estes, 2011). Nevertheless, this ongoing process might be met with struggles, uncertainties and opportunities (Scharp, Cooper, Worwood, & Dorrance Hall, 2020).

Based on student parents' own accounts, some student parents merge their identities as student and parent by explaining how their education makes them better parents; education is seen as beneficial to their children and their children as advantageous to their education (Estes, 2011). Under this account, parents are better students, they are committed and motivated to finish and are successful because their success will benefit their children. Children are often a driving force behind their decision to enter or remain in higher education (Brooks, 2012), and their time away from their children will allow them to provide their children with greater knowledge, more financial resources and more quality time in the future. Being a student is then articulated as a way of being a 'better' parent in the longer term, even though it implies compromising the ideal of the 'good' parent in the shorter term (Moreau & Kerner, 2015).

The main challenges student parents face, according to their views, relate to time, finances, and possible health and emotional issues (Moreau, 2016). Student parents have shown high levels of sleep deprivation (Marandet & Wainwright, 2010), high occurrence of depression (Gerrard & Robert, 2006), as well as feelings of guilt, of 'missing out' and 'not fitting in' regarding family life and studies (Moreau & Kerner, 2015). They have also reported uncertainty-induced stress related to their transition to academia and parenting that, in turn, has been associated with adverse mental and physical health outcomes (Gerrard & Roberts, 2006; Scharp & Dorrance Hall, 2018).

The personal views of parent students as well as the wider support systems in place intertwine while managing these dual identities and the uncertainties that derive (Scharp et al., 2020). Van Rhijn and Lero (2014) found in their study with 398 student parents that their own beliefs in their ability to function adequately (self-efficacy) in their studies and parental roles predicted their perceived ability to meet the demands of their multiple roles and satisfaction

with life. Interestingly, according to this study, family satisfaction fully mediates the relationship between studies – family balance and life satisfaction. Therefore, the experiences of student parents are vital to be heard in order to understand how success in both roles as students and parents are interpreted and understood. Under these lines, the current study aims to address student parents' voices of how they have experienced their student parent identities under the particular condition of pandemic lockdown.

Third Space

The Third Space theory is used to explore and understand the spaces 'in between' two or more discourses, conceptualisations or binaries at a physical and ideological level (Bhabha, 1994). According to Soja (1996), 'thirdspace is a purposively tentative and flexible term that attempts to capture what is a constantly shifting milieu of ideas, events, appearances and meanings' (p. 2). Consequently, this symbolic space blends binaries or 'opposing categories to open new alternatives' (Soja, 1996, p. 5) and involves continuous negotiations and the integration of new perspectives, arguments and counter-arguments (Zeichner, 2010). In the Third Space, it is possible to collapse traditional (dualistic) hierarchies and to revitalise voices, narratives and experiences. These, in turn, may lead to new knowledge and new discourses through a challenging but fruitful process.

For Moje et al. (2011), the Third Space is a space with three aims: (1) to build bridges between marginalised and dominant discourses or understandings, (2) to enable members to navigate across different discourses and ways of knowing and (3) to create conversational spaces that bring competing or contradictory ideas into dialogue. Therefore, the Third Space enables participants to see connections and contradictions and to dislodge competing understandings that emerge through the first and second space. Zeichner (2010) agrees that the Third Space is where participants overcome binaries and instead look for bridges and equalisers that afford 'homogenizing', unifying forces (Bhabha, 1994, p. 54). Similarly, Soja (1996) underlines that the Third Space provides alternatives to divisive 'either/or' thinking by enabling combinations of ideas, leading to reciprocal relationships between 'knowledge creators' and 'knowledge users'.

The Third Space has strong resonance in many fields, including social sciences (Gutiérrez, 2008; Gutiérrez, Banquedano-López, & Tejada, 1999; Moje et al., 2011). It is perceived as a navigational space as well as a transformative space of cultural, social and epistemological change (Moje et al., 2011). This 'and/also' or 'in-between' space enables participants to become more central to their learning, discourages othering and provides opportunities for reflection on new and shared understandings and practices (Gutiérrez et al., 1999). The third space is about 'both-and-also' (Soja, 1996)

and this 'in-between-ness' is fluid and wholly dependent on and not constrained by the interplay of the social, spatial and historical conditions.

