

# How do student-sole-parents experience the tertiary library?

By

Joanne Kim Barnes

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# 1. Abstract

## 1.1 Research problem

The objective of this research study is to explore the experience of student-sole-parents within a 'no-children in the library' tertiary library environment and the impact this has upon their ability to engage in compulsory course work, as well as the effects this policy has upon their study goals.

## 1.2 Methodology

Using qualitative research method, in-depth interviewing was used as a research tool to enquire into how six, full-time students who are also sole-parents experience the library service.

## 1.3 Results

Key findings of this study show that a no-children-in-the-library policy statement is problematic, in varying degrees, for full-time students who are also sole-parents as it, depending upon the ages of the student's dependents and availability of personal support, (1) poses a barrier that hinders access to library resources and services that facilitate and support study activities, and allow engagement with learning material and partnering with library staff to develop information literacy and (2) diminishes their study experience.

## 1.4 Implications

This is a single, small qualitative study and the results can only relate to Unitec Institute of Technology, Waitākere campus. This study is of interest to those concerned with academic libraries who are (1) seeking to understand how their library's policy regarding children in the library and study-room and other resources allocation may be affecting student-sole-parents and (2) seeking ways to improve student-sole-parent's access and interaction with their library.

## 1.5 Key words

Academic libraries; library services; students; sole-parents; polytechnic libraries; New Zealand

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### 3. Table of Contents

1. Abstract.....	2
1.1 Research problem .....	2
1.2 Methodology.....	2
1.3 Results.....	2
1.4 Implications.....	2
1.5 Key words.....	2
2. Acknowledgements.....	3
3. Table of Contents.....	4
4. Problem statement .....	7
4.1 Rationale .....	8
4.2 Research Aims.....	8
4.3 Research question.....	8
4.3.1 Sub-questions .....	8
4.4 Key terms .....	8
5. Literature Review .....	10
5.1 Introduction .....	10
5.2 Should tertiary institutions prioritise the childcare needs of non-traditional students? .....	10
5.3 Why consider the needs of students who are sole-parents? .....	11
5.4 What are the effects of the traditional library use policy, attitudes and resource allocations upon students who are sole-parents? .....	12
5.5 Library anxiety.....	13
5.6 What measures have other colleges taken to meet the needs of students who are sole-parents? .....	14
5.7 Quantitative data .....	15
6. Methodology.....	17
6.1 Introduction .....	17
6.2 Research methodology .....	17
6.3 Method.....	17
6.4 Data collection .....	18
6.5 Interviewing Form .....	18
6.6 Sample Selection .....	19
6.7 Ethical Considerations.....	19

6.8	Role of Researcher .....	19
6.9	Methods of Data Analysis .....	20
6.10	Limitations.....	21
7.	Findings .....	21
7.1	Impact on Academic Achievement .....	22
7.2	I couldn't be here so I asked someone to get books out for me .....	22
7.3	I just can't afford internet at home and I can't come to the library.....	23
7.4	I couldn't get my work done .....	24
7.5	Printing is a huge thing.....	25
7.6	Basically I haven't been able to get any short term loans .....	25
7.7	It was the library assistance that I needed the most.....	27
7.8	I'm just trying to juggle and focus.....	27
7.9	We knew we couldn't bring kids in the library .....	28
7.10	I was constantly thinking oh man what am I going to do tomorrow.....	28
7.11	I knew we weren't allowed to be in there .....	29
7.12	I can't study here anymore, it's not convenient.....	30
7.13	I need them to hang out in a safe place.....	31
7.14	If I want to use the library I look for someone to help me but it is hard.....	32
7.15	I let them down, it wasn't their fault .....	32
7.16	My year would have been different had I been able to bring the children to the library.....	33
7.17	Its higher education, its higher quality and everyone is on their own really .....	34
7.18	It's isolating when your kids aren't welcome here .....	35
7.19	It is really important for student mums to be able to make a difference in her life .....	36
7.20	I don't want special treatment. I just want to be welcome.....	37
8.	Discussion.....	37
8.1	Introduction .....	37
8.2	Is the 'no-children-in-the-library' tertiary library stance impacting student-sole-parents ability to undertake their studies?.....	38
8.3	Is the 'no-children-in-the-library' tertiary library stance effecting student-sole-parents ability to engage in the student experience?.....	39
8.4	Recommendations .....	39
8.5	Further research.....	40
9.	Conclusion.....	40
10.	References .....	41

11. Appendixes.....	47
11.1 Appendix 1: Interview form .....	47
11.2 Appendix 2: Participant Information Sheet .....	49
11.3 Appendix 3: Participant Consent Form .....	51

#### 4. Problem statement

While growing numbers of students who are also sole-parents are participating in tertiary education, little research is available on how academic libraries are meeting the library needs of this group of students. A primary function of the academic library is to meet the learning and research needs of its student community, therefore it is of interest to explore how the academic library is supporting student-sole-parents. The purpose of this paper is to understand student-sole-parents' experiences of the library through an investigation of student-sole-parent's experiences at the Unitec Institute of Technology, Waitākere campus.

In my experience as a Librarian working within tertiary libraries in New Zealand I have become aware of students' wanting to use the institution's library while having their children accompany them. As I have talked to these students, usually after explaining to them the library's policy position of not allowing children to accompany students unless for a brief period of time while they complete an urgent or important library task, I have learned that this is a problem effecting our ability to provide a good library service to these library members. This problem is worth investigating as a research output because in the interests of delivering equitable and excellent tertiary library customer service this policy statement is negatively impacting students who are parents, especially student-sole-parents. By addressing the needs of student-sole-parents within policy configuration and resource allocation, their ability to undertake library related study tasks, and thus their sense of being able to remain engaged in study can be greatly improved.

Traditionally the average tertiary student was a school leaver aged between 18 - 22 years old. An important international trend in higher education is the rise of the adult student. According to the National Center for Education Statistics there are 17.6 million undergraduates in the United States of America. Thirty-eight percent of those enrolled in higher education are over the age of 25 and 25 percent are over the age of 30. It is predicted that the share of all students who are over age 25 will increase another twenty-three percent by 2019. A characteristic of this non-traditional student population compared to the traditional student who are able to prioritize study is that the non-traditional student, the "older students, parents (especially single parents), and students who work full time have family and work responsibilities competing with school for their time, energy, and financial resources (National Center for Education Statistics 2002)". "Nontraditional students who enter postsecondary education seeking a degree are, in fact, less likely than traditional students to attain a degree or remain enrolled after 5 years" (Horn 1996). To effectively and equitably support nontraditional students who are also single parents reach their study goals, library administrators need information on how the library policy configurations impact and effect student-sole-parents in order to adequately address the library needs of this group.

## 4.1 Rationale

Through observation and engagement with student-sole-parents the researcher became aware that student-sole-parents were facing challenges completing quality coursework and participating in compulsory group assessments due to a bias in the library policy configuration and study-room resource allocation that is biased against them accessing the full range of services the library offers. Student-sole-parent's experience of tertiary library information services should be investigated in order to identify the impacts and effects of the apparent challenges they faced accessing their institutions' library. This study investigates the little explored relationship between the sole-parent-student's library experiences and how the 'no-children in the library' environment impacts their ability to engage in compulsory course work, and the effects this policy has upon their student experience and study goals in order to identify any bias within library management policy configuration and how resources are unfairly allocated to favor those students without parental responsibilities.

## 4.2 Research Aims

This research investigates how a 'no-children-in-the-library' policy is experienced by students who are also sole-parents to children under the age of 14, to understand the impact this policy has upon these students ability to engage in the activities of study, and identify the effects this policy has upon these student's experience of study.

## 4.3 Research question

Is the 'no-children-in-the-library' tertiary library stance impacting and effecting student-sole-parents ability to undertake their studies and engage in the student experience?

### 4.3.1 Sub-questions

- How does the 'no-children-in-the-library' policy impact student-sole-parent's short term study goals?
- How does the 'no-children-in-the-library' policy effect student-sole-parent's desire to study?

## 4.4 Key terms

- **Child:** In this study a child is defined as someone who is 13 years or younger as set out by the Summary Offenses Act 1981, which states "Every person is liable to a fine not exceeding \$2,000 who, being a sole-parent or guardian or a person for the time being having the care of a child under the age of 14 years, leaves that child, without making reasonable provision for the supervision and care of the child, for a time that is unreasonable or under conditions that are unreasonable having regard to all the circumstances" (Parliamentary Counsel Office, 2014).
- **Library:** "A place set apart to contain books [and information resources and services] for reading, study, or reference." (Oxford University Press. (n.d)).



- **Library anxiety:** Library anxiety is experienced by undergraduate students and characterised by “tension, fear, feelings of uncertainty and helplessness, negative and self-defeating thoughts, and mental disorganisation that only appear when students are in or contemplating a visit to the library” (Jiao, Onwuegbuzie, & Lichtenstein 1996)
- **Student:** “A person who is engaged in... study. Const. of, in, or with defining word prefixed, indicating the subject studied.”(Oxford University Press. (n.d)).
- **Student-sole-parent:** “A person who is engaged in... study. Const. of, in, or with defining word prefixed, indicating the subject studied.”(Oxford University Press. (n.d)) and is caregiver for someone who is 13 years or younger as set out by the Summary Offenses Act 1981, which states "Every person is liable to a fine not exceeding \$2,000 who, being a sole-parent or guardian or a person for the time being having the care of a child under the age of 14 years, leaves that child, without making reasonable provision for the supervision and care of the child, for a time that is unreasonable or under conditions that are unreasonable having regard to all the circumstances" (Parliamentary Counsel Office, 2014). The parents must have a child either primarily in their care or in a joint custody arrangement and alternate between living with one parent and living with the other parent.
- **Study:** “To apply the mind to the acquisition of learning, whether by means of books, observation, or experiment. Const. in, on, upon (a book, a branch of learning).”(Oxford University Press. (n.d)).
- **Study-room:** A room within a tertiary library specially designated for student study.
- **University:** “An institution of higher education offering tuition ... and... having the power to confer degrees” (Oxford University Press. (n.d)).

## 5. Literature Review

### 5.1 Introduction

A preliminary internet search was used to investigate if any New Zealand tertiary libraries communicated through their websites consent for students to have their children accompany them to the library for extended periods of time. This search was carried out in order to glean an idea of at least of how promulgated, if not how widespread this consent was spread, and if they did, what policies, rules or guidelines were publicised. As far as the researcher could tell, no New Zealand tertiary library allowed children to accompany their parents in the library for extended periods of time. This may not mean that there no tertiary libraries in New Zealand that provide family-friendly space, but may evidence this provision being suppressed as opposed to promulgated to students and potential students. An internet search identified four university libraries, all within the United States, who advised to students, on the library website, of family-friendly dedicated study space being available.

