
SINGLE PARENTS DESCRIBE BALANCING ROLES: PARENT AND STUDENT

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The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore lived experiences described by single-parent students while balancing their roles: parent and student. A qualitative design included a hermeneutic approach with interpretation that consisted of a transcript coding process. Approximately 30 hours were spent reading through transcripts, while highlighting words which identified themes. Seven themes evolved: structure, stress, not enough time, guilt, isolation, self-care, perfectionism. For example, structure, isolation, and not enough time were themes reflected as Meg stated, "I know what a priority is and what isn't. Friends are not a priority. It's like this constant balancing act. Everything is going a million miles a minute, so fast - the teaching, homework, learning, my kids, the days, studying." On-campus single-parent students' academic support and family-friendly social activities were limited; inequities in social justice were evidenced. Following themes of structure, stress, and isolation, a homework-support group on campus was offered twice a week. There was scarce involvement by single-parent students. After the last six interviews, a different approach was used for support by following the themes of guilt and isolation. On campus, family-friendly social activities were offered and participation was successful. By offering family-friendly social activities on campus, single-parents received improved support while balancing their responsibilities of parent and student.