The Third Space in this paper is the hybrid changeable space where parents-students identify and explore their dual roles through bridging, navigating and transforming their understandings and experiences. Given the new reality of the pandemic lockdown and the massive changes in their family and study lives, parent students embarked on a third space where the 'either parent or student' roles and identities are negotiated and brought together, in mind and space (Soja, 1996). The aim of this study is to unpick the elements of this Third Space, based on parents-students' personal reflections and experiences.

Lockdown Pandemic Research

Recent research revealed that families have experienced the lockdown differently based on a number of factors. The satisfaction and wellbeing of those with dependent children during the lockdowns was significantly lower than that of individuals without dependent children (Huebener, Waights, Spiess, Siegel, & Wagner, 2021). In addition, negative effects were found to be increased for parents of younger children, for women, for those with lower educational attainment and for parents who reported being affected by closures of day care centres and schools (Huebener et al., 2021). Parents felt additional pressures caused by pandemic-related school closures, with mothers seemingly being impacted by this more than fathers (Andrew et al., 2020). These closures compounded a global childcare crisis which existed prior to the pandemic but was intensified during the pandemic (Gromada et al., 2020). Similarly, Chen, Byrne and Vélez (2021) found in their study in the United States that family income and race/ethnicity played a significant role in the lives of families coping with a variety of challenges due to the pandemic.

Ayuso, Requena, Jiménez-Rodriguez, & Khamis (2020) raised the question of whether families adapted or changed during these restrictions, raising an interesting question regarding the longer-term impacts of this period. Family systems theory conveys an understanding that stressors which impede the functioning of one family member may lead to changes in the functioning of all family members (Prime et al., 2020). It therefore follows that the functioning of the whole family would be impacted by negative effects upon student parents due to the additional demands of studying simultaneously with managing their dependent children during school closures, requiring them to split their focus (Arowshola, 2020).

Further to this, the pandemic was seen to exacerbate many existing inequalities and differences of which student parents are likely to have been impacted significantly. Lebow (2020) emphasised that access to the technological requirements for families to connect during the pandemic was

polarised due to economic inequality and disparity. This will have particularly affected families in which the parents were students, due to the need for simultaneous use being required. Furthermore, this scenario would have been compounded by the fact that students often have minimal income, resulting in them having reduced means to purchase the necessary technology despite having significant need for it. Certainly, [Arowoshola \(2020\)](#) observed that whilst technology had facilitated good levels of student engagement on the whole, within the student parent cohort this was often not the case. Alongside these broad observations, there have inevitably been additional individual differences present in the responses and adaptive behaviours of families to the pandemic disruption ([Prime et al., 2020](#)).

Higher education institutions made hasty transitions to online pedagogy during the early stages of the COVID-19 pandemic ([Crawford et al., 2020](#)). [Savage et al. \(2020\)](#) observed during early lockdown that the mental well-being and physical activity of students decreased, and their perceived stress and time spent sedentary increased. It has also been conversely argued that despite the challenges and inherent risks associated with the pandemic, pathways to resilience were available and important to explore ([Rolland, 2020](#)). It is possible that the negative cascade of pandemic-induced social disruption may be interrupted at multiple junctures through research, policy, advocacy and lobbying, with a significant role for professional organisations in the areas of child and family well-being and mental health ([Prime et al., 2020](#)). It is therefore key to examine what form this may take and how pathways to resilience could be incorporated into community structures and processes. With this in mind, [Lin et al. \(2021\)](#) called for higher education institutions to reach out to student parents during the pandemic and prioritise their needs in order to ensure their continued engagement and completion of studies.

Methodology

Design, Tools and Participants

This mixed methods study explored student parents' views through an online survey of 18 questions, both open-ended and closed. The survey was piloted initially and allowed participants to provide their opinions and narratives regarding their experiences through the lockdown period. This inclusive, pluralistic and complementary form of research ([Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004](#)) was selected in order to capture participants' life stories.

The online survey was distributed and disseminated through University and Student Union networks and associations nationally. The survey was open for a 10 day period, towards the end of the third national lockdown, end of February 2021, in order to capture recency. During this period primary and

secondary schools were closed and probably most participants would have needed to homeschool their children. Data collection aimed at participants' ongoing experiences while being a parent and a student constrained at home, during lockdown; therefore, the mixed methods approach gave a more panoramic view of the research landscape, through different viewpoints and diverse research lenses (Shorten & Smith, 2017).

Participants were part-time or full-time parent students at a UK higher education institution, regardless of gender, geographic location, level or subject of study and/or family circumstances. Participants were recruited randomly and participation was voluntary.