### 5.2 Should tertiary institutions prioritise the childcare needs of non-traditional students?

Tertiary institutions exist within a competitive climate. Demand for tertiary educational institutes to enrol students, nationally and internationally, is now a competitive environment that has created an educational market place where students have greater choice. "The competition for students... has increased substantially since the Global Financial Crisis. Competition stems not only from our traditional partners (and also competitors) - Australia, UK, America, Canada and Europe (mostly English speaking), but we now face increased competition from non-traditional, developing countries in Asia, Middle Eastern and Latin America. [Massey University] (Ministry of Education, Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment 2014, p. 54).

Educational institutions need to update their policy and resourcing allocations to better meet the learning needs of sole-parents in order to attract and retain this growing population. "It is no secret that the numbers of adult students in academia have greatly increased in the last 30 years. The biggest jump was in the 30 and over group... [With] adult women student [numbers rising] significantly... Adult female students have many of the same motivations, barriers and stresses as adult male students. The stress factors do not seem to be related to gender, but rather to which roles the student has outside of class. A male student with children who does not have a spouse assisting with child care or other home responsibilities will be just as anxious and stressed as his female counterparts" (Harrell 2002). Research confirms the student-sole-parent population experiences added pressure and stress, especially related to childcare needs, while pursuing their education. Overseas research reports a trend that sees the "number of pregnant and sole-parenting students in higher education (is) increasing" (Brown & Nichols 2012, p. 499). "Pregnant and sole-parenting students, a subgroup of non-traditional students, are enrolling in higher education at numbers higher than previous decades"(Brown and Nichols 2012, p. 500). However this increase in enrolment has not been addressed through policy development and resource allocation to enable this population to be successful in their study program. "Few

resources exist for these students and the universities who provide services do not adequately promulgate them to the campus community" (Brown and Nichols 2012, p. 499).

### 5.3 Why consider the needs of students who are sole-parents?

Tertiary institutions are increasingly needing to consider the business model of the service they offer and clearly identify to whom as funding reductions force them to deliver an educational product that meets the increasingly non-traditional student body. Over the past decade, reductions to government funding of tertiary institutions have fostered a more competitive environment in Australian higher education (de Zilwa, 2010; Bradley, 2008; Currie, 2002). Institutions, including New Zealand, are being "pressured and encouraged to explore new avenues for additional income and to view students as more consumer-like in their choice of a course and university" (Baily et al 2014, p. 251). A competitive educational market place for prospective students requires tertiary institutions to adopt more flexible modes of support in meeting the learning needs/demands of all students.

"Reentry, adult, and nontraditional students attending classes at off-campus sites have special needs and situations that require responsive programming... most of them share some common characteristics. The majority... are female; they have children at home; they are full-time students; and they work full-time. All of these factors contribute to a high level of stress and anxiety" (Harrell 2002). As Harrell (2002) explains these factors need to be considered when designing library services for students in order to provide for responsive individualized and in-person services. Essential in the design of programs is knowledge of the students' demographics and awareness of adult student characteristics. Brown and Nichols (2012, p. 501) report that student-sole-parents face additional barriers to undertaking and completing their study requirements, including the challenge of juggling various responsibilities to work, family, and school. They are less likely to graduate than their classmates without children and are often unaware of campus resources available to them. Sole-parent families consistently stand out in national surveys. Sole-parent families are consistently and disproportionately represented in a range of domains including living standards (Jensen et al 2006) and poverty (Perry 2010, p. 32) to mental and physical health (Sarfati and Scott, 2001, p. 257-260) and criminal victimisation (Mayhew and Reilly, 2007.; Mayhew and Huang 2009, p. 3). It would be remiss of tertiary libraries to marginalize their interests especially due to the widely accepted notion that tertiary education is a way to transform one's life for the better. "Higher education is partially a public good, as symbolized by its contribution to the greater good and future generations yet unborn. But it is also partly a private good, as reflected in its contribution to earnings and research contributions to patents" (McMahon, p. 52).

5.4 What are the effects of the traditional library use policy, attitudes and resource allocations upon students who are sole-parents?

Literature documents the sole-parents' experience of tertiary education as one of isolation, marginalisation, stigmatisation and inconvenience while being characterised by feelings of inadequacy and not fitting in. Duquaine-Watson, 2007 (p. 234); Yakaboski 2010 (p. 465) conducted studies into mothers as students and reported they were experiencing a sense of being stigmatized by the larger, traditional, campus population, which resulted in them having feelings of isolation and disconnection from their peers and learning community. It was also found that some student-sole-parents created resilience through forming learning communities with other mothers. "This self-identifying sometimes created camaraderie with other student-sole-parents, some found that this led to marginalization in the classroom or stereotyping of the experience. This stereotyping included the ideas that most single mothers are welfare recipients and single mothers are rewarded or receive a free ride through federal assistance programs" (Brown and Nichols 2012, p. 501).

Although a sense of camaraderie with other student-sole-parents provides some sense of inclusion within a supportive peer group, this inclusion can cost the student-sole-parent the more desirable, more appropriate status of 'student' as they are often instead defined, by peer students who are traditional student peers, by their sole-parenting role rather than by their role as a student (Duquaine-Watson 2007, p. 234). Duquaine-Watson (2007, p. 234) also reported that many student-sole-parents became keenly aware of how limited their interactions with other students became once they became aware of their role as a sole-parent. The sole-parenting student's role as sole-parent became the focus in conversation.

Institutional policies and program requirements cause impediments preventing student-sole-parents effectively meeting their immediate study requirements and also affect their ability to engage with the process of tertiary education. Student-sole-parents are not having their childcare issues considered within the policy environment and program structure. Research showed that across both student-sole-parent populations, structural limitations issues were found within schools that restricted (sole-parent) students' ability to meet their needs. (Duquaine-Watson 2007). Other issues cited by student-sole-parents as being prohibitive to engaging in study included: a lack of overall program flexibility (Cujec et al, 2000 (p. 637-640.); Yakaboski 2010, p. 470-474), lack of campus residential housing for pregnant and sole-parenting students (Cohen, 2005; McCormack, 2007), lack of sole-parent facilities on campus (Springer et al 2009, p. 435 - 454) and childcare difficulties (Matus-Grossman & Gooden, 2001, p. 19; Duquaine-Watson 2007, p.229-240). Sole-parenting students discussed how these "structural impediments created or augmented financial, transportation, and access barriers. Finally, it was found that even when resources were available for pregnant and sole-parenting students, there was little to no knowledge about their existence" (Brown and Nichols 2012, p. 501).

## 5.5 Library anxiety

Researcher Constance Mellon identified library anxiety through her ground-breaking 1986 study "Library anxiety: a grounded theory and its development". Library anxiety impacts upon student's ability to use the academic library effectively. Students experience negative feelings of inferiority and shame that overwhelm them and compromise their ability to use the library to engage in their learning and study (Mellon, 1986, p. 160-165). Researching how this phenomena effect student-sole-parents is worth considering within this study because library anxiety, or anxiety around using or needing to use the library maybe correlated to the research group's status as student-sole-parents. Their experience of study and library use has unique features due to them having to prioritise their legal responsibility to arrange appropriate care for their children. While there have been many studies, across many different sub-sets of students, exploring the phenomena of library anxiety a search for literature using the Subject Headings 'Library Anxiety' and 'SINGLE parents' revealed no research in this area. Most research has focussed on undergraduate students and have found that they are not familiar with academic library resources, print or electronic, and have not engaged in academic study, writing or research thus contributing to their library anxiety, with them lacking confidence to approach library staff with questions, being afraid of appearing unknowledgeable, or just being overwhelmed with the entire academic study/ research process (Atlas, Wallace & Van Fleet, 2005, p. 314-319; Cooke, 2006, p. 11; Cooke, 2010, p. 208-227; ; Fitzgibbons, 1990, p. 6-17); Grassian & Kaplowitz, 2001, p. 65-72; Harrell, 2002, p. 355; Jiao & Onwuegbuzie, 1996, p. 150-163. Mellon suggested library anxiety should be recognised and the anxious person provided with experiences in which they could develop library competency and succeed.

Harrell (2002) cites Law Four in Ranganathan's Five Laws of Librarianship. It states that libraries should "Save the time of the reader. Harrell (2002) explains that "we need to save our adult students' time without compromising the educational process" and that "any responsive library services program should incorporate (a) Librarian awareness of lifestyles, pressures, and characteristics of adult and non-traditional students. We also need to consider that returning adult or non-traditional students may have a high level of anxiety and specifically anxiety about using the library and technology. (In addition the) provision of services and materials at the hours and places our patrons need" should be in place.

Library anxiety is characterised by a self-perception of inadequacy and this perception of inadequacy can be self-fulfilling. Individual students who have high levels of library anxiety will exhibit "cognitive, effective and physiological symptoms that may include discomfort, fear, tension, feelings of uncertainty, learned helplessness, self-defeating thoughts, and mental disorganisation" (Onwuegbuzie & Jiao, 2004, p. 235). These symptoms can be so debilitating that students develop library avoidance behaviours and attitudes that result in actual lack of ability to use the library effectively.

5.6 What measures have other colleges taken to meet the needs of students who are sole-parents?

While researching for this literature review, only four academic library family-friendly study spaces have been identified. One, Portland State University Library; (2), the Family Room at Collins-Callaway Library and Learning Resources Center at Paine College in Augusta, Georgia; (3) the Child-Friendly Group Study-Room at the University of California, San Diego Library and; (4) the Family Reading Room at the J. Willard Marriot Library, The University of Utah. Few family-friendly study-rooms at tertiary libraries is somewhat confirmed by Petit's (2014, p. 38) findings "while researching for this article, I was able to identify only one other similar study space in an academic library, the Family Room at Collins-Callaway Library and Learning Resources Center at Paine College in Augusta, Georgia". The Portland State University (PSU) Library created a family-friendly study room for student-parents and their children at Portland State University Library in response to a student profile that included "large number of non-traditional students, many of whom have taken long breaks in their post-secondary education" (Petit 2014, p. 36). In 2010, PSU commissioned the Presidential Task Force on Child Development and Family Support. According to this 2011 report, "It was apparent from the interviews with sole-parents and data collected, that the need for more family-focused and family-friendly spaces and places on campus in a variety of locations is pressing. [This includes] space for children to play quietly while their sole-parents study or work ..." (Balzer et al, 2011). The Collins-Callaway Library and Learning Resources Center at Paine College created family-friendly study space in response to a "growing population (of) students with families, including small children," and they report increased traffic from this population with the establishment of the new space (McCoy, 2013, p. 1).

PSU prioritised dedicated family space for parents. The space is fitted out so that student-sole-parents can study without concern about wandering or bored children. Petit (2014, p. 39) explains "that sole-parents are "a particularly vulnerable population, PSU Library feels that the Family Study Room is a good investment in our students and a good use of space in the library building. The presence of the room generates a large amount of goodwill, even amongst students who do not have young children".

The Family Study Room at PSU Library has a PC, a Mac, two scanners, and a variety of furniture for adults and children. The play area includes a play kitchen, child-sized furniture, a rocking chair, and comfortable beanbags. "The room accommodates two family groups at any given time, and students may only check out the key when their children are with them. In 2013, Library Development Director Jennifer Wilkerson led a refresh of the room with support from a grant from the Juan Young Trust. The room features a brightly painted wall and new, comfortable furniture sized for adults and children; a carpeted floor; more engaging toys and books; and a television and DVD player with ALA-recommended DVDs. What might look ordinary or common in an elementary school or public library is quite vibrant and playful in an academic library" (Petit 2014, p. 38). Using data collected from the online study-room booking

system, PSU was able to trace the family-study room's use. "For the time period of August 2012 through November 2013, our reservations system had 5,806 unique users, 194 of whom used the Family Study Room. We had 89 users who reserved the room more than once, with 13 users reserving the room ten or more times. The Family-Room saw 571 total reservations, 2 percent of all of our study rooms. While this use isn't in line with the estimated 21.5 percent of PSU students who have children, we also know that many of those students may have older children or may not bring their children to campus" (Petit 2014, p. 38).

PSU report experiencing a challenge in promoting the study-room to its intended audience. "Some librarians make a habit of talking to students studying in the library with young children, to let them know about the Family Study Room. The PSU Resource Center for Students with Children also helps promote the room through their website, via flyers posted around the student union, and by word-of-mouth. The challenge may be, in part, because our students do not expect the library to have a space dedicated to students with children (Petit 2014, p. 38).

#### 5.7 Quantitative data

Statistics New Zealand Census reports a pattern of just under a third of all New Zealand families identify as a one parent family with at least one dependent child. The 1996 Census data reported the national one parent family formation at 26 percent, 2001 Census at 29.2 percent and 2009 Census at 28.1 percent (Statistics New Zealand, 2009).

New Zealand sole-parents report experiencing difficulties undertaking study and face consequences for failing to complete study requirements due to childcare issues. Most of these sole-parents experiencing these types of stress are mothers. Of the sole-parents not engaged in formal study or training, Statistics New Zealand Childcare Survey 2009 (Statistics New Zealand, 2009a) reports that mothers are the group most effected by childcare difficulties and most likely to experience difficulties that prevented them from participating in, or effectively engaging with education. The survey reports that:

- **8.9 percent of sole-parents are students.** "8.9% (76,500) of sole-parents were engaged in formal study or training towards a formal qualification in the previous 12 months"
- **13.7 percent of sole-parents experience difficulties with childcare.** "Of those who had studied or trained, 13.7 percent had difficulties getting childcare".
- **Most student-sole-parents are mothers.** "More mothers than fathers had studied or trained towards a formal qualification in the previous 12 months – 10.6 percent compared with 6.9 percent".
- **Student-sole-mothers experience the most childcare difficulties.** "A higher proportion of studying mothers reported having difficulties (18.2 percent) than fathers (5.2 percent)".

- **Most student-parents are sole-parents.** "Sole-parents were more likely than those in two-parent families to have studied or trained in the previous 12 months (2009) – 16.0 percent compared with 7.8 percent".
- **More than twice as many student-sole-parents experience childcare difficulties than student-parents in a two-parent family.** "Sole-parents who were studying were also more likely to have childcare difficulties while studying – 25.7 percent compared with 9.8 percent of those in two-sole-parent families".
- **A quarter of student-sole-parents to children aged 3–4 years old, experience childcare difficulties while studying** – 23.3 percent compared with 14.3 percent of those with a youngest child aged 0–2 years, and 9.5 percent of those with a youngest child aged 5–13 years".
- **The most challenging childcare issue for student-sole-parents is the lack of appropriate care when needed.** "The most common difficulty reported was a lack of care available on the days or at the times needed, 39.1 percent reported this difficulty. The other difficulties commonly reported were the cost of childcare (19.9 percent) and a lack of informal care available by someone known to them (17.9 percent)".
- **Most student-sole-parents are being denied the full scope of their educational success due to childcare issues.** "Of those who had difficulties getting childcare while studying or training towards a formal qualification, 76.4 percent experienced at least one study-related consequence".
- **Childcare issues are costing student-sole-parents educational qualifications.** "Over half (58.5 percent) of those who had childcare-related difficulties had stopped taking on study or training at some stage as a consequence, 57.1 percent had been prevented from changing the hours they regularly studied or trained, and 34.1 percent had quit a study or training course due to childcare related difficulties".
- **Nearly half of student-sole-parents to children aged 0 to 2 years are most likely to quit their course or program.** "Sole-parents who had a youngest child aged 0–2 years were most likely to have quit a study or training course due to childcare difficulties –45.1 percent compared with 27.2 percent of other sole-parents".

The Statistics New Zealand Childcare survey 2009 also reports that a barrier to sole-parents enrolling in study is childcare difficulties.

- **Sole-parents are not enrolling in study because of childcare difficulties.** "Of sole-parents who had not studied towards a formal qualification in the previous 12 months, 4.3 percent stated that difficulty getting childcare had stopped them from taking on study or training. This was the case for 6.7 percent of mothers and only 1.5 percent of fathers".
- **Young sole-parents are least likely to enrol in study due to childcare difficulties.** Younger sole-parents are least likely to undertake study or training due to childcare difficulties, with 7.9 percent of those aged 15–24 having not taken on study due to difficulties compared with 4.8 percent of 25–34-year-olds, and 3.9 percent of those aged 35–54 years. Sole-parents were more likely than those in a two-parent family to report



not taking on study due to difficulties with childcare – 11.5 percent compared with 3.3 percent.

- **Unemployed sole-parents are the least likely to enrol in study due to anticipating difficulties securing childcare.** Sole-parents who were not employed are the least likely to take on study due to difficulties with childcare (14.6 percent). Of those who said that they had not taken on study due to difficulties with childcare, 37.6 percent stated the cost of childcare as a reason. In addition, 24.7 percent stated childcare was unavailable on the days or at the times needed, and 19.9 percent said a lack of informal care by someone known was a barrier to taking on study.

## 6. Methodology

### 6.1 Introduction

This chapter sets out the research methodology used in this study. It outlines the research design, methods for data collection, sample selection and data analysis. Finally, the limitations and ethical considerations of this study are presented.

### 6.2 Research methodology

Feminist research guides the research methodology and informed the research method employed within the study. A qualitative approach was used to explore the experiences of student-sole-parents enrolled at the Unitec Institute of Technology, Waitākere campus. The data was analysed in conjunction with relevant literature and external quantitative data to uncover themes that describe the student-sole-parent experience. A feminist research approach was selected as a guide as it "centres on women's issues and concerns... to promote policy changes on issues of particular importance to women" (Hesse-Biber, 2014, p.5).

### 6.3 Method

A qualitative method using in depth interviewing as a research tool was used. Qualitative research is defined by Denzin (2008, p.321) as "the word science". This method focuses on the social world and relies heavily on "words or stories that people tell us as researchers" (Liamputtong, 2010, p. 3). Qualitative research enquires into how individuals 'make sense of their experiences and the world in which they live' (Holloway & Wheeler, 2010, p. 3). This method was used as it provides a way to enable a detailed analysis of a specific setting, subject or event "on the assumption that it is possible to derive knowledge of the wider phenomenon from intensive investigation of a specific instance or case" (Becker as cited in Gorman & Clayton, 2005, p.47). In this study, the investigation was of an experience of six full-time students based at the Waitākere campus of Unitec Institute of Technology. The methodology offered insight into these student's experience as told in their own words. While this group of students all belonged to the same group – full-time students who are also sole-parents, they had differing personal variables. They had different ages, ethnicities and family profiles. Positivist

researchers critique the qualitative research approach arguing it is a soft science lacking reliability and validity, therefore resulting in research contributions that lack value and scientific knowledge (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007; Denzin, 2008; Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Packer, 2011) hence, this study inclusion of quantitative data to provide generalized statistical data, as well as a literature review in order to ensure rigor and broaden the scope of the findings.

#### 6.4 Data collection

Data was collected through semi-structured interviews. Face to face interviews were used to provide the best opportunity for the research participants to express their views without being influenced or effected by the other participants. It was also selected as a method that best enabled the researcher to establish the rapport and trust with the participants. Rapport and creating of a safe interview environment where the participants knew they could trust the researcher, allowing them to feel safe and comfortable to speak, was an important element in setting up an environment that allowed honest and open dialogue. An interview guide with a set of questions was prepared beforehand with the flexibility to clarify, probe and develop further questions.

Data was collected through in-depth interviews with student-sole-parents selected by the researcher through invitation. Face-to-face interviews were chosen as a data collection tool as "interviewing is a particularly valuable research method feminist researchers can use to gain insight into the world of their participants" (Hesse-Biber, 2014, p. 185). In-depth interviewing is a mechanism used to "uncover the subjugated knowledge of the diversity of women's realities that often lie hidden and unarticulated" (Hesse-Biber, 2014, p.184). "The in-depth interview seeks to understand the "lived experiences' of the individual.... the subjective understanding an individual brings to a given situation or set of circumstances" (Hesse-Biber 2014, p. 189). Face-to-face, in-depth interviewing of the participants allowed the researcher to engage in a conversation with the participant. It provided an environment where the participants were able to share their feelings and experiences about how the no-children-in-the-library policy has impacted their study and effected their student experience. In-depth interviewing enabled the researcher to "reconstruct events the researcher has never experienced" (Rubin & Rubin, 2012, p. 3). It offered the researcher "access to the [participants] ideas, thought and memories in their own words... particularly important for the study of women because in this way learning from women is an antidote to centuries of ignoring women's ideas altogether or having men speak for women" (Hesse-Biber, 2014, p. 190), or as in this research project, an antidote to the tradition of tertiary libraries having student-sole-parents childcare needs overshadowed by the institutional library use policy that prioritises the needs of the traditional student.

#### 6.5 Interviewing Form

This study used a semi-structured interview form using an interview plan (Appendix 1). A semi-structured interview was used as a way for the researcher to "build a relationship with [the] participant, to explore what might be a relevant topic of interest to them, and to uncover topics that might be overlooked by the researcher" (Hesse-Biber 2014, p. 186) while holding a focus on the research topic.