Ethics

The study ensured anonymity, confidentiality, privacy and the right of participants to withdraw. Participants were made aware of the scope of the study and were asked to share their views and experiences as a parent student during lockdown. The study was granted ethical approval by the School of Education Ethics Committee of Liverpool Hope University in early 2021 and adhered to the Ethical Guidelines for Educational Research (BERA, 2018), acknowledging ethical implications of the study.

Data Analysis

A content analysis approach was used to organise and elicit meanings from responses to the survey. As such, the four distinct main stages were followed: the decontextualisation, the recontextualisation, the categorisation and the compilation (Bengtsson, 2016). In order to increase the validity of the study, both researchers performed the analysis separately and then discussed their results and obtain consensus, through the process of triangulation.

Findings

There were 91 student parents from 20 different higher education Institutions in the United Kingdom who participated in the study; 85 female and 6 male participants. 55 student parents were studying an undergraduate degree, 33 a postgraduate degree and 3 another type of degree. From the sample, 72 participants reported being married or co-habiting, 18 reported being single/lone parents and there was 1 grandparent raising their grandchild besides studying.

Overall, 46.2% of the participants found it hard and 29.7% very hard to balance the demands of parenting and studying during the period of lockdown. 17.6% found it manageable and only 6 participants found it easy or very easy. The analysis identifies the features of the first space, participants' views on

their parenting role during lockdown, the features of the second space, participants' views on their student role during lockdown and how these lead to the emergence of the third 'in-between' space where student parents bridge, navigate and transform their dual identities.

First Space (Being a Parent During Lockdown)

73.6% of the student parents identified their role as a parent being more restrictive than before the lockdown, 13.2% felt more liberating and 13.2% the same as before. Overall, student parents used the precise words 'hard', 'difficult', 'challenging' and 'struggle' to characterise their parenting experiences through lockdown by 44.4% of the responses to question 7. [Table 1](#) summarises the ways in which student parents felt the new lockdown reality affected their role as a parent, in both positive and negative ways.

More than one third of the participants presented feelings of guilt, failure and/or limited capacity to meet their children's needs. In 35.5% of the responses, aspects of 'bad parenting' were addressed, either as an inadequacy to give children attention (12.2%) or through personal feelings and images of oneself as a parent. For instance, 'spending time with my children has been invaluable but I have often experienced self doubt in whether my parenting is good enough' (p. 80) and 'I don't get to play or enjoy my time with them much at all. Mum guilt is huge' (p. 48). Other participants admitted feeling as if they were 'loosing the plot, self identity, a shouting mum and an awful student' (p. 4) or as '... a rubbish parent who is stressed all the time and hasn't got time for my kids' (p. 7) or as 'failing most days' (p. 54).

In addition, 13.3% of the parent students found parenting during lockdown rather stressful. This stress was recorded as constant, 'stressed out more, stuck inside with two boys who need interaction and excitement', (p. 18) or as sporadic, 'at times a stressed one' (p. 47). Also, participants recognised that the stressful context derived from external factors, like 'school expectations causing additional stress and arguments' (p. 84) and from more personal ones, like: '... I like to think my kids see me as a positive role model...improving myself through study. Worry they think I don't have time for them' (p. 88).

Table 1. Impact of Lockdown on the Parenting Role.

Positive Experiences	Negative Experiences
Better relationships stemming from more family time (13.3%)	Considerations of 'bad parenting' (35.5%)
More organised, structured, proactive (12.2%)	Tiredness and limited time (21.2%) Stress and worry (13.3%)

Participants also highlighted their parenting role to be affected by lack of time, tiredness and changes in their temper (21.2%). Limited patience, not being fun, being grumpy or irritable resonated in some responses. Limited time was related mainly in regards to family time, ‘... can’t give my children the time and care they need’ (p. 25) and less in regards to oneself ‘no space away of for my self’ (p. 33).

On the other hand, 13.3% participants referred to the benefits of spending more time with their children in leading to closer bonds and stronger relationships. This is reflected in the following response, ‘we’ve enjoyed the extra family time, learning lots of new things and spending time together - this has meant my relationship with my children has got even closer’ (p. 81). Student parents acknowledged the challenges of parenting through lockdown, but they also appreciated the value of spending more family time together; ‘It has been hard but nice to spend time with him that I wouldn’t have’ (p. 9). Also, 11 parent students found that through the lockdown experience their parenting in terms of organisation and structure improved, mentioning being ‘much more organised, committed, determined’ (p. 50).