## 6.6 Sample Selection

Purposive sampling technique as recommended in Bryman (2008) with a homogeneous sampling application was used as a strategy to select only participants that were relevant to this study. The research question configuration pre-determined the site and sample selection. As well as Human Ethics Consent being granted by Victoria University of Wellington, Human Ethics Consent and Site Consent was sought and approved by the Unitec Institute of Technology. The following methods were used to recruit participants for this study: (1) invitation calling for participants by email to lecturers who then forwarded the invitation by email to their students, (2) poster invitation in the campus library as well as on noticeboards around campus, and (3) students promoting the invitation to their student network via Facebook. The invitation yielded a good response and seven responses, one more response than interview places were received. Due to a recording error in the first interview, all seven responders were interviewed but only the last six interviews were recorded so subsequently used. All the research participants received the Participant Information Sheet (Appendix 2). They were advised that the interview was (1) confidential and that (2) their identity would remain anonymous throughout the project's entirety, (3) was undertaken only with their documented permission through the Participant Consent Form (Appendix 3), and (4) they were entitled to withdraw from participating before the date the data analysis commenced. Representation across the student body was fairly well represented with the sample consisting of all full-time female students; one post-graduate student, five undergraduate students, year levels 1 – 5, ethnicities represented were one Maori, two New Zealand Europeans, one Tongan, one Korean, and one British participant. Participants' held the following ages: 28, 31, 36, 40, 44 and 56 years old.

## 6.7 Ethical Considerations

Ethical approval was obtained from the Victoria University of Wellington Human Ethics Committee. Permission was also sought and obtained from Unitec Institute of Technology to involve students from their institute. As identified in the ethics approval process, each participant was given an information sheet that outlined the purpose of the study, the processes for handling and storage of data and the confidentiality and anonymity of their participation. The researcher explained these processes again to participants before each interview proceeded. Informed consent was gathered from all participants.

## 6.8 Role of Researcher

The researcher is a key data collection instrument within the qualitative research method. The feminist research approach acknowledges the researcher's importance as a data collection instrument through identifying the researcher's unavoidable presence in the data collection phase. Due to this unavoidable presence and subsequent influence, the feminist research approach is "particularly concerned with reducing the hierarchy" (Hesse-Biber 2014, p. 199) between herself and the research participants. In order to increase reciprocity and rapport, and break-down any notions of "power and authority invested in the researcher" (Hesse-Biber 2014, p. 199) the researcher started each interview by sharing her own past experience of being a full-

time student and mother to a child under the age of 14 years old. The researcher's focus on establishing trust by conveying a shared experience was important because the researcher predicted and subsequently did, interview participants known to the researcher through interactions based at the library. These known relationships presented a potential risk to the validity of the research due to a range of conscious and unconscious biases the researcher likely held, however on reflection the familiarity was an advantage because participants easily confided in the researcher the impact and effects the no-children-in-the-library policy had upon their ability to study. Having a written interview schedule was important, it allowed concerns held about the researcher from the researcher to be moderated externally within the HEC process. Direct quotations from the participants are included in the report findings. These quotations are important as they accurately represent the voices of the participants as well as demonstrate the researcher's willingness to present findings that accurately reflect the experience of the participants.

#### 6.9 Methods of Data Analysis

Data that informed the study was sourced from three places. One, the qualitative data collection, (2) a literature review and, (3) external quantitative data. The qualitative data was organized into categories then analyzed. The analysis process was used to explore the data to understand the stories the participants had shared. The analysis process was used to identify the impacts and effects the traditional 'no-children-in-the-library' policy has upon student-sole-parents. The qualitative data was then compared and interpreted against the other data sources (literature review and quantitative data) to obtain additional insight into the messages contained within the qualitative data. This application and combination of different research approaches ensures that findings and claims made in this study can be relied upon as robust and possessing criterion validity due to the substantiation through different, yet rigorous sources of data

When setting up the interviews with participants, participants selected a time that was convenient to them. The interviews were held in a private office in the library. The library was selected as it is a familiar environment to the participants and served as an environmental reminder the context of the research. Each interview lasted between 30-45 minutes and was recorded using an iPad. The iPad recording was then uploaded to the researcher's YouTube account on a private setting. During the interview process the researcher made notes about the interview on an interview schedule dedicated to that participant only. The interviews were transcribed verbatim by the researcher within 24 hours of recording. The researcher listened to the interview recordings, and read through the interview transcripts as a first step in the data analysis process to glean a general sense of participant's experiences. After becoming familiar with the interview data, the transcripts were used to organize the data into categories, then organize into related themes. Creswell (2003, p. 199) identifies the first step in data analysis is reading through all the data to get a general sense of the information, noting ideas and for the researcher to immerse themselves in the data details before coding the data into themes. Coding the data is an important step in the research process because it allows the researcher to "cluster

key issues and allows (the researcher to) take steps towards drawing conclusions” (Bell 2005). By clustering the data around the key messages or meanings allows the researcher to uncover recurrent and significant issues.

#### 6.10 Limitations

This study was confined to full-time students of Unitec Institute of Technology based at the Waitākere campus and who were also sole primary caregivers to one or more children under the age of 14 years. There was no restriction on participant’s gender nor biological relationship to the children. The researcher being a staff member of the participant’s library presented the limitation of possible personal bias due to possible preconceptions of or knowledge about the institution and student community. In order to negate this limitation, the researcher has been honest and open within the research and to the research participants about the role of researcher and library manager. This study is limited by the small sample size and representation. Participants who volunteered were all women, mature students aged over-25 years old and may only represent the experiences of these students. This study endeavors to provide an account of the experiences of student-sole-parents based at the Unitec Institute of Technology Waitākere campus and thus will make a contribution to tertiary libraries only.

Reliability and validity of this research was ensured through the following procedures:

- Using peer-reviewed literature;
- Clarifying researcher bias; and
- Rich, deep description.

Recording the interview sessions was used as a strategy to ensure accurate representations of the interviews were stored, and subsequently accessed, also as a way to archive the interview in order to evidence, and therefore confirm honesty within this study’s findings.

Rigour to ensure the study is trustworthy was achieved through the following criteria:

- "Using participants actual words in the report";
- "Articulating the researcher's personal view and insights about the phenomena explored ";
- "Delineating the scope of the research" (Corbin and Strauss 2015, p. 343); and
- Describing how the literature relates to the findings.

## 7. Findings

This chapter reports on the findings that relate to student-sole-parents and their experiences of a tertiary library at the Unitec Institute of Technology Library, Waitākere campus. It investigates the sole-parent-student’s experience of how the 'no-children in the library' environment impacts their ability to engage in course work, and the effects this policy has upon their ability to engage, and therefore stay connected to and invested in, their student experience

and study goals. The overall theme was identified through multiple readings and analysis of the in-depth interview transcripts. Themes “should display multiple perspectives from individuals” (Creswell, 2003, p.194) therefore, these findings will be supported by quotations from the research participants in provide a descriptive account of the participants’ experience.

An emergent theme, the characteristic persistent throughout all the participant’s stories was the experiencing of additional stresses as a result of not being able to use the library in a way that is available to other students who do not require access while having children accompany them. Participants are experiencing unique library related stresses caused by difficulties accessing the library due to a combination of factors:(1) a non-negotiable legal responsibility to provide appropriate care to children under their care; (2) challenges securing or accessing childcare when needed and (3) needing to apply themselves to a study schedule with subsequent deadlines and compulsory contributions to collaborative course activities.

Due to the lack a family friendly library policy, the research participants are experiencing missing out on quality, productive study time; they are studying in public environments that generate distractions from study and place their children at risk; an increased financial burden; a barrier accessing Librarian assistance easily and immediately or in a way they that suits their learning and a lack of internet access and other critical library resources. The research participants are experiencing stress academically, physically, mentally and financially as a result of the policy configuration relating to the lack of accommodation of the participant's children.

#### 7.1 Impact on Academic Achievement

The negative impact on participant's ability to achieve academically was the most significant domain effected. Participants spoke of always being or at least feeling rushed, and spending time away from study seeking an institution based solution to their lack-of-library access problem with the end result still having a diminished library resource experience.

#### 7.2 I couldn’t be here so I asked someone to get books out for me

The biggest barrier that the no-children-in-the-library policy presented was the challenge of not being able to spend the necessary time in the library that would enable them to select, locate and use the books that would best inform their assessments and learning. Participants reported not using critical Short Loan resources, instead photocopying excerpts from resources other students had selected for their topic; rushing through the process of selecting books; going without library material all together and relying on prescribed readings from within their course or seeking information from the internet.

*"[I didn't get the books I needed] all the time. I just got my stuff off online or from the couple of authors I had or reading material lecturers already had us look up rather than go to the library. Students are encouraged to go into the library but I just went online. [I didn't read as widely as I would have like to] you had go to resources [you had already] because you didn't have the opportunity to spend the time in the library organizing resources... the books are scattered everywhere. I've never got any short loans. I was just always in a hurry so it was easier if I went online or used my own ones. My last assignment I needed short loans and grizzled to one of the*

*lecturers that I couldn't spend time looking for books, it was too time consuming with a child" [sic].*

*"I couldn't do much in the library [due to being a single-parent to one and a half year old twins with limited childcare options] ... I couldn't be here so I asked someone to get books out for me, you know... What would have been best would have been me being able to get in on my own and do it exactly".*

*"I couldn't be here so I asked someone to get books out for me, you know. What would have been best would have been had able to get in on my own and do it exactly. But I managed to get it done somehow. A pass was all I could aim for"*

*"I've never got any short loans... it was easier if I went online or used my own ones. [Had my children been welcome in the library I would have borrowed short loans,] my last assignment I needed short loans and grizzled to one of the lecturers that I couldn't spend time looking for books, it was too time consuming with a child. There were a couple of times I needed books... but I thought in not coming up here w baby".*

*"We raised [the issue of lack of suitable study space] with one of the part-time lecturers... they opened up one of the computer rooms in level 2... So we were able to use that one [on a] Tuesday and Thursday night. So the kids would come and sit in the back and we could do our study... [We needed books] quite often [during this time so] we darted to the library to get our books... We knew we couldn't bring kids in the library... a couple of the other students felt that there could have been more availability of the library for students with kids but nothing was ever discussed about how to go about it".*

7.3 I just can't afford internet at home and I can't come to the library

A lack of library books was not the only resource participants failed to access. Two of the participants did not have internet access from home due to issues related to cost and relied upon free Wi-Fi to access the internet. Internet access is critical for Unitec students as course work is based online. Participants spoke about the frustration and exhaustion they felt, and hardship they experienced as a result of having to 'grab' internet access where they could instead of being able to use the library's internet access to undertake study that would have helped them manage their time, and subsequent stress levels.

*"Even an hour or 2 a day. I could have got books and gone online... [it was] the thing I needed to study".*

*"[Had I been able to use the campus library and bring my children with me it would have made a] big difference... I would have had higher quality assessments. I don't have internet at home. That is the main problem I have. So what I did was I downloaded stuff, copy and pasted on to Word then read, read, read. But when I needs synonyms, thesaurus I didn't have it. I'm reading, reading, reading but I needed the internet. It would have made it a lot easier".*

*"Many times [I've need to complete a study related task at the library but have been unable to as I've had to have my children with me] ... study is expensive. There's lots of thing to pay for, travel, placement costs, parking... you [I] just can't afford internet at home and I can't come to the [campus] library [and use] a desk with my kids and use the internet. That's why I end up in the kids section of the public library downstairs so I can use the internet".*

*"[I wasted a lot of time in where I could have been studying.] I'm reading, reading, reading but I needed the internet. It would have made it [completing assessments] a lot easier. I had a lot of exhaustion... and frustration at not being able to access the internet to be able to manage my time".*

*"[Had I been able to use the campus library and bring my children with me it would have made a] big difference... I would have had higher quality assessments. I don't have internet at home. That is the main problem I have. So what I did was I downloaded stuff, copy and pasted on to Word then read, read, read. But when I needs synonyms, thesaurus I didn't have it. I'm reading, reading, reading but I needed the internet. It would have made it a lot easier".*

#### 7.4 I couldn't get my work done

Students spoke of or inferred feeling despondent about the difficulty accessing the library. One student spoke about the struggle, which she eventually decided wasn't worth it of setting up childcare during school holiday periods so that she could access the library intermittently yet importantly.

*[A time when I needed to complete a study related task at the library had children in my care was] the first semester I did here, the school holidays mismatched with the semester timetable. I had a lot of deadlines. There were no [childcare] facilities here and it was going to be more of a mission setting up care due to all the forms [needing submitting] setting-up WINZ care for the sake of a couple of weeks so ... the girls [either] had to loiter in the hallway [or] ...I wouldn't come to the library".*

*[Generally we are pretty good at working that [childcare when collaborative group study activities needed contributing to] in amongst ourselves. But I'm lucky there is a friend that can help out and in case worst case scenario the children have come in again, you know they've come in to class or in the group, and we've moved somewhere else or they came in and sit in the hallways. [My children are 10 and 11 years old] they can sit quietly and do something like read*



*a book, play loom bands or do some coloring. [I need them] to hang out in a safe place [while I study]. I'm not asking for babysitting facilities you know".*

*"Many times I walk past [the library] and see the opening and closing hours and wish [I could make better use of it]. When unit class finished at 2pm last year I couldn't get my work done because my childcare was only for a set day time. It clashed with uni [Unitec] schedule".*

#### 7.5 Printing is a huge thing

The research participants spoke about the effect the no-children-in-the-library policy had upon their ability to access the library's printing facilities. One participant described the stress and frustration she felt at not being able to use the library to work on assessment submissions during the weekend due to having her children with her, yet needing to hand in a hard copy of her submissions at 8am on a Monday morning (the library's opening time). The frustration was knowing there was a library set-up that met her exact study needs for these weekend periods yet was unavailable to her while she had her children with her, and her not having alternative care for her children at these times. Although most Unitec assessments are submitted electronically, according to the student, for this course it is standard practice to submit a hard-copy of the journal writing assessments. This student experienced additional stress from having to complete her assessment submission ahead of the deadline time in order to compensate for not being able to access the library, nor print over the weekend period. In some cases participants relied upon the printing facilities as a way to create copies of readings needed for study. Creating these copies incurred a financial cost participants could neither negate nor barely afford.

*"[I've had difficulties completing an assessment due to not being able to bring my children to the library] ... many times I stay up all night then come in early when the kids can go to day care then rush to download readings to print off...Printing is a huge thing. You need to print it [assessment submission] off to hand it in at 8am. The library doesn't open till 8am and if I can't get in in the weekend before then I've got to go find somewhere to print it off".*

*"Printing is expensive. I photocopied quite a lot of stuff [from short-loan items borrowed from peers] actually do with assignments".*

#### 7.6 Basically I haven't been able to get any short term loans

Participants spoke about being hurried as well as settling for less than ideal course resources as a result of not being able to use the library in their own time being accompanied by their children. Using an institution's library books is a critical activity in the academic writing process. Student-sole-parents were settling with less than ideal information resources by using material already had in their possession instead of seeking the best information; only seeking digital material; asking others to locate relevant material; or taking copies from material peers have retrieved for their learning. Participants acknowledged any solution other than selecting one's own material, from the full range of material available, was not ideal. Of particular

concern is the participants not accessing short-loan material as this material is selected by their lecturers as being key content to support their learning.

*"[I didn't get the books I needed] all the time. I just got my stuff off online or from the couple of authors I had or reading material lecturers already had us look up rather than go to the library. Students are encouraged to go into the library but I just went online. [I didn't read as widely as I would have like to] you had go to resources [you had already] because you didn't have the opportunity to spend the time in the library organizing resources... the books are scattered everywhere. I've never got any short loans. I was just always in a hurry so it was easier if I went online or used my own ones. My last assignment I needed short loans and grizzled to one of the lecturers that I couldn't spend time looking for books, it was too time consuming with a child".*

*"I couldn't do much in the library [due to being a single-parent to one and a half year old twins with limited childcare options] ... I couldn't be here so I asked someone to get books out for me, you know... What would have been best would have been me being able to get in on my own and do it exactly".*

*"Basically I haven't been able to get any short term loans and the books I needed. I've done a lot more reading by printing out of books from friends. It has cost me a lot of money that way. Printing is expensive. I photocopied quite a lot of stuff actually do with assignments. I couldn't come in here [the library] and borrow the books".*

*"I couldn't be here so I asked someone to get books out for me, you know. What would have been best would have been had able to get in on my own and do it exactly. But I managed to get it done somehow. A pass was all I could aim for".*

*"I've never got any short loans... it was easier if I went online or used my own ones. [Had my children been welcome in the library I would have borrowed short loans,] my last assignment I needed short loans and grizzled to one of the lecturers that I couldn't spend time looking for books, it was too time consuming with a child. There were a couple of times I needed books... but I thought in not coming up here with baby".*

*"[Basically I haven't been able to get any short term loans and the books I needed. I've done a lot more reading by printing out of books from friends. It has cost me a lot of money that way. Printing is expensive. I photocopied quite a lot of stuff actually to do with assignments. I couldn't come in here and borrow the books".*

*"I'm late bringing books back, getting fines, sometimes I think it's just such a hassle coming in so I just don't get those resources [short-loans]. Resources that would have given me a better understanding".*

7.7 It was the library assistance that I needed the most

Participants are aware of the contribution librarians can make towards their learning. One participant directly attributed her failing a course due to her not securing assistance with her assessment from a Librarian. This participant was aware of the expertise located at the library but wanted to access the librarian assistance at her point-of-learning, in person.

*"[I have stress related not being able to access the library because of having my children w me] especially in the final days leading up to a due date. That is when I want to be at the library because it has everything I need especially in those last couple of days - get proofreading done, get the referencing correct... it is the library assistance that I needed the most".*

*"I relied on the library staff to guide me further... but I could not get the extra time to access the help I needed. [Had I been able to bring my children to the library it would have made a difference] because I could have been here instead of being at home instead of going over what I don't understand".*

*"[One time I had to use the library to complete a study task, I needed] to complete a critique of research. The only way I could access the research was at the library. I couldn't get it at home. I don't understand why. I had to be here at the library to access it. We had a week to get it done. I had 2 preschoolers at the time... I relied on being at this library to get this assessment done within the week. I tried to find different people to look after my children so I could do the assignment. I had day-care, 20 hours per week but couldn't afford more care. Twenty hours is not a lot of study time per week. The day care hours were 8am till 12 [midday]. By the time I dropped them off and got to the library at 12 [midday], I only had about 2 hours of library time a day... [This] research project that was really effected because I relied on the staff. It was a weak point and I couldn't access the help I needed. Consequently I ended up failing that paper ... it is the library assistance that I needed the most".*

7.8 I'm just trying to juggle and focus

Many participants spoke about how being prohibited from using the library space when accompanied by their children disadvantaged them. Many participants turned to the downstairs public library as a way to manage their childcare responsibilities and study needs, however all the participants acknowledged how this imperfect solution still failed to solve their need to be in their institutions' library and the solution's causation of creating the stress of having to supervise children in a public space. The public library presented the most convenient study space solution yet proved frustrating, inconvenient and meant a loss of productive study time for participants.

*But when I needed to print I would have to run upstairs w my kids and get my printing and then go back down. [This causes] lots of stress I think, the main thing is I'm stressed, [I'm] trying to*

*focus on my work and make sure the kids are ok, obviously you [I] have to do that always but.. Not running [in and] out of the kids section (the Children's Section in the downstairs public library). I'm just trying to juggle and focus. Something like that [study] takes 3 times longer than if I just had somewhere to study and I didn't have to worry about that [childcare].*

*"[When I've needed to use the library or be in the library but I've had my children with me] you know sometimes I put my children on the ground level... down in the children part [of the public library below the Unitec library] and I just come here and do some work for a short time. I don't want to leave them for a long time. Also... [they] are not allowed [in the Unitec library] so they just wait outside [the Unitec Library] and I hurry".*

#### 7.9 We knew we couldn't bring kids in the library

Some participants sought a study space solution from within the institution. They sought solutions from lecturers with limited success. It appears that academic staff wanted to help but due to the nature of student-sole-parents problem, that is ultimately needing library access on their terms, were unable to offer a solution that met student-sole-parents need for library resources, study space or support to continue studying full-time.

*"We raised [the issue of lack of suitable study space] with one of the part-time lecturers... they opened up one of the computer rooms in level 2... So we were able to use that one [on a] Tuesday and Thursday night. So the kids would come and sit in the back and we could do our study... [We needed books] quite often [during this time so] we darted to the library to get our books... We knew we couldn't bring kids in the library... a couple of the other students felt that there could have been more availability of the library for students with kids but nothing was ever discussed about how to go about it".*

*"My tutors knew [I was a single parent struggling to organize time to study in the library] and they tried to help by organising childcare but it never happened, it fell through".*

*"[Lecturers] said to me... take study part time. They mean well but for me that is not the kind of help I needed".*

#### 7.10 I was constantly thinking oh man what am I going to do tomorrow

All participants spoke about the added stress of not being to fully leverage the library service and the toll this stress had upon them. Since all of the participants were resolved to complete their studies, stress often manifested itself physically for these students. Many had resolved to overcome and work around any issues in order to achieve within their course, and this determination to pass their courses resulted in stress being persistently present and at times peaking with disastrous results. Participants reported symptoms like high blood

pressure, feelings of struggling, being relentlessly tired, loss of appetite, loss of sleep, ongoing feelings of malaise and struggling and for one participant whose overall day, and mental and physical health would have been greatly improved had she been allowed to have her twin preschoolers accompany her to the library, to access the internet and librarian assistance, during periods of a heavy study load, a collapse in class and subsequent hospital stay due to exhaustion.