When elaborating on their opinions about themselves as parents during pandemic, 23.3% of the participants expressed how they felt as a parent by mentioning their student duties too. Student parents would describe aspects of their parenting role by making links to their student role, showing how these roles intersect and sometimes might be in conflict.

I feel like I’m either failing my children’ education or my own. There appears to be an either one or the other; if I find time for my own work I feel I let them down, if I help them, I worry I fall behind. (p. 34)

Lastly, participants would detail the variety of ‘additional’ roles that emerged because of the lockdown and the subsequent changes in family life. They would see themselves as ‘teacher, friend, counsellor, technology expert, cook, cleaner, mum’ (p. 43) or ‘A parent. A teacher. A friend. A motivator. A stress. A world. An entertainer. A worry’ (p. 60). Thus, participants would prioritise their role as a parent above the rest, ‘... I ‘m first and foremost a Mother’ (p. 69).

Second Space (Being a Student During Lockdown)

Student parents expressed aspects of their role as a student during the recent lockdown through negative connotations by 60.4%. On the contrary, only 39.6% of the participants felt their studies and student experience had gains while being a parent student during pandemic. ‘I have found being a student at this time helpful as it has helped me to keep my mind off everything else going

on' (p. 70) and 'hardworking. Found identity seen as a student not just mum' (p. 87) were two positive comments.

From the responses that identified negative attributes to studying while a parent, 36.6% acknowledged meeting the basic requirements and not being able to commit fully. This was reflected in a few responses, like '... trying to balance everything but haven't been able to give my all to my studies all of the time' (p. 24) or 'not been able to work as well as I have done in the previous years. The environment is not helping me study' (p. 33). Similarly, another student parent felt like 'someone who will do what needs to be done to pass but certainly not getting deep knowledge and understanding' (p. 42) or another student parent had a more reflective stance by mentioning 'not at my usual standard' (p. 69). Participants in these instances recognise that the situational circumstances led to their inability to fully engage and endorse their studies.

The most identifiable reason for this lack of commitment to the student role is time restrictions. 32.7% of the participants who experienced their student role negatively would state time limitations; 'I haven't really been a student as all my other responsibilities have taken over most of my time' (p. 18). Secondly, participants mentioned finding difficulties to concentrate and feeling distracted by 14.5%, as noted 'I can't concentrate and my grades are slipping' (p. 5); thirdly, they considered lack of motivation by 10.9%, 'not as dedicated, less motivated less confident than before' (p. 55) and stressed by 10.9%.

Responses from student parents underlined how the new studying online experience differed from what was happening before the pandemic; 'I think there is no replacement of in-person teaching and learning experience' (p. 88). The main change in a rather negative way, according to 20% of the responses, was the restricted University support systems, 'struggling with assignments and failing to get the support I need from my university' (p. 44) and the lack of connectivity and interaction with others, 'I've missed the opportunity to speak properly to other students about our course which I think is usually a valuable part of being part of a uni cohort' (p. 88).

Third Space (Bridging and Navigating Through Studies and Parenting)

In identifying ways through which the binary roles of parenting and studying during lockdown have been balanced, almost one third of the participants indicated extensive and stretched times. 28.5% of the participants made specific reference to being a parent during the day and being a student during the night or when children were asleep; 'Stayed up late to complete work when kids in bed' (p. 36) or 'My studies start early to avoid clashing with schools so

Table 2. Participants' Priorities for After Lockdown.

More time with family and friends	47.7%
More time outdoors, more exercise and less screen time	40.9%
More time on University work	4.5%

I'm up at 4am ready to hit the books by 5am' (p. 71). Such adjustments led to exhaustion and tiredness, according to most participants.

Similarly, the timing element is reflected in a number of responses that emphasise how a strict routine and time management have contributed in maintaining a balance between the various roles and responsibilities, '[I] organised my time according to the demands of my study and children. Try to study early morning or late evening, when my children do not need me that much' (p. 86). This segregation of duties based on time arrangements was mentioned in 15.2% of the responses.

While considering the duality between the parent and student role, 12% of the participants explicitly indicated that the parenting role came first and the student role second, whereas only 2 participants explicitly mentioned that their student role was more important. Here, participants experienced their dual roles as 'either/or', having to prioritise the one at the cost of the other. As stated, 'there hasn't been much balance. I am always a parent first. My student role has taken a back seat and this has had an effect on my health' (p. 19). Under similar lines, another student parent underlined "I'm a parent first, I'm a student when I have time. Sometimes that may be from 12-4am' (p. 30).