*"Many times [I've had difficulties completing an assessment due to not being able to bring my children with me to the library to study], I stay up all night then come in early when the kids can go to day care then rush to download readings to print off... [My work is] rushed. I maintain good grades but there is a whole layer of stress that doesn't need to be there. It's like the stress that kills you. I get really high blood pressure. My blood pressure goes to 160 over 110 for weeks".*

*"I feel wrecked when I've had those [assessment] times and it feels [like] a struggle. I'm lucky I've never failed anything or had to resubmit but I feel the strain in my health (caused by having to attempt Unitec library needs while needing to supervise my children in the downstairs public library). If I wasn't determined this would have been time is would have given up".*

*"I was always stressing, sleepless always tired. I didn't eat much last year. My appetite was so bad due to stress, lack of sleep, lack of equipment to complete study & assessment. I was constantly thinking oh man what am I going to do tomorrow in regards to activities then assessment and group work... how am I going to cope?... [I felt] tired and stress... my neck was always sore".*

*"Last year I collapsed. I ended up in hospital due to exhaustion".*

7.11 I knew we weren't allowed to be in there

One participant reported having to resort to hiding her children as she studied in the library so that she could complete urgent course work. She spoke about the due assessment being stressful enough without the added stress of needing to conceal her children as she sought to complete her course work in the best way she saw fit. Although she was in the library, with her children, the need to conceal them meant she hurried through her work and produced work of diminished quality that through comments from her lecturers that a better grade could have been possible had the submitted work been undertaken with more care in areas like spelling.

*"Assignments are quite stressful so it would have been better knowing that there was no boundaries [to me using the library with my children], there was nothing. I always had to rush my work before [the library manager] saw me [sneaking my children in to the campus library,*

*then concealing them when in, so I could use the library computers]. Always being mindful, looking around for where she was. I was always distracted... my spelling was really bad. My assignment would have been better had I spell-checked my work. Lecturers would ask if I used spellcheck".*

*"[I knew I wasn't allowed to have my children come with me into the library because the] library manager would tell us off. She told us no kids in here. So quite often we would sneak them in. I would seat one next to me. Because she was short. Just as long, you know, hidden they were ok. As long as they didn't talk or make any noises it was ok. [What made me disregard the library policy and library manager's instruction was the need to do] Power Points or something, and it was real urgent. Something I had to get done... that was the only times I did something like that. Something real urgent. It was not a nice feeling [sneaking the children in], but you know it had to be done. As long as I had that 10 - 15 minutes to do what I had to do, and sometimes you know, I also had to go over the thing. So really I would be here for up to 25 minutes. I was stressed out because I had a timeframe to get it in by. It was stressful, I knew I wasn't allowed to be in there... knowing we weren't supposed to be in there that was stressful and hoping like hell the kids didn't start whining because they were bored".*

7.12 I can't study here anymore, it's not convenient

All the participants knew about the library's policy to only allow children to accompany their parents for brief periods only. Participants became aware through various means. One correctly assumed, one was told by peers and most knew through either notices posted around the library space or through being told by the library manager. Knowing they couldn't use the library when needed when they had their children accompany them, left participants with feelings of isolation, discouragement and disconnection from study as well as feelings of disillusionment as to what undertaking a programme of study would be like for them.

*[When I found out I couldn't have my children accompany me to the library, I thought] oh my goodness... I can't study here anymore, it's not convenient. It's harder to study here... It's like, it makes it difficult to study for a long time here. Quite stressful".*

*"One day I brought my children here and the librarian said I'm not allowed to bring the children here. They are only allowed just a short time. I can't really remember but they just said. It's inconvenient because there are many single mums and parents here so they [the library] do not support them... they have no space for the children".*

*[I'm aware of the library policy and know I can only bring children in for a brief period of time] it's on every door... it's quite obvious and even if someone brought their child in they would get asked to take their child to the public library level.. [When I have had my children with me in the library for a brief period of time] I [feel like] was breaking the law, breaking the rules, like you shouldn't have the gremlins in the library where it is very quiet".*

*“[Regarding the library policy statement ruling that children are only allowed in the library for brief periods of time], to know that the rule was there it made me feel like I don’t want to come to uni [Unitec], like a closed door - class/ home/ class/ home. [It made me question my experience] What is uni? Was it worth it? Is it worth it? [Being able to bring my children with me to study in the library] would have made everything possible for me. Even an hour or 2 a day. I could have got books and gone online... [it was] the thing I needed to study”.*

*“[I first became aware of the policy concerning parents when] I had my kids with me and a librarian came up to me [and told me the policy regarding children only being allowed to be in the library for brief periods of time]. I thought damn, I've got things to do. I just said look I just need 5 minutes so I got given 5 minutes that turned into 20 minutes... I had to get in and out quickly. I just thought shit, whatever bloody hell... so what am I supposed to do? I just had to wait till the library manger wasn't there and go in anyway”.*

7.13 I need them to hang out in a safe place

Participants spoke about the challenges they experienced accessing and organizing childcare so that they could come and use the library. All the participants are Work and Income benefit recipients so cannot afford paid childcare outside of the 20 hours free subsidized hours they are entitled to. Those with preschool children aged between 2 – 5 years old drew upon these hours as release time from parenting for timetabled classes. Some relied upon their children attending school to provide the time they needed to attend class and use the library, however when the children were on school holiday some participants were unable to organize suitable care for their children that allowed their children to be responsibly supervised and allow them as students to carry out study activities.

*[A time when I needed to complete a study related task at the library had children in my care was] the first semester I did here, the school holidays mismatched with the semester timetable. I had a lot of deadlines. There were no [childcare] facilities here and it was going to be more of a mission setting up care due to all the forms [needing submitting] setting-up WINZ care for the sake of a couple of weeks so ... the girls [either] had to loiter in the hallway [or] ...I wouldn't come to the library”.*

*[Generally we are pretty good at working that [childcare when collaborative group study activities needed contributing to] in amongst ourselves. But I'm lucky there is a friend that can help out and in case worst case scenario the children have come in again, you know they've come in to class or in the group, and we've moved somewhere else or they came in and sit in the hallways. [My children are 10 and 11 years old] they can sit quietly and do something like read*

*a book, play loom bands or do some coloring. [I need them] to hang out in a safe place [while I study]. I'm not asking for babysitting facilities you know".*

*"Many times I walk past [the library] and see the opening and closing hours and wish [I could make better use of it]. When unit class finished at 2pm last year I couldn't get my work done because my childcare was only for a set day time. It clashed with uni [Unitec] schedule".*

7.14 If I want to use the library I look for someone to help me but it is hard

All participants reported difficulty, for a variety of reasons, securing childcare that was either appropriate, met their study needs, or affordable. As a result of not being able to secure childcare when needed participants reported having to not come into study at all or leaving classes early.

*"It's hard to find babysitters... I need to leave them [the children] with people they know and they don't want to be left with [just] anyone... Babysitters are a juggle because everyone I know is busy".*

*"If I want to use the library I look for someone to help me but it is hard because I am single mum and all my family is in Korea".*

*"[Barnardos childcare options lack flexibility] I had to make my day work within their schedule".*

*[There can be days friends can run out of willingness to help. They have their own lives and children. One friend has a child with dyslexia and a severely disabled child as well. So it's being able to have them be financially supported to stay overnight as well. They also have last minute things come up for them too. There have been times where I've had to either skip a lecture or leave early due to childcare issues".*

7.15 I let them down, it wasn't their fault

Participants have an obligation to participate in group study activities. Student's reported that participation in or absence from the group study activity sessions resulted in stress that either effected participants' short-term budget or long-term financial stability and their sense of belonging to the student community and contribution to the group activity. Feelings of shame and guilt were experienced by participants who could not, for reasons outside of their control, join in group study activities that had been set-up by course lecturers at short notice.



*“[I’ve had to arrange child-care with little or no notice so I could participate in a group-study] many times. I had to pay for that extra time in day care... I had to find that money”.*

*“[I feel] left out [when group study activities are being organized, but] I have no choice but to do it. In order for me to [participate it costs] me extra money [for childcare]. I was really stressed out... Group assessment came up all the time. It forced me to buy a laptop last year so I could download and read at home. When I did that it really put a financial hardship on me that is still going on for years”.*

*“[There have been times when I have had to arrange childcare with little notice so that I could participate in group study], plenty of times. I remember one day we had to do a group collaborative presentation and we had 2 days to get it done and so I had the idea of finishing at 12 [midday], getting the children, going home to finish my study but of course everyone else wanted to meet at the library and use the library resources but I couldn’t bring my children back to the library so I had to apologize to my group and promise to make it up to them whether next day when I could arrange care. I had to work really hard to make it up to them... I did my best to do what I could at home and bring it the following day but I felt guilty for them... I let them down, it wasn’t their fault. They were expecting me to participate equally but I can’t. They knew [I was a sole-parent], and looked like they were understanding but still some part of me felt like I let them down”.*

*“[When collaborative study groups are being discussed, organized and planned] you [I] need to speak up, but people are like they are your kids your problem... I understand it from the point of view that before you have kids you don’t comprehend the juggle so no hard feelings on them but it would be good if I could bring my kids a long so both needs could be met. A lot of the time there is not a lot of consideration given to me so I just have to adjust... I think everyone at Unitech is too wrapped up in themselves”.*

7.16 My year would have been different had I been able to bring the children to the library

When asked what kind of difference being able to have their children accompany them in the library at times of need would have made, participants predicted a range of stresses being alleviated and an improved quality of their engagement with learning and the ability to gain higher grades.

*“[Had I been allowed to bring my children with me to the library when I had urgent study tasks to complete] I wouldn’t have been stressing so much knowing it was ok. I mean assignments are quite stressful so it would have been better knowing that there was no boundaries, there was nothing, it would have been a lot better. [The quality of my work would have been a lot better] I always had to rush my work before [the library manager] saw me. Always being mindful, looking around for where she was. I was always distracted. As long as I knew what I had to do*

*then I could get out. [If I had been allowed to come in with my children my assessment grades would have been better, for example] my spelling was really bad. My assignment would have been better had I spell-checked my work. Lecturers would ask if I used spellcheck”.*

*“My year would have been different had I been able to bring the children to the library], hugely different. The childcare could have dropped the children here instead of me catching the bus to collect them... it would have saved me a bus trip each day [taking the children to care by bus before catching my bus to Unitec]. My shoulder last year was literally swollen from the weight of my bag”.*

*“Had I been able to be in the library I would have completed work on time. Not asking for extensions all the time because I would have had access to resources and the time to write”.*

*“[If I could bring my children here with me to the library] I wouldn't have to worry about my children when I study also the children be quite safe, I think they feel safe that mum is with them”.*

*“[If I had the option of bringing my children with me to the library, I would be] more relaxed, less stress[ed]. It would be convenient and my children would be safe here”.*

*“[If I had been able to bring my children into the library, book study space] it would have made a huge difference. It would have given me a space to study and for them [the children to be] occupied [in a safe environment] and [me] not have to stress about it”.*

7.17 Its higher education, its higher quality and everyone is on their own really

When asked about their sense of belonging to the student community as a student-sole-parent, participants reported a diminished sense of belonging that could be attributed to the library's policy of not allowing student-sole-parents to have children accompany them to the library.