Another emerging theme captured the support some participants felt facilitated their dual roles. This support mainly stemmed from family members, like partners, grandparents or husbands (15.3%) and in one case a participant acknowledged the support from nursery. Two participants with teenage children referred to the support and understanding they received from their children, 'my 14yr old son is amazing which helps me to balance all aspects of home life and student life' (p. 64).

In response to the question whether participants will or would like to make any changes to their family/children's own life when lockdown lifts, the most common answers underlined the acknowledgement of quality family time and choices, then the parental role and child support and finally the student role and University focus (Table 2).

Discussion and Conclusions

Overall, findings show that the majority of student parents felt their dual roles were both affected by the lockdown in a rather negative way and identified a number of additional roles that surfaced. They emphasised how this

experience had a strong impact on their parenting role by reporting feelings and aspects of 'bad parenting', tiredness and limited time, stress and worry. Similarly, participants felt lack of engagement and commitment to their studies due to time restrictions, distractions and lack of motivation and connectivity with the wider University, due to the online context. Struggles and uncertainties in being a parent student have been underlined previously (Scharp et al., 2020) and equally, student parents have identified time and emotional challenges (Moreau, 2016), sleep deprivation (Marandet & Wainwright, 2010), feelings of guilt and 'missing out' (Moreau & Kerner, 2015) and uncertainty-induced stress (Scharp & Dorrance Hall, 2018).

Furthermore, the study revealed how some student parents felt the pandemic provided them and their family with opportunities and positive experiences. Regarding their parenting role, some participants appreciated that the lockdown enabled more family time and in turn strengthened family relationships. Spending more time together as a family reinforced some student parents in being more organised, structured and proactive. However, according to the study by Andrew et al. (2020), the implications of spending more family time together, due to the pandemic, vary. They found that even though COVID-19 affected all families with children, it has not affected them all equally as demands related to parenting, domestic responsibilities, child care, leisure time and sleep were found to be coped differently in families from diverse socio-economic backgrounds.

40% of the participants acknowledged gains in being a student during the pandemic, while they felt their studies counter-balanced and intersected with their parenting role. In these cases, student parents find that being a student leads to being a 'better person and parent', at least in long term (Brooks, 2012; Estes, 2011; Moreau & Kerner, 2015). This dynamic process stems from 'culturally recognisable discourses' that shape, define and refine the parent student identities (Holstein & Gubrium, 2000). As such, both identities interchange as a balancing act where challenges, uncertainties as well as opportunities (Moreau & Kerner, 2015) lead to new perspectives and understandings (Zeichner, 2010).

Thus, student parents embarked on a Third Space (Bhabha, 1994; Soja, 1996), where they re-conceptualised the dualistic hierarchies of being a parent and/or being a student in finding connections and ways to cope with the lockdown reality. Through their personal revitalised voices and narratives, student parents underlined predominantly the struggles and challenges experienced, but also acknowledged the opportunities and alternatives that occurred. They recognised that sometimes the lockdown implications led them to divisive roles, like parent by day and student by night, but through negotiations, they were enabled to overcome othering (Gutiérrez et al., 1999) and resist dominant binary discourses (Moje et al., 2011), like 'good enough student' and 'good enough parent'.

In bridging both identities, participants highlighted the role of a strict routine and time management as well as the contribution of social support, either from family or more broadly from social networks. These mechanisms of support and pathways to resilience need to be taken forward in addressing student parents' needs in respect to both their family and study lives. Lin et al. (2021) calls for higher education institutions to set in place processes and procedures to ensure student parents' continued engagement and completion of studies, given the pandemic-based shifts. Similarly, child and family well-being organisations and provisions can play a significant role in facilitating families with student parents to confront uncertainty and disruption (Prime et al., 2020). Further research could be directed in enlightening the characteristics of supportive systems, policies and practices for student parents, their children and their wider family context (Chen et al., 2021).

In answering what changes or habits participants would sustain after the lockdown, the majority considered more quality time with family and friends, more time outdoors including exercise and less screen time and, lastly, more focus on their studies. Overall, student parents tended to mention and include in their narratives more frequently their parental role rather than their student role, underlining how they feel being a parent is highly important. A larger sample could provide more detailed accounts in these re-conceptualisations. Thus, such aspirations need to be taken into account in ensuring families with student parents can meet the demands and needs of their families, their studies and themselves.

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