*“[I don't feel a sense of belonging to the student community], to be honest no. Because I didn't [don't] have the interactions with others in group classes [collaborative study activities that are usually take place in the library]. I didn't have that connection... I didn't feel like I did enough you know... [I feel a sense of guilt around my lack of contribution]. When I mentioned to my group last year can I bring my boys [to collaborative activities]? Can we set up the group outside the library they said no. Because its higher education, its higher quality and everyone is on their own really”.*

### 7.18 It's isolating when your kids aren't welcome here

When asked about their desire to continue studying, the five undergraduate participants were determined to persevere through the immediate stresses they were experiencing to complete their degree programs, however one did acknowledge often, especially at the end of semester, feeling like giving study up. The one post-graduate degree participant acknowledged the difficulties thus far completing a degree program as a student-sole-parent and planned to finish studying at a postgraduate certificate level as she could not see how she undertake a full Masters programme requiring increased reading and research while with a child and not being able to bring them in to the library. For this student the library, despite her willingness to seek library staff assistance, is overwhelming. This library anxiety results from the current policy and lack of library study space.

*“Well I [have] had ummed and ahed about taking up more papers. Part of the reason I've put my thesis on hold is that baby is getting older and I haven't worked out how I'm going to manage her and going to class and coming to the library. Just the resources and needing to access what I need to get it done. It's just a bit tricky, you know manage everything. I haven't figured it out yet... I don't want to go through what I've gone through... not being able to get to things done. I don't know how I've managed but I've got there... it's isolating when your kids aren't welcome here”.*

*[Thinking about my ability to study here in the longer term, not having the option of being allowed to have my children with me here in the library] makes it difficult to study for a long time [long term] here. Quite stressful. You know like, actually, single parent does not have enough time to study. During school time we also have lectures so we have to focus on that and we also need our free time to study by myself... so [I] have to use the library during that time for study... there is difficulty and stress for me”.*

*“I feel like I'd to further my studies but at the moment I don't see it being practical or easy enough to continue. And I know that the [library] website has got everything on it that we need, we get shown it at the beginning of each year, but that just goes all over my head and so I still really do rely on coming back to the library and asking those questions and getting that support from the staff as well. I don't find the website convenient for me. I know it could be convenient but I have other things to work out. [My preferred way is to come in and talk to a Librarian] at my pace when I need it or otherwise I can't grasp it. When I come in with my daughter I get the feeling I'm being watched and being waited for how long I'm going to be here, especially by other students. I feel like that too when I see others. I'm not allowed you aren't either”.*

*“[I feel like giving up study due to the challenges associated with completing course work] always at the end of every paper. I think why would I voluntarily put myself through this, is this worth it? [Being able to have my children accompany me in the library] would have made a huge difference. It would have given me a space to study and not worry about them being occupied and not have to stress about it”.*

7.19 It is really important for student mums to be able to make a difference in her life. Participants were asked to consider what kind of library they would like to see Unitec provide and all were unanimous in their urging for library policy to be changed and resource allocated to better meet the library needs of student-sole-parents.

*“[I’d like library managers to] look at making changes so the library is available to mums... It is really important for student mums to be able to benefit from learning, making a difference in her life. If they are on the benefit, they want to make a difference, get a job, and support their kids financially. That support can be extended from the library... why not if it is a possibility. For me [education has been] it’s a way to keep yourself informed, keeping yourself going, raising your own family, being part of the community. I think they should know that they can come in and have that option of using the resources, knowing the resources are available... it’s not easy for mums to come in when with kids. I honestly believe if mums can be welcome the library will be a cool place to be”.*

*“[I think the policy should be changed] it should be because there are such a large amount of students who have children, single or not. Everybody has to deal with day-care also especially single parents trying to make a better life and not be that typical on the benefit with a child and can’t do anything about it. It would be better to encourage them to do something... even just one [library] study room you could book. Maybe even toys, not even toys. Just a place for parents. It’s not fun down in the kid’s area (section)”.*

*“I understand the point of the rule [policy] and know how distracting children can be but feel there should be more support for children [student-parents] to be here like a room for parents to take the children. I don’t want to distract other students by bringing my children being here. [I think] all those [library] study rooms down there should be turned into study rooms for parents... so they can have library access, have their children in a room that doesn’t distract others and [the children can be safely] be entertained [contained]. I’ve brought my iPad in for my daughter before. She likes the volume up so she can hear it but it is distracting for other students. Having her in a study room would allow me to get my study done”.*

7.20 I don't want special treatment. I just want to be welcome

Participants understood the need for a quiet, student-centered, study focused library environment, however urged for library policy and study-room allocation that better met the needs of sole-parents. They did not want special treatment just a library service that made the library equitable for them also.

*“My understanding [regarding the library’s policy statement regarding children in the library for brief periods only is] I haven’t seen the policy but I know that they can’t be here. You know I know I’m not the only person in the universe. I think its fair out of respect for other people and I guess that there could be an age limit for under and over an age range because they [children] all behave differently. Even in churches there is even a quiet room where parents are welcome. I think it would be quite easy to accommodate those things because we all study and learn differently. Where I would choose to sit with my children would be different to where I would choose without children. I think its fairness to other student but I think there should be changes in the age range. My suggestion would be to ask what age they can behave. Maybe exclude preschoolers because they are nosier than older ones”.*

*“No one wants to be the parent of a child who is a distraction... I don’t want special treatment. I just want to be welcome”.*

## 8. Discussion

This chapter discusses what was accomplished through the study’s findings, why these findings are significant and what research should take place next for tertiary libraries to be more equitable for student-sole-parents.

### 8.1 Introduction

The purpose of this research is to enhance tertiary libraries understanding of the impact and effects the no-children-in-the-library policy upon student-sole-parents. It examined the experience of student-sole-parents needing to use their tertiary library, the impact of student-sole-parents not being able to have their children accompany them in the library for extended periods of time for study or library use, and the effect this policy has upon these students sense of belonging to the library and student community. The 'no-children-in-the-library' tertiary library stance is negatively impacting and effecting student-sole-parents ability to undertake their studies and engage in the student experience that augments their study. The results of this study show they are being negatively impacted by this policy and this is evident in the diminished quality of their course work, low use of library resources and struggle to participate in group study. Library learning resources are critical to student success as literature and professional

practice. Glenn (1988) observes that education is needed to develop common attitudes and values considered essential. Learning resources are key educational tools.

Their short-term study goals are compromised due to their not being able to have their children with them in order to participate in group assessment activities, use appropriate study-space, select appropriate texts or seek Librarian assistance with lengthy or complicated reference questions. The policy statement is also creating within these students a diminished sense of belonging, sense of hopelessness for future study and stressed state of physical and mental health. Student-sole-parents are experiencing stress as a direct result of not having family friendly study space in the library, and augmented stress within their personal responsibilities. Due to the additional difficulties and stresses the 'no-children-in-the-library' policy has upon student-sole-parent's their desire to study, and their enjoyment from it is diminished, and in some cases all but extinguished.

8.2 Is the 'no-children-in-the-library' tertiary library stance impacting student-sole-parents ability to undertake their studies?

In this study student-sole-parents experienced a significant barrier to undertaking course work and participating in group assessment work as a result of not being able to access the library when with children. The most significant barrier was experienced by parents who had pre-school children. These parents, who all rely on Work and Income social welfare benefits, had difficulties securing childcare outside of the government subsidised 20 free hours per week. What these students needed was internet connectivity, and time to use the Short-Loan resources. One of the student said "Many times I walk past [the library] and see the opening and closing hours and wish [I could make better use of it]. When unit class finished at 2pm last year I couldn't get my work done because my childcare was only for a set day time. It clashed with uni schedule" [sic]. The library is a critical resource for students. Although the library has a comprehensive website that allows access to a range of services that save student's effort and time, for example Live Chat, item request and an extensive eBook collection and online database, the undergraduate students still needed to access the library's collections, study-space, internet and face-to-face Librarian assistance, as they move along their learning journey developing information and library literacy skills. The library is a managed place of expertise, and for some students, Librarians play a crucial role in helping them develop the information literacy skills they need to complete work. One student reported failing an assessment due to her not understanding what a critique of research entailed. Because she knew to locate the research piece from the library, she only considered Librarians as the support who could help her understand what she needed to do to complete a successful piece of work. Although library staff are not the only ones she could have turned to, she could also have turned to her lecturer or student academic support for clarification, however her understanding of the library, and in part the legacy that the term library conveys to members, had her believe that only Librarians could guide her through the process of appraising the research study. This student ended up wasting a lot of time ruminating with a lack of clarity over the assessment task, and a significant part of this lack of progress on this task was a lack of childcare options for this student's two preschoolers that would have allowed her to come into the library during the weekend and access

the expertise she needed. The library is the only student support service available open during the weekend so often picks up other student support service tasks if it is apparent it is urgent and important for individual students. This student reported "I relied on the staff. It was a weak point and I couldn't access the help I needed. Consequently I ended up failing that paper ... it is the library assistance that I needed the most [sic]".

8.3 Is the 'no-children-in-the-library' tertiary library stance effecting student-sole-parents ability to engage in the student experience?

In this study the challenges students experienced while completing course work were ongoing and relentless. Some student's days were a series of challenges in many areas that just to stay engaged in study required a lot of energy, resolution and commitment to continue being a student juggling family responsibilities. One student described needing to catch two buses to get to class every day, but the first bus was only to take her pre-school children to day-care. She said had she been able to bring her children to the library, she could have caught some study time with her children accompanying her, then her day-care provider would have been able to collect and drop-off her children to her, at campus. She lacked a place on campus where she could supervise her children and engage in group study activities. This was also one of the students with no home based internet. The ongoing series of set-backs, included difficulty using the library in ways that were doable for the student and enabled them to access resources and services within a heavy study schedule and time-consuming parental responsibilities, and in a way that was as convenient and easy for students without childcare responsibilities. Set-backs included not borrowing the resources, especially Short-Loan resources that were integral texts needed for students to glean the formative understandings needed then and for building upon later in their studies. The study highlighted the relentless, stressful plight of student-sole-parents, whom do not seem to be privy to community support despite being surrounded by an institutional and student community. These students are relying heavily on the government support they are entitled to, yet that support only covers the core study requirements. Without support of family or friends, student-sole-parents are struggling to 'be in two places at once', that is a student and a parent. Students are meeting this struggle by pushing through course work requirements by 'grabbing' the most convenient resources and settling for the most convenient study space solutions. Both solutions are impacting upon the student's development of knowledge in their field and are compromising their ability to stay in study in the future through either the attainment of low quality course work or the urge to not continue studying. Since most of the students have stated failing a course is not an option, they are enrolled for the benefit of their children, the stress is striking their health which unavoidably and ultimately is linked to their ability to undertake study effectively.

8.4 Recommendations

The following recommendations are suggested:

1. Tertiary libraries investigate the need for family-friendly services within their libraries;
2. Academic Librarians support student parents by seeking library solutions that accommodate their needs; and
3. Tertiary libraries to consider the needs of student parents when planning or allocating library spaces; and
4. Tertiary libraries to review their policies to identify any negative biases that may be present towards student-parents.

#### 8.5 Further research

A limitation within this study is that it only a small sample of students were interviewed. The study cannot tell us how many, either campus, nationally or internationally, student-sole-parents are facing the challenges derived from the no-children-in-the-library policy, nor can it allow us to know the comprehensive, collective story that is the general story, or most common impacts that belongs to student-sole-parents either campus, nationally or internationally. A quantitative study across of New Zealand tertiary libraries, and the study replicated internationally would be of value. It would allow us to know the scope and therefore urgency of the matter, as well as providing research that could feed into a metadata analysis allowing us to know the sector scope of the issue. Knowing the scope of the issue would be incredibly beneficial to tertiary libraries as it would allow them to better plan how their existing building resources are allocated, as well as enable them to future-proof any building developments in order to effectively meet the researched group's needs.

It is not within the scope of the study to examine the health related impacts of the stress the students are experiencing therefore a comprehensive evaluation of the impacts upon students wellbeing and the subsequent effects this is having on their desire to study is not examined. A health focused study on this group of library students would be interesting and useful. It would allow tertiary libraries to have a better understanding of the student-sole-parents study experience as it relates to their wellbeing and health. Tertiary libraries could use this research to inform the policy configurations and resource allocations they determine, and plan for with the aim of moving towards developing tertiary libraries that adopt a holistic approach to catering for diverse community's library needs.

## 9. Conclusion

This study has begun to provide an understanding of how student-sole-parents experience the academic library at Unitec Institute of Technology at the Waitākere campus. It expands upon existing literature by giving us a better, more in-depth understanding of the challenges student-sole-parents have when needing to use the library. Because this was a small qualitative study whose participants were all female and non-traditional older students, this study reflects the



experience of only a small section of the student-sole-parent student population at this polytechnic. The library policy configuration and allocation of study-room space has a bias against student-sole-parents and is contributing to a negative library use and student experience for them. This study asked if the 'no-children in the library' environment (1) impacts upon student-sole-parents ability to engage in compulsory course work, and (2) if this policy configuration is effecting their study goals. What the study discovered was that student-sole-parents are struggling to achieve positive study outcomes. Because these students are mostly completing course requirements, it may appear that there is no need for change from the library however what the student's learning records are not evidencing is the ongoing struggle these students are bearing and the toll that struggle is having upon their personal health, wellbeing and finances. The findings of this study make a contribution to the literature on student-sole-parents and academic libraries, as a way to understand their library needs and what is necessary for them to have the same access to the library as traditional students. Further research that could be undertaken to expand the findings of this study include quantitative research to know the scope of the issue, so tertiary libraries could better understand the needs of student-sole-parents. Further research could also be used to examine the health related impacts of the stress of student-sole-parents who are being effected by prohibitive library policy and resource allocation. As Harrell (2002) wisely explains "in our interactions with adult students... we need to practice patience, flexibility, and compassion. We need to become aware of adult students' unique needs, strengths, and characteristics. We may not be able to cure their "high anxiety" about the conflicting roles in their lives and the pressures caused by pursuing an education, but with responsive, proactive library services, we can help alleviate some of the symptoms".

Student Name: Kim Barnes

Student number: 300302787

INFO 580

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## 11. Appendixes

### 11.1 Appendix 1: Interview form

1. **Open ended questions that aim to build rapport with the participant**
  - a. How long have you been a student with Unitec?
  - b. What programme are you enrolled in?
  - c. How did you happen to select this programme of study?

2. **Researcher shares with the participant their experience of being a student mother as another way of building rapport.** This exercise acknowledges my "role in terms of power and authority in the interview situation" (Hesse-Biber 2014, p. 184) and serves to lessen this dynamic by establishing trust and reciprocity with the participant.

3. **I would like to ask you about your experience as a student-sole-parent**

- a. Thinking about all of the roles you have and how your time might be distributed. You are a sole-parent, a student, do you also work? Are there any other major factors that demand your time?
- b. What made you decide to study?
- c. Tell me about a time when you needed to complete a study related task at the library but you had children in your care?
- d. Has there ever been a time when you had to arrange child-care with little or no notice so you could participate in a group-study?
- e. How do you think student-sole-parents feel when collaborative study groups to which they belong to, are discussing/ organising/ planning their group activity requirements?
- f. Has there ever been a time you've experienced difficulty managing your library needs due to childcare issues?
- g. Has there ever been a time you've experienced difficulty completing an assessment due to childcare issues?

4. **Thinking about how the ages of children pose different challenges in regards to childcare**

- a. How old is/ are your child/children?
- b. Does the age of your youngest/ only child effect the childcare choices you have available?
- c. What childcare choices, if any do you have available to you?
- d. Are there difficulties or barriers associated with accessing these options?
- e. Have you experienced any study-related consequences relating to needing to access the library and childcare issues? If yes, what? If no, why?
- f. Have you ever considered withdrawing from a course due to childcare difficulties that you know could have been resolved had you been allowed to bring your child/ children with you to the library?
- g. Have you ever considered stopping taking on study due to childcare related difficulties? If "yes" why? If "no" what made a difference that allowed you to not consider stopping?

5. **Thinking about your sense of belonging to the student community**

- a. On an everyday basis do you feel a sense of belonging to the student community?
- b. Are you aware of any other student-sole-parents on campus?
- c. If yes, tell me about your relationship/s with them?
- d. If no, why do you think this is so?

6. **Do you think, or know that other students or staff are aware of you being a sole-parent?**



- a. Do you think they hold any opinions about student you due to you being a sole-parent?
  - b. What about your lecturers?
  - c. How do you feel about yourself as a student in this situation?
7. **If the participant has experienced difficulties studying due to childcare.**
- a. How has experiencing childcare difficulties related to library used effected your sense of belonging to Unitec and your entitlement to using the library?
8. **Are you aware of the library policy regarding children being allowed to accompany sole-parents for extended amounts of time in the library?**
- a. If "yes".
    - i. How did you become aware of it?
    - ii. Tell me about that time?
  - b. If "no", the researcher will state the policy statement to the participant.
  - c. How does this policy make you feel?
  - d. Is there anything about this policy you think should be changed?
  - e. Why?
9. **Thinking about your ability to use the library effectively**
- a. Tell me about a time when you needed to use the library but had children with you?
  - b. Has there ever been a time you avoided using the library due to your role as a student-sole-parent?

## Participant Information Sheet

**Research Project Title:** How does a 'no-children-in-the-library' tertiary library policy impact and affect student-sole-parent's ability to engage in study and participate in the student experience?

**Researcher:** Kim Joanne Barnes, School of Information Management, Victoria University of Wellington

As part of the completion of my Masters of Information Studies degree, this study is designed to investigate how a 'no-children-in-the-library' policy is experienced by tertiary students who are also sole-parents of children under the age of 14. The study will investigate the impact of this policy upon student-sole-parent's ability to engage in the activities of study as well as the potential long term effects this policy has upon student-sole-parent's experience of study.

Victoria University requires, and has granted, approval from the School's Human Ethics Committee.

I am inviting student-sole-parents enrolled at the Unitec Institute of Technology to participate in this research. Participants will be asked to take part in an hour long interview. Permission will be asked to audio record the interview, and a transcript of the audio interview will be sent to participants for checking.

Participation is voluntary, and you will not be identified personally in any written report produced as a result of this research, including possible publication in academic conferences and journals. All material collected will be kept confidential, and will be viewed only by myself and my supervisor Dr Phillip Calvert. The research report will be submitted for marking to the School of Information Management, and subsequently deposited in the University Library. Should any participant wish to withdraw from the project, they may do so until Monday 26th October, and the data collected up to that point will be destroyed. All audio and data collected from participants will be destroyed within 2 years after the completion of the project.

A summary of the research results will be emailed to participants at the completion of the research project.

If you have any questions or would like to receive further information about the project, please contact me at [barneskim@vuw.ac.nz](mailto:barneskim@vuw.ac.nz) or telephone (09) 815 4321 ext. 5001, or you may contact my supervisor Dr Philip Calvert at [Philip.Calvert@vuw.ac.nz](mailto:Philip.Calvert@vuw.ac.nz) or telephone (04) 463-6629.

Kim Joanne Barnes

## 11.3 Appendix 3: Participant Consent Form



SCHOOL OF INFORMATION MANAGEMENT  
TE KURA TIAKI, WHAKAWHITI KŌRERO  
LEVEL 5, RUTHERFORD HOUSE, PIPEITA CAMPUS, 23 LAMBTON QUAY, WELLINGTON  
PO Box 600, Wellington 6140, New Zealand  
Phone +64-4-463 5103 Fax +64-4-463 5446 Email [sim@vuw.ac.nz](mailto:sim@vuw.ac.nz) Website [www.victoria.ac.nz/sim](http://www.victoria.ac.nz/sim)

### Participant Consent Form

**Research Project Title:** How does the 'no-children-in-the-library' tertiary library policy impact and affect student-sole-parent's ability to engage in study and participate in the student experience?

**Researcher:** Kim Joanne Barnes, School of Information Management, Victoria University of Wellington

I have been given and have understood an explanation of this research project. I have had an opportunity to ask questions and have them answered to my satisfaction.

I understand that I may withdraw myself (or any information I have provided) from this project, without having to give reasons, by e-mailing [barneskim@vuw.ac.nz](mailto:barneskim@vuw.ac.nz) by the Monday 26th October.

I understand that any information I provide will be kept confidential to the researcher and their supervisor, the published results will not use my name, and that no opinions will be attributed to me in any way that will identify me.

I understand that the data I provide will not be used for any other purpose or released to others.

I understand that, if this interview is audio recorded, the recording and transcripts of the interviews will be erased within 2 years after the conclusion of the project. Furthermore, I will have an opportunity to check the transcripts of the interview.

Please indicate (by ticking the boxes below) which of the following apply:

- I would like to receive a summary of the results of this research when it is completed.
- I agree to this interview being audio recorded.

Signed:

Name of participant:

Date: