

**Challenges and obstacles experienced by mother students of Nazarbayev University
during their graduate studies**

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Ethics approval



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November 5th, 2019

Dear Kamshat,

This letter now confirms that your research project entitled: *Challenges and obstacles experienced by mother students of Nazarbayev University during their graduate studies* has been approved by the Graduate School of Education Ethics Committee of Nazarbayev University.

You may proceed with contacting your preferred research site and commencing your participant recruitment strategy.

Yours sincerely,

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CHALLENGES AND OBSTACLES EXPERIENCED BY MOTHER STUDENTS OF NAZARBAYEV UNIVERSITY DURING THEIR GRADUATE STUDIES

Challenges and obstacles experienced by mother students of Nazarbayev University during their graduate studies

Abstract

The number of re-entering mother students to higher education is increasing around the world. The pattern of obtaining new knowledge among them shows the demand and future expectations for a more prosperous life. This study will present the experience of mother students at higher education and investigates what challenges and barriers they faced and how they overcome problems related to balancing their roles during their study. The research is conducted based on a qualitative method. This approach helped to understand the challenges encountered by mother students and their response to difficulties in life's multiple roles and experiences. The findings show that there are several factors affecting graduate mother students to successfully pursue a university degree, such as multiple role strains, situational, dispositional and institutional barriers, level of self-confidence and social and family support. Furthermore, universities, departments, faculty, and peers have to perceive the needs of mother students in real-life conditions and enhance the relationship with them by providing support. These findings are directed at policy makers, departments and university leaders and suggest an implementation of supporting policies to help struggling mother students. The consequences of not fulfilling the demand of mother students can influence their academic performance.

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Проблемы и препятствия, с которыми сталкиваются мамы студенты Назарбаев Университета во время обучения на послевузовских программах

Аннотация

Число повторных поступлений матерей-студентов в высшие учебные заведения растет по всему миру. Модель получения новых знаний среди них показывает спрос и будущие ожидания процветающей жизни. В моем исследовании будет представлен опыт матерей студентов в высших учебных заведениях, а также будут изучены проблемы и барьеры, с которыми они сталкиваются и как они преодолевают проблемы, связанные с балансированием их ролей во время учебы. Мое исследование проводилось на основе качественного метода. Такой подход помогает понять в ходе интервью проблемы, с которыми сталкиваются матери студенты и их реакцию на трудности в жизненном опыте с несколькими ролями. Полученные результаты показывают, что существует несколько факторов, влияющих на успешность получения образования в университете студентами-матерями, такие как множественные ролевые нагрузки, ситуационные, диспозиционные и институциональные барьеры, уровень уверенности в себе и социальная и семейная поддержка. Кроме того, университеты, факультеты, преподаватели и сокурсники должны понимать потребности матерей студентов в реальных условиях и улучшать отношения с ними, предоставляя достаточную поддержку. Эти результаты дают высокую оценку лицам, определяющим политику, департаментам и руководителям университетов и предлагают реализовать поддерживающую политику, чтобы помочь матерям. Последствия невыполнения требований матерей студентов могут повлиять на их успеваемость.

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Назарбаев Университетінің магистратура бағдарламаларында оқу кезіндегі ана студенттерінің қиындықтары мен кедергілері

Аннотация

Ана студенттердің жоғары білім алуға қайта түсуінің саны бүкіл әлемде артып келеді. Олардың арасында жаңа білім алу үлгісі өркендеуші өмірдің сұранысы мен болашақ үміттерін көрсетеді. Менің зерттеуім жоғары оқу орындарындағы ана студенттердің тәжірибесін ұсынады және олар қандай қиындықтар мен кедергілерге тап болғанын және оқу барысында өз рөлдерін тепе-теңдікке байланысты проблемаларды қалай жеңетінін зерттейді. Менің зерттеуім сапалы әдіс негізінде жүргізілді. Бұл тәсіл сұхбат арқылы ана студенттердің кездестіретін қиындықтарды және олардың өмірдегі бірнеше рөлдердегі қиыншылықтарға қалай жауап беретінін түсінуге көмектеседі. Зерттеу нәтижелері магистратура бағдарламаларының студенттерінің университеттік дәрежесін сәтті алуына әсер ететін бірнеше факторлардың бар екенін көрсетеді. Мысалы, бірнеше рөлдік жағдайлар, жағдайлық, диспозициялық және институционалдық кедергілер, өзіне сенімділік деңгейі және әлеуметтік және отбасылық қолдау. Сонымен қатар, университеттер, кафедралар, оқытушылар және құрдастар студенттердің аналық өмірге деген қажеттіліктерін ескеріп, оларға жеткілікті қолдау көрсету арқылы олармен қарым-қатынасты жақсартуы керек. Бұл нәтижелер саясаткерлерге, кафедралар мен университет басшыларына несие береді және ана студенттердің қарсы тұруға көмектесетін саясатты жүргізуді ұсынады. Ана студенттердің талаптарын орындамауының салдары олардың оқу үлгеріміне әсер етуі мүмкін.

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Chapter one: Introduction

1.1 Introduction

Higher education has become an increasingly valuable investment for all countries. As determined by Tight (2012), the reason for all governments to invest in education, training and learning is the increase of international competition, technological developments and globalization. Consequently, the number of students who submit documents to pursue higher education is growing, including the number of mother students. According to Klein (1990), the number of registered mother students to higher education over the last decade has increased relative to those students who have continued to a master degree after high school.

There are diverse definitions given by different authors about the people rejoining the university. For instance, Padula (1994), describes mother students as “mature”, “re-entry” or “adult” over 25 years old. Most of the re-entry learners are mother students and this group of people is growing (Clayton & Smith, 1987). For example, in the U.S., around four million students have children and are studying at the same time. If we divide them into categories, approximately 37% of mother students are African American, 33% are Native American, 30% are the rest, and all of them are trying to balance their roles (Gault, Milli, & Cruse, 2018). Considering these numbers, 40% of mother students are working full time and probably 25-30% are part time. These students are under pressure and around 15 to 20% are likely in the future to leave the college. Despite studying under time constraints with multiple roles mother students tend to show higher GPA’s than non-parent students (Miller, Gault & Thorman 2011). Therefore, institutions should understand the situation and seek to satisfy the needs of mother students. However, for the last decade it seems that higher education environments are becoming more flexible for mother students to obtain the degree and are more gender friendly (Kuzhabekova & Almukhambetova, 2017).

Home (1998) affirms that mother students are usually occupied with so many roles compared to a regular student. The combination of all the roles for mother students creates a great dilemma

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for them. When a mother student focuses all her attention on one thing, she compromises another one. Some studies investigated the relationship between stress, anxiety and depression of mother students with the increase of their roles, lack of time, demand and support (Backels & Meashey, 1997). Based on some researchers, they affirm that adult students who are involved in an academic program are constantly experiencing stress (Toews, Lockyer, Dobson & Brownwell, 1993). It happens due to the fact of having a limited time to reduce accumulated academic and intellectual stress. Without releasing such stress, it might influence a student's physical and psychological health (Sloboda, 1990) and these type of people are considering at higher risk (Frazier & Schauben, 1994).

Despite the negative side of having multiple roles, some researchers believed that when mother students faced difficulties in multiple roles, it conversely creates multiple opportunities to encounter success (Johnson & Robson, 1999). Other researchers' claims that approaching the problem with an effective strategy and having family and faculty support could reduce the stress level and could achieve a success in their study (Nelson, Dell'Oliver, Koch & Buckler, 2001).

There are other factors affecting a mother student's success at the university. For instance, the level of self-confidence has very substantial impact on interpersonal relationships with other students and can lead to isolation from the society without it (Novak & Thacker, 1991). Another factor is low income; many mother students are facing economic hardship from going and obtaining new knowledge. The reason is financial barriers, as they have to pay bills to support family and all the fees necessary at university. Nevertheless, they all know that in order to find a satisfactory job without having a diploma is hard to achieve (Terrell, 1990). In addition, during their study an important factor for success comes from family and social support. These supports give strength for mother students and help to delegate some of the commitments to family members (Jacobs & King, 2002). All the mentioned factors will be elaborated in details in my literature review part.

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1.2 Motivation for the study

Each researcher, and even more a young researcher, studies a problem that is close to him or her and which he or she is often directly confronted with. Re-entering the university as an adult mother student who has a family and children and a full time work, I have realized how much the student's status will change and what kind of skills are needed in organization of time, hard work and endurance required to obtain a degree.

It turned out that there are many students in my position and it became interesting for me to study how our challenges and obstacles are similar to each other, and to identify how each of us copes with our problems. Based on the foregoing, I decided to explore the current topic. After reading some articles, I realized that the topic is endless and can be explored and presented from different angles. The motivation of re-entering university for mother students might be different, but the challenges and barriers facing all mother students are alike.

I would like to believe that the revealed results will lead my research to constructive recommendations and this work and recommendations will be applied within the walls of the Nazarbayev University. In addition, this is a growing mother students' population who are re-entering university and helping to solve their needs or provide them with a guidance and support motivates me to research this topic.

1.3 Statement of the problem

Some researchers claim that increasing productivity in labor markets is related to education, but not always measuring the well-being of population depends on market (Hill & King, 1995). For instance, if mother students enhance their education, it will affect productivity at home. An educated mother can influence her family's health, help to reduce child mortality as well as invest in the capital of their kids. Moreover, when we hear about mother students we have to perceive it not only from the economic perspective but also from the family and social

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perspectives. There are significant benefits of educating mother students (Miller, Gault & Thorman 2011; Attewell & Lavin 2007).

An attempt to obtain a higher education in an institution for a mother student is a unique challenge. Returning to school after many years have passed make their life complex. For instance, when mother students receive access to a graduate education, they encounter many obstacles involving marriage, job and raising dependents. According to Goldrick-Rab and Sorenson (2010), a low level of self-confidence because of lack of time for preparation, lack of social and family support and high level of demand in multiple roles serve to make degree completion for some mother students very challenging. Likewise, mother students are often defined as over the age of 25 (Dill & Henley, 1998). During that time, most of the school subjects are forgotten and the habit of sitting in the classroom is unusual. Moreover, when a mother student has many responsibilities, they are vulnerable and tend to leave schools.

1.4 Purpose of the study

The main purpose of this study is to explore and analyze challenges and obstacles faced by graduate mother students during their studies. The lack of sufficient time to study because of their multiple roles, a sense of anxiety and internal dissatisfaction with the fact that mother-student cannot devote enough time and energy to study, work, children and the family leads to stress and challenges to physical health, which decrease their self-confidence (Novak & Thacker, 1991). The study will also attempt to identify 1) how these students cope with these challenges; 2) what kind of social and family support mother students need and 3) how they expect to overcome these challenges. All the participants are currently mother students studying at Nazarbayev University.

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Research questions

RQ 1: What challenges and barriers do mother graduate students face during their graduate studies?

RQ 2: How do they cope with those challenges and barriers?

RQ 3: What kind of support do they need to overcome these challenges?

1.5 Significance of the study

It is expected that the research results will provide insights into the problems facing mother students while studying. All participants have a family and are raising kids, and for some it is their first child. The study explores an understanding of how mother students perform their demanding multiple roles, what constrains them from showing all their productivity, and what assistance is necessary. For institutions, it might be beneficial to understand all the challenges and barriers encountered by mother students and allocate their resources efficiently when providing assistance.

For faculty members, understanding that mother students during the semester might be busy carrying for her sick child, having doctor appointments, supporting the family financially or at doing housework might be beneficial. According to Tehan (2007), mother students have to be treated differently from regular students. Higher education is a helping engine to generate financial stability of families.

For new mother students, the research might show how other students in similar situations cope with the issues. Each individual has their own challenge, for example, one mother student might have a dependent who needs government aid, and if they obtain a higher education, the level of aid will be reduced. Another mother student might want to find a new job with a higher salary. Consequently, new or currently studying mother students could share their experience and help others.

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For regular students, it will be also useful to understand the situation of their groupmates. For me, doing this research helped me to a deeper understanding of what other mother students are encountering, how they are overcoming all the barriers and what support they are having. I know that having professional knowledge is always beneficial to create new ideas.

Chapter Two: Literature review

2.1 Introduction

The purpose of my literature review is to identify, analyze and synthesize relevant literature that provides a theoretical basis for this study. After analyzing studies, I will summarize my findings and discuss what limitations and gaps currently exist. All the sources cited in this literature review are from international sources and peer-reviewed.

My research aim is to investigate the barriers and challenges facing mother students during their academic years. After searching related literature to my research topic, it was found that not much research within the Kazakhstani context exists. Thus, cited literature of overseas authors was used to disclose the content of the topic.

The chapter is divided into main factors affecting mother student's performance in academic study. All the factors contribute to a mother student's ability to acquire education. The first factor will disclose information about multiple roles. Obviously, all mother students have dual or multiple roles in their life; those roles need to be identified. Multiple roles are divided into three common classes or barriers: situational, dispositional and institutional. All the barriers describe certain challenges affecting mother students during their study. The next part is devoted to the difficulties with low levels of self-confidence. In this part, I will reveal information about the influence of self-confidence to a mother student's academic performance. The reasons of low levels of self-confidence during academic studying is varied. This part also covers the question of how mother students are coping with self-confidence. Last part will discuss how family and social support can affect mother students. Family and social support plays a vital role in a mother student's life. Without having any support, mother students would be in a tougher situation and might leave the school if they put family responsibilities as the priority. Further, these factors will be elaborated in more details.

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2.2 Multiple roles

According to Cross (1980), adult students are able to maintain more than one responsibility such as employment, study, and family during their life and studies. For instance, higher education for adult students is one activity among many others where the goal is to pursue specific needs, such as learning new skills or new career opportunities. The selection of roles among alternatives is called “role strain” (Goode, 1960). Most of the articles about “role strain” or sometimes called “role conflict” are associated with stress, anxiety. It is inside the branch of psychology. According to Goode (1960), there are four types or sources of role strains:

1. The demand of role in particular time and place
2. The demand of different obligations among the roles
3. The demand of several activities or responses
4. Engaging in several roles with different individuals

The first type of the role meaning happens automatically in a particular time and place. The second role occurs when there is a conflict of time and place or resources. The third role relationship is typically related to jobs. Finally, the last form of role is defined as engaging into one role and having to struggle to fulfill another. The author also describes five ways of reduction of role strain, which are:

1. Compartmentalization
2. Delegation
3. Elimination of role relationship
4. Extension
5. Barriers to intrusion

Compartmentalization means the process of setting priorities, depending on the role demand and situational urgency. Delegation – as the name says when, for example, a mother student delegates her duties at home to her husband. Thereby, finding extra time to fulfill another role

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demand. Elimination of role relationship – all of our role obligations related to our job, family, education or social needs. To eliminate one of them can be very difficult, but sometimes mother students tend to eliminate one of them in order to achieve another. Extension – for example, when mother students are extending their duties to satisfy certain obligations. Barrier to intrusion – for example, it occurs when mother students intentionally creates a delusion of not having time for all the roles. They delegate their housework to husbands, some parts of work to colleagues, some homework to classmates while pretending that they are busy all the time (Goode, 1960).

We have understood from the above-mentioned explanation that these merging points of responsibilities and all roles are – the role strain. In regards to multiple roles and the role of conflict, many researchers report only negative aspects. However, according to Gove (1972), having multiple roles is actually beneficial. He described that receiving rewards from one role could fulfill the other roles.

However, in every role, both sexes have difficulties (Mucench, 1978). For example, the primary challenge for mother students is to find a balance in their multiple roles. Mother students are often playing so many characters, such as mother, partner/spouse, community member, employees etc. (Chartrand, 1990). Consequently, the life of mother students is more complex than for regular students (King & Bauer, 1988), and they have less time for extra homework and activities. Thus, the level of stress caused by multiple role demands is increasing and creates barriers to successfully pass courses. According to Backman (2004), research shows that during their life mother students are trying to arrange the balance among all commitments which leads to occurrence of the role balance. The role balance is attainable by minimizing the conflict in one role under the condition when the demand of performing another role creates difficulties (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985). The management of occurred difficulties is the process of coping with role balance (Frone, 2002).

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The process of coping emerges when mother students evaluate the outcome of the conflict. The outcome might be stressful or threatening (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984) and depends on the value evaluated by mother students to a particular threat or conflict (Bolger & Zuckerman, 1995; Friede & Ryan, 2005). It means that personal factors also influence how the role conflict is perceived, managed and restored (Kammeyer-Mueller, Judge & Scott, 2009). Therefore, all the roles performed by mother students by some means are related to achieve particular goals and have its own value or important meaning (Kramer et al., 2003; Kielhofner, 2008). To put the value on different roles identifies how much time and energy efforts will be spent on tasks. For example, the role of mother for a majority of women is a priority over any other roles (Medina & Magnuson, 2009; Arendel, 2000). Thereby, the stress for mother students who put the value of family as a priority could cause great tension when it comes to difficulties related to their family because of the role conflict. For mother students who put another role as a priority is vice a versa (Luchetta, 1995).

Mother students believe that they have a sense of controlling the situation during the role conflict, as they use and the experience of coping strategies to overcome it. Ingledew, Hardy and Cooper (1997) call it the position of control. For instance, people with internal position of control tend to believe that their actions predict the outcome. According to Rotter (1996), people with a higher internal position of control recognize the link between their actions and the results. These types of mother students understand that they need help and ask for it, have organizational skills and set priorities. They are less likely to feel the role of conflict and can manage it (Noor, 2002). Conversely, mother students with an external position of control consider the outcome of the results as luck or the influence of other people (Rotter, 1996). Thus, mother students with an external position of control experience stress, avoidance of actions and role conflict (Sheppard & Crocker, 2008; Gianakos, 2002). These types of mother students are always struggling with the balance of roles during their life (Bowman & Stern, 1995).

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All of the mentioned worriers, according to Miller and Thoresen (2003) and highlighted in their research, have a positive relationship to stress and illness. Another researcher mentioned that the reaction of stress is illness (Mattila & Salokangas, 1981). When mother students are not meeting the demand of their roles and commitments, they usually experience health issues. It is also related to the change in their life (Holmes & Rahe, 1967). There is a significant correlation between new life changes, such as adding another role, and stress related symptoms. In addition, many authors mentioned that stress, depression, and anxiety for mother students are the results of an increasing demand in their roles (Roehl & Okun, 1984; Backels & Meashey, 1997; Puryear, 1988; Leavitt, 1989).

The research by Graham (2006) found that graduate students, particularly females, tend to be in a higher risk of obtaining health problems because of stress. The stress is associated with physical and emotional exhaustion, depression and other related health issues for mother students who are trying to balance their roles (Brus, 2006).

As aforementioned, mother students must find the balance between their responsibilities, which usually leads to time constraints (Ely, 1997). According to Jacobi (1987), mother students encounter more time constraints and role conflicts compared to their counterparts. Among all their responsibilities, a family obligation is more challenging when mother students have young children. The tension for women with young children is very high in their student roles. Because children obviously need plenty of time and energy, it affects a mother student's ability to successfully pursue an education. The amount of time does not decrease, as the child gets older. Moreover, when students have limited time because of childcare responsibilities, they cannot fully participate and be involved in-group projects (Quimby & O'Brien, 2006).

Students usually spend most of their time on studying and have to deal with all the issues related to obtaining a degree (Sims & Woodrow, 1996; Grounds, 1996). The time constraints of executing multiple roles are the main barriers for mother students. According to Crispin and

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Nikolaou (2019), mother students allocate their time on a daily basis. In addition, researchers try to measure the time spent on homework, work and class time, compared with a regular student's activities. It was found that mother students are spending less time on doing homework and out of time activities, and more on work.

Therefore, commitments between family, work and academia create barriers and challenges. Most of the time, family variables are the reason mother students failing their attempts at education (Schliebner, 1990; Leavitt, 1989). Barriers and challenges might be different, but there are three classes of barriers that are common to most of the articles, they are situational, dispositional and institutional (Mercer, 1993).

2.2.1 Situational barriers.

According to Terrell (1990), the unavailability of parents when their kids need them creates a feeling of guilt for mothers students. For example, female adult students with older kids may attempt to pursue an education, however, young kids may be the reason to stop their education (Carney-Crompton & Tan, 2002). The combination of studying and taking care of a child is big challenge for mother students. She has to compromise and focus her attention on either one of the roles (Jenkins, 2009). Knowing that the academic life is devoting your time to extensive studies, mother students are able to commit to their studies and motherhood responsibilities. However, mother students feel emotional pressure during their studies because some professors believe that students have to show a constant interest and take the required steps for development. For mother students, it is hard to dedicate all her time and effort into studying while she has a parenting role (Adofo, 2013).

By the term parenting role, most importantly for mother students is to plan childcare when they step into academic life. Based on Berg and Mamhute (2013), mother students encounter difficulties without planning proper childcare. Most of the time mother students hire a nanny to take care of their kids, a housekeeper to care of housework, or ask parents or relatives

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to look after their children (Adofo, 2013). If this condition does not work well, then mother students will spend all their time with a child. In addition, in young age, children get sick more often and mother students feel emotional stress of not being around them. The consequences of missing classes and not preparing for the examination due to caring for a child's health may result in a loss of educational goals and termination from the university (Adofo, 2013).

The financial condition of the adult plays an essential role in academic achievements as well because parents have to pay academic-related expenses and childcare while they are in a class or at work. Therefore, for families with low income it is unaffordable (Terrell, 1990) and dedicated students try to spend more time and energy to support their dependents and to be financial stable in order to continue study (Carney-Crompton & Tan, 2002). Thus, the priority of satisfying the basic needs of the family such as food, rent and leisure, take over educational expenditures.

According to Chartrand (1992), employers have a positive impact on the well-being of mother students, but the cost of impact is spending most of their time. When mother students start to compromise their career opportunities in order to study or take care of their children, it leads to health and financial challenges (Terrel, 1990).

Regarding financial challenges, Hoxby (2010) found that families with low-income select colleges or universities that are affordable. The majority of families who have enough resources to support university fees usually apply to several universities. For mother students from low-incomes, the manner of submitting documents and selecting universities are the same. According to Gladow and Ray (1986), there are basic problems associated with low-income mother students:

- Controlling family income and expenses
- Health care
- Expenses to travel

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- Fulfilment of kids demands
- Looking after children
- Daily routine at home

Balancing family finance for mother students is very important, especially when it comes to study. The basic need of studying for most of mother students is to advance their education as a way to improve their financial status. In practice, some mother students move to another city with dependents to study and they have to afford all related expenses. For families with low income it is unattainable. Thus, those students are leaving their dreams and goals of studying a side. For every mother student with low-income, it is hard to find a job with a reasonable salary or keep it unchanged. These challenges with employment and studying can be devastating.

Overall, situational barriers in articles is defined as a type of barrier when circumstantial conditions block or prevent mother student's desire and ability to obtain new knowledge. They lose the opportunity to access education (MacKeracher, Suart & Potter, 2006). According to Habibah (2006), situational barriers occur when mother students have multiple responsibilities. Those responsibilities might be family, home, children and work. In addition, he mentioned the lack of childcare services and support from others. Most of the literature that I have read mentioned the above listed responsibilities as major situational barriers. Baharudin, Murad, and Mat, (2013) explained that the majority of research is based on mother students studying in higher education who are working class. In addition, Baharudin, Murad, and Mat, (2013) reports that women occupy most of the cooking and cleaning staff because they have the sense of caring after children or older people.

2.2.2 Dispositional barriers.

There are three dimensions to the role of women (Home, 1998):

1. The role of conflict occurs simultaneously;
2. The role of overloading is insufficient time to meet all demands;

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3. The role of preoccupation occurs while performing another role.

Mother students with young kids face the role of conflict more often due to the fact associated with the increasing demand of their roles (Carney-Crompton & Tan, 2002). Thus, they feel unsatisfied when there is a lack of time to care for their child and there is a lack of funds to support and do multiple task assignments (Terrell, 1990; Home, 1998). These worries lead to stress and depression of mother students. The reasons for the occurrence of role conflicts might be varied. For example, mother student's emotional needs, obtaining new knowledge or children's well-being. However, unforeseen events can happen at any time even if you plan everything. Unpredictable situations such as a sick child, uncomfortable time deadlines at work or on academic life force mother students to ask for help. Supporters usually take several responsibilities from mother students in order to make it easy for her.

According to Nevill and Damico (1975), the methods to identify role conflict situations faced by mother students totaled eight categories:

1. Time management

Role of the conflict most of the time occurs when there is a demand for time. Mother students have to find time to satisfy all the obligations they have such as household, social commitments and privacy. Pearlin (1975) reported that household commitments increase the risk of wives being overstressed. Further, Schooler, Miller, and Richtand (1984) noted that characteristics of housework is related to the condition of mothers psychological functioning.

2. Relations with Husband

Some studies indicated that wives' mental condition improves when husbands participate in household work (Krause & Markides, 1985; Pleck 1985; Kessler & McRae, 1982). The interest and activities of husband and wife are often different. Husbands' participation in household activities reduces the stress of wives because they take some responsibilities.

3. Household management

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Household management might be time-consuming work and many women are spending a lot of time and effort maintaining their household. Household management contains a range of activities such as preparing meals, cleaning house and clothes, childcare, and paying utilities. The time spent on every task to satisfy family needs is significant (Shelton & John, 1996; Bianchi, Milkie, Sayer & Robinson, 2000).

4. Finances

Finance always plays an essential role in conflict. According to Headden (2009), finance is the main obstacle facing most students in acquiring education. Low-income families are always facing disagreements of where to spend money efficiently.

5. Childcare

Conflicts arise when there is a need of caring for a child or to study. Mother students are always feeling the pressure of demanding time and energy. Cleary and Mechanic (1983) highlighted that between mother students and children it is always a relationship of time demands.

6. Expectations of Self

Thoits (1986) found that every mother student with multiple roles has a goal and understanding the sense of self-will that enhances their well-being. Not every time can mother students measure accurately their expectations and strengths.

7. Expectations of others

Other people expect from mother student to behave accordingly. For instance, universities expect mother students to perform and meet all the requirements. Family members expect their time and care. It is not possible to meet everyone's expectations and mother students have to compromise one role with the demand of other roles, thus causing difficulties.

The role of overloading occurs when full-time students are trying to contribute to every demand as a student, family member, and job. Most of the mother students do not fully understand what will be the effect on their combined role demands. The demand for the job with

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fix hours may seem doable but not family and student demands. Therefore, the role of overloading is usually associated with vulnerability and guilt (Home, 1998). In addition, the role of overloading means to sacrifice one of the roles. If mother students compromise with the learning role, then the quality of their education will be damaged. Thereby, mother students are always searching for alternative ways to satisfy the overloading demands of their roles. For instance, some mothers leave their kids with a nanny or family member while attending the class, other mothers studying while using public transport and some of them are not participating in social life. Examples of how mother students are finding ways to fulfil their obligations can be endless. Most of the time, according to the experience of Home (1998), the role of overloading for mother students occurs when they are pursuing education. The significant challenges push those students to react immediately in such situations. Overall, mother students sacrifice a comfortable environment in order to satisfy their study demand.

According to Cooper and Davidson (1982) mother students, by doing their multiple roles obtain the role of overloading. Mother students experience a greater role of overloading than men. Increasing overloading roles may be reduced by the rewards (Sieber, 1974). There have been different studies that aimed to identify factors that affect mother students' health in overloading of roles. When mother students lose the balance between their roles, it will create a potential risk (Krantz, Berntsson & Lundberg, 2005). Compared to men, mother students are more engaged in multiple roles and experience stress more (Nordenmark, 2002). Some articles suggested that mother students could reduce the negative consequences of role overloading through self-care (Skovholt, Trotter & Mathison, 2016). Self-care activities contains physical and psychological activities to reduce the level of stress. Baruch (2004) reported that mother students should actively practice stress-reducing activities, properly manage their time, and value the situation and search for support. It is quite evident that if more people are involved in the role, the executor will experience less role overloading.

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The role of preoccupation is essential for mother students to feel support. Some mother students are making a decision to quit while performing another role and support from family and society can strengthen their lives (Chartrand, 1992). Compared to regular students, mother students do not have more supportive individuals available and institutions will be helpful if they develop some social supportive services on campus. The role of preoccupation named the role of contagion. The effect of the role might harm the quality of performing another role. According to Bilyalov, Ambusaidi, and Burfoot-Rockford (2015), the situation happens outside of the class with mother students. They described that some mothers were trying to feed their child during class break; some were using time to study while their kids were playing in the library, and some mother students were falling asleep because they were exhausted. It all shows how mother students are dealing with their roles. Mother students are always doing multiple roles at the same time. However, the result of performing another role might result in poor academic result because she was not able to focus or concentrate.

Overall, mother students encounter dispositional barriers when they attend higher education. The life experiences of adult learners can affect their education during their study in higher education (Barrell, 2013). Experiences here refer to the learner's ability to comprehend materials, where their study experiences are affected because of the time passed since the last time they studied (Barrel, 2013). The challenges of mother students who re-enter the university might be psychological pressure, stress, unpreparedness for changes, losing the control of the situation and uncertainty of future (Hui & Leckie, 2011). Other researchers classified dispositional barriers as being incapable to succeed in learning and age differences with young classmates (Rabourn, Shoup & Brcka-Lorenz, 2015). Their younger counterparts are more engaged and confident, which may result in adult students feeling uncomfortable and participate less. This would influence student's further achievements in education (Rowland, 2010). When the number of barriers increases, it has a high chance of future failing. To maximize the learning

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potential of a student from failing falls on the shoulders of instructors. They have to recognize the situation faced by mother students and creates useful strategies or tools to provide support (Barrell, 2013). The intervention of instructors to learners could help solve conflicts, such as time constraints, stress, depression, and role demand (Fairchild, 2003). Giancola, Grawitch, and Borchert (2009) found that the conflicts between school and family are intense.

2.2.3 Institutional barriers.

Accommodation of mother students in the school are usually not well-structured (Benshoff & Lewis, 1992). The number of available rooms are always in question. Some universities provide for students with a family a limited number of apartments. The apartment that the university has provided might be a little bit far from the campus and the question of transportation cost arises. In the case of Nazarbayev University, there are a limited number of rooms that can be provided to a mother student, but the price is unaffordable. The price issues is also an affective topic to consider. Thus, mother students in those universities and colleges have to struggle with the condition (Bauer & Mott, 1990). There are several articles describing the impact of facilities such as accommodation on student's choice. Yorke (2010) showed that, after the survey, facility related factors have impact on student's comfortable studying. Moreover, accommodation might be an attractive element, created an environment for students and staff that can influence every member's experience (Fleming & Storr, 1999).

To unite an adult's life experience into an academic environment all classes have to be well organized. The class time and office hours should be convenient, career planning services and campus involvement interests have to be meet. However, if institutions ignore the importance of fulfilling the needs of mother students who work and care for families, they may never find a group of companions with whom they would feel connected socially or emotionally.

Institutions are typically focused on students' involvement through in-class or out-of-class activities (Donaldson, Graham, Kasworm, & Dirkx, 1999), but mother students are not involved through these traditional ways because the system is not designed to meet their needs and do not

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recognize them for who they are (Sandler, 2000). Academic efficiency of every student depends on their own personality and social backgrounds (Rienties, Beausaert, Grohnert, Niemantsverdriet, & Kommers, 2012). Thus, the transition to a new environment for mother students relates to the perception of the system first. When the system is not accepting mother students' needs, obstacles to overcome them often negatively influence on them. There are three main barriers highlighted in the system:

1. Academic barriers
2. Social barriers
3. Psychological barriers

Academic barriers include the language challenges (Khanal & Gaulee, 2019). For example, in Nazarbayev University, most professors are foreigners and the language of study is English. For local students who never had an experience of fully expressing their thoughts, it is hard to overcome this barrier. Khanal and Gaulee (2019) noted that students faced reluctance to answer questions, participate, or complete assignments because of the language anxiety. These students are often disappointed about their performance because they are not able to meet the academic standards (Fallah, 2016).

Social barriers appear on a daily basis, such as transportation problems, accommodation issues and food. Actually, everything related to a social life is necessary for success in the academic life. The signs of psychological barriers occur when institutions are not willing or able to provide a support. The students who receive support are well adapted to the system and academically stable (Biserova & Shagivaleeva, 2019). However, some students are not seeking any opportunities to receive a support and feel lost emotionally.

According to Provenski (2008), policies of institutions accidentally creates numerous barriers for students. Government interaction with different policies to public institutions is also noticeable. In practice of some institutions, the difficulties in registration process influence students and generates barriers from the beginning. Bosworth, Choitz and Hoops (2007) explained that every institution has to be ready to support and be responsible when students

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encounter barriers in the process of enrolling and during the study in high education. For instance, institutions have to offer available courses that are applicable, related to major, and with a variety of course times. Barriers created by institutions often have a negative effect on mother students. Based on Provenski (2008), some barriers are common for most of the students such as costs and financial challenges of the university, childcare expenses, transportation issues and location. Those barriers in higher education influence on the decision of students, either to continue their study or drop it.

For mother students it is essential when the program is design to meet their needs. However, most of the educational programs are not prepared with mother students in mind (Hui & Leckie, 2011). Institutions are not targeting mother students and lack support mechanisms for them. Mother students' needs are very different from those of a regular student. Despite the fact that mother students have positive interaction with other students and are willing to engage, the approach of providing additional support should be different (Rabourn, Shoup and Brcka-Lorenz, 2015). According to Kinghorn and Womack-Smith (2013), institutions have to develop specific learning programs, create an environment suitable for mother students, and provide assistance based on their needs because mother students are different from regular students. Another proponent of the idea to support mother students, Rowland (2010), suggested that for this type of student, institutions have to develop flexible programs, some classes after working hours, organize weekend class hours, and provide centers for kids close to the university. Targeting this type of student is beneficial for institutions to develop and attract more students (Salvant, 2016).

The level of support for mother students is different depending on institution. For example, some educational institutions are not even making an attempt or effort to support mother students. As Kirby (2009) discovered, institutions located in some regions do not have a constructed framework to unite mother students, staff, and institutions in the process of engaging

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in learning activities. This example shows that institutions' policies are not targeted specifically at mother students and none of the supported services essential for these students is provided. Vyskocil (2018) noted that the lack of missing support services such as advising and guiding, assisting and counseling, arranging and supporting, and finding solutions for mother student with multiple needs are often necessary to successfully pursue higher education.

2.3 Level of Self – Confidence

According to Chartrand (1990), when mother learners start their journey as a student, they emotionally self-evaluate themselves as a good student and try to meet the educational demands. However, when they could not achieve it, their personal distress would increase. However, many mother students are incapable to express their confidence to fulfill the role of student. In general, mother students who re-enter a university have a clear vision and strong motivation (Compton, Cox, & Laanan, 2006). As Carney – Crompton and Tan (2002) claim, the performance of mother students, both female and male, comparing to young generation is higher at the academic level. Nevertheless, in accordance to mother student's satisfaction in academic performance they feel unconfident about their academic ability because they have so many commitments outside of the university.

A survey shows that 50% of student mothers defined themselves as successful, 44% as moderate and 6% responded that to become successful is a challenge (Vyskocil, 2018). Because of the time and their multiple roles, there is a tremendous pressure on their academic ability. Many researchers connect the level of self-confidence with academic performance. For example, according to Leman (1999), confidence is an important factor, which shows the ability of the student. When the ability is high, the success of the student in academic life will be great. During the academic life, the student has to be ready to present a confident argument and pass all the exams. Another point is that, even when mother students outperform boys, they are not confident in making important choices. Those choices are somehow related to the possibility of having

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fewer female students in certain academic fields, such as mathematics and some sciences (Stables, 1995).

As specified by Case (1990), confidence might influence female students spoken and written skills. The researcher analyzed the three common generalizations of female and men. The findings are following: first, men talk more than female, second the pronunciation of women in most cases are accurate, and last men tend to think about the task in communication rather than women, who focus on social emotional situations. In terms of writing as per the researcher Flynn (1988), the style of writing for men and women is different. He claimed that female students are more friendly and emotional than men. Men show competitive or objective character. Rubin and Green (1992) are like-minded researchers who found that women in writing considered other people's reactions and do not want to be argumentative.

Another factor affecting mother student's self-confidence is aging. According to Knowles (1980), after the age of 25, the ability to study is slowed, but it is only in a speed of learning and not related to intellectual ability. Most people believe especially mother students that they could not successfully obtain a university degree when they become older. Thus, those learners underestimate their skills and ability (Chartrand, 1990).

In addition, because of age differences mother students feel vulnerable and doubtful about their capabilities. A study similar to this revealed that when mother students enter colleges or universities, they are usually doubtful about taking the courses or not and feel anxiety to take any examination (Furst, 1991). In addition, another study shows that mother students often do not believe that they can keep up with regular students and feel worried about their ability to do the college work (Coker, 2003). According to Vyskocil's (2018) survey results, mother students feel like outcasts, embarrassed and have low confidence when it comes to homework, because they miss group-studying activities.

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There is a strong relationship between the level of self-confidence and performing role related tasks (Kammeyer-Mueller et al., 2009; Erdwins, Buffardi, Casper & Alison, 2001). Mother students who are capable to combine work and family roles are at a higher level of self-confidence. They know what strategy to use, how to distribute required efforts and perform successfully (Stajkovic & Luthans, 1998). Consequently, these mother students can sustain and maintain the balance between their roles. In contrast, mother students with a low level of self-confidence may procrastinate a lot or avoid taking any action. They tend to believe that the tasks are beyond their abilities and as a result spend more effort than required. In addition, the performance of this type of mother students leaves much to be desired (Beauregard, 2006; Bandura, 1982).

The level of self-confidence of mother students can be influenced by the increasing demand of other roles (Beauregard, 2006). For example, mother students with low levels of self-confidence after failing in a task may experience stress, which has direct or indirect impact on other roles. They exaggerate the consequences of the result (Dutton & Brown, 1997; Brown & Dutton, 1995). On the other hand, mother students with high levels of self-confidence might get a shake after failure of the task. However, they are capable to compensate for lost strength and hope by drawing it from other roles in their life (Dutton & Brown, 1997). Self-confidence is a vital factor to consider in the case of mother students (Friede & Ryan, 2005; Dutton & Brown, 1997; Brown & Dutton, 1995).

Another factor affecting mother students' self-confidence is a person's positive or negative attitude towards any task. When students are turning positive to solve any challenges, the level of self-confidence is increased. They look positive at any events and feel more energetic (Kammeyer-Mueller et al., 2009; Judge, Thoresen, Pucik & Welbourne, 1999; Friede & Ryan, 2005). The result of a positive approach in solving challenges can help mother students to achieve their academic goals. According to Elliott, Sherwin, Harkins and Marmarosh (1995),

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future positive outcomes depend on a student's positive experience. It simply means that believing in a positive outcome will result in a more optimistic and positive view. In contrast, mother students with negative views and approaches are always feeling uncertain, anxious, and unbelieving (Elliott et al., 1995). These types of students tend to frequently experience role conflict and role strain (Spector, Fox & Van Katwyk, 1999; Decker & Borgen, 1993). They negatively embrace all the situations and feelings and lose their balance (Kammeyer-Mueller et al., 2009). To achieve their goal for these types of people is very difficult (Polasky & Holahan, 1998; Heinisch & Jex, 1997).

2.4 Family and Social Support

When mother students return to university, they recognize different experiences from their earlier studies, such as how the environment of the schools has changed, the style of teaching, learning resources, academic requirements for student performance and attention (Agar, 1990). According to Jackman (1999), when mother students encounter all of these changes, they feel fear and need endorsement and support from her family and community. Consequently, the reason for their low performance in academia may be a lack of support.

In the academic experience of mother student, family support is crucial for learning. The process of decision making whether to continue education or not, depends on how much support mother students received from her family (McGivney, 2004). A lack of support from the family members may harm adult students' education (Jacobs & King, 2002). Another research effort examined a relationship between a single female adult student and mother students. They discovered that in the case of a single female student her mother plays an essential role in helping her obtain a higher education and achieve future goals. In another case, for mother students, her partner and children are the most supportive people in her academic achievements (Plageman & Sabina, 2010). There are different types of situations and purposes of mother students' decision to re-enter the college. Some women clearly know what will be the benefit for

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themselves and for their families (Coker, 2003). Other mother students try to pursue higher education because they want to prove to other members of their family that they can achieve it or they want to be a role model for their kids (Lin & Wang, 2015). Thus, mother students are motivated by their family members and expecting to receive their support.

Mother students in their student role also have to feel social support from their faculty and peers in order to be successful. It is often true that mother students have only a few peers with whom they can study or just discuss educational topics outside of campus. The reason is that adult students have many other responsibilities (Lundberg, 2003). Another reason for losing communication with peers is that mother students face the challenge of being older than their group mates are. According to Quimby and O'Brien (2006), mother students often feel uncomfortable during the conversation with a peer because young students have different priorities and perceptions. The college environment for mother students is always a challenge. Another author described the situation about what mother students feel when there are age differences. She wrote that mother students feel excluded when there is a gap between ages (Padula, 1994). In addition, when it comes to instructors, mother students in their academic experiences have to manage the time (Coker, 2003). In comparison to younger students, they need to have schedules that are more flexible. Thus, faculty support plays a significant role in the assistance and achievement of mother student's goals.

In summary, mother students during their education can encounter low levels of self-confidence, different types of roles and lack of social and family support. Thus, these limitations create pressure, stress, and fear and worry for mother students more rather than for traditional students. One of the main reasons for dropping out of schools among mother students is the above-mentioned criteria. According to Crawford (2004), an important aspect for adult learners is to build self-confidence and receive social and family support. However, mother students learn through their life experience and this experience help them to study. Therefore, Kennedy (2003)

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believes that during the process of studying most of the mother students learn and establish self-confidence.

According to Quimby and O'Brien (2006), support from social community, family, friends and peers for mother student group is essential. When adult women students receive enough support from others, they feel attached to something, very confident of trusting other people and can manage their multiple roles. The support can help mother students to overcome academic challenges and bring positive beliefs on their abilities. In addition, when mother students learn to balance their roles, it effects on their academic satisfaction. Therefore, it is necessary to have social and family support for this type of group. For example, when adult females' partner can take care of their child and do some housework, it will help her to complete school homework and reduce stress. Family responsibility never ends and when someone from her side can give a hand, it would generate extra hours of studying (Henderson & Mapp, 2002).

If mother student receives social support, it can help to reduce stressful situations. Mother students who had support, reported that they face lower levels of role conflict (Menks & Tupper, 1987; Dyk, 1987). The type of support may be different; it can be tangible or intangible. According to Houstonbourg and Strange (1986), mother students received more support from other people rather than from their spouse. However, support can come from different sources. More mature students such as mother students believe that universities are less supportive compared to younger students (Kuh & Sturgis, 1980). Tangible support can be seen from the side of universities in, for example, creating flexible schedules, removing some constraints, availability of diverse programs, easy administration procedures, thus, satisfying mother students' needs and providing opportunities to successfully graduate (Cross & McCartan, 1984; Coats, 1989). Faculty can provide advising, guidance, support and show the readiness to fulfill the needs of multiple role parents (Kirk & Dorfman, 1983). Some universities provide paid leave for mother students who give a birth, some support by reimbursing expenses, and others give an

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opportunity to complete studying (Long, 1983; Spears & Potter, 1987). Support financially or by creating centers for childcare are also practiced by some universities.

Instructors also play an essential role in students' achievement and have to work closely with them. When instructors help mother students in any situation and morally support them, it will help to increase the students' performance. For instance, if instructors design flexible due dates for female adult learners, it could help to prevent high level of stresses of not missing the deadline. In addition, instructors can help female adult students to communicate with others; they could combine different students into one group and build a bridge among them. Moreover, instructors could ask female adult students to share their life experience with the class so other students could learn from real life how hard it is to study and show support (Kreischer, 2017). After knowing the condition of mother students, peers would treat them with more understanding.

According to Benshoff (1993), mother students face difficulties in re-entering university. In order to refresh their study skills, they need to adapt to new standards, resources, environments and manage their time. It would be beneficial for adult female students to have tutors or peers who could help them with their assignments and to push them to successfully learn all required knowledge (Benshoff, 1993). In addition, campus peers could help adult students to refresh their previous knowledge and could play an important role. With the assistance of their campus, peers and instructor's, female adult learners could well establish relationships with other students to obtain confidence on campus and be more satisfied.

Emotional support outflowing from the community, peers and home is helping to strengthen the balance (Lee & Duxbury, 1998; Gordan & Whelan-Berry, 2004). When friends and family understand the challenges mother students are facing and help, it will be a great support. Mother students are in need of emotional, psychological and spiritual support from every person related to her. Rout, Cooper and Kerslake (1997) noted that when mother students

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receive emotional support from family, work and community they are capable of balancing their roles. A combination of support can reduce the level of stress and promote well-being. Based on Gudmondsson (2014), access to support helps mother students to manage the conflict between roles.

Chapter Three: Methodology

3.1 Introduction

The chapter above was about the literature related to mother students. The following chapter aims to provide a rationale for the methodology for the research. Initially, the research design will be explained, and then the method of data collection and sampling will be described. Further, the procedure of data analysis and the ethics of the study will be covered.

3.2 Research design

The objective of this research is to investigate the challenges and barriers mother students are facing during their study and identify how they handle those problems. The research will be conducted based on a qualitative method. The reason of using qualitative method is to understand in-depth through conversational communication the issues of graduate mother students. Qualitative research implies asking questions autonomously from participants and collect the information provided (Given, 2012). The method will help us to identify common answers. The open-ended questions give participants an opportunity to voice their experience as well as allow the researcher to create the options for responding (Creswell, 2012). Since the purpose of this study is to explore what kinds of barriers and challenges graduate mother students are facing during their study and how they manage them, an interview allows us to obtain information from participants in their own words and help to understand the meaning, perception, beliefs, motivation and social condition of participants (Given, 2012).

3.3 Data collection methods

This section will explain the method of collecting data regarding research questions of the study. The qualitative research method was applied and in-depth interviews were conducted in order to identify the barriers and challenges of graduate mother students, how they cope with them and what kind of social or family support they need. I interviewed nine people and believed that is a sufficient number of people to achieve the main goals of my research. In addition, the

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interviews were conducted face-to-face or by videoconference because it is a most effective way to collect detailed data, where participants' actions can be taken into consideration (Hawthorne, 2003).

3.4 Sample

The section explains the selection procedure and sampling strategy. If we consider age limitation of graduate mother students, then typically in Kazakhstan, people obtained their bachelor degree by the age of 22-24, and for master degree, it differs depending on different life situation. However, as I am studying among mother students I could say that the minimum age of mother students around me is 27 and above. The criteria for selection of participants were as follows:

- All participants are supposed to be graduate mother students from Graduate School of Education, Graduate School of Business and Graduate School of Public Policy;
- Some participants are supposed to be fully employed in order to investigate the difference;
- All participants are supposed to be studying in 1st and 2nd year graduate students.

According to Creswell (2014), I conducted a snowball sampling method. One or two participants with specific characteristics are selected and then snowball-sampling method is used. It implies that participants who are interviewed will recommend other individuals to be included into the sample. Therefore, the research sample included nine graduate mother students of the Nazarbayev University.

Table 1.

№	Participant	Kids	Employment
1	Participant 1	2	Full time employed
2	Participant 2	2	Academic leave
3	Participant 3	3	Full time employed

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4	Participant 4	2	Full time employed
5	Participant 5	2	Full time employed
6	Participant 6	1	Maternity leave
7	Participant 7	2	Full time employed
8	Participant 8	1	Maternity leave
9	Participant 9	3	Full time employed

3.5 Data Collection Tool

The interview structure is divided into three parts, the first part included general questions related to identifying the overall condition of the student and questions asked such as “Could you please tell me more about yourself?”, “Could you please tell me more about your major and your degrees?” and so on. The second part was trying to explore more information about the motivation, social support and family condition, what specific challenges they are facing right now and about their feeling of being a student. The third part is focused on how those students are handling their barriers and challenges. Before conducting the actual interview, I tested my questions on a mother student who studies with me. The interview helped me to understand the type of questions and detect the time.

3.6 Data collection procedures

An important objective when collecting data is to guarantee anonymity and for this reason it was decided to conduct the data collection process face-to-face or by Skype. For the convenience of participants, I used the email correspondences as well, but preferably, I have tried to have face-to-face interviews. Therefore, considering face-to-face interview with participants was a best way and option to gather necessary data and it helped to interpret verbal and non-verbal cues (Hawthorne, 2003). In practice, some participants asked to do it by telephone due to their busy schedule. According to Creswell (2014), a telephone interview is the alternative useful “way to contact participants when they are not available face-to-face” (p 242).

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3.7 Data analysis

During the analysis of the data, a systematic procedure was used. The procedure was explained and described by categories and descriptors. According to Bloomberg and Volpe (2012), a systematic procedure is an appropriate tool to analyze the data after collecting it. First, when all interviews were recorded and finished, they were transferred to a laptop and transcribed. Next, after the process of transcribing all the results was finished, I compared them to find similar patterns and categorized them. Third, if there was any additional information, I separated them and categorized as additional. Finally, I found the relevancy of received data to my research questions and used a coding process. Coding process is beneficial to create a story from the data.

3.8 Ethical Issues

The part of ethical issues explains what potential risks there are and what the benefits are. First, I identified all my participants for the research and informed them about the content before the process as well as provided them with a consent form. Then, I explained that there are no rewards in this research. The information will be strictly confidential and if they have any questions related to the research or interviewing process, they could contact my supervisor. Participants for the face-to-face interview chose the time and place, because, all graduate mother students are busy with time schedule and the place should be comfortable for them to reveal their emotions and feelings.

Chapter Four: Findings

4.1 Introduction

This study attempted to answer the following research questions:

1. What challenges and barriers do graduate mother students face during their studies?
2. How do they cope with those challenges and barriers?
3. What kind of support do they need to overcome these challenges?

An interview was conducted based on the research questions and the number of research sample included nine graduate mother students. In the first part, I provided a table with general information about participants of the study (table 1). It contains general information about the number of kids, employment and status. Further, I described all the questions and summarized my findings through identifying similarities and differences, comparison and relationship, and suggestions in the end.

4.2 What obstacles did participants face?

In this part of the chapter, findings will be presented that disclose the main challenges and barriers of being a mother and a student. Likewise, all the results received from participants will be analyzed according to the factors referenced in the literature review.

4.2.1 Multiple roles

All participants described that they have either dual or triple roles. When mother students face multiple role commitments they feel different expectations and react depending on the situation (Friede & Ryan, 2005; Brown & Dutton, 1995). After analysis, it was disclosed that the time they spend on work, family and study are equally divided. Time constraints occurs in role conflict and reduce the balance (Wolcott & Gleezer, 1995). Three of the participants' replied that they spend a great deal of their time at work because they have more tasks to do and one of them is a head of the department. They approximately spend around 80% of time at work. They receive a lot of information within a short period and have to review, sign and respond quickly. Another three participants responded that they spent most of the time with their family. The reason behind this is that two of the respondents became a young mother and the third participant

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gave birth to third child. They devote themselves to the family, with the exception of 2-3 hours a day that they spend on school. One of the participants, #5, said that:

It was hard during the pregnancy (toxicities), because it caused me a reluctance to lean. It was this period (more precisely, the first semester) that turned out to be very difficult emotionally, because of which I missed the deadlines of the work performed.

Last three participants spend most of the time studying, because, for the first participant it was an opportunity to apply for a higher-paying job in the future despite the fact that she was the only working person in the family (receiving salary) and she found out that she was pregnant with a third child. Similarly, the other two respondents said that they devote all their time only to study. One of the participants, #9, said that: “I spend most of my time studying because there are tight deadlines for homework and a large amount of sources for self-study”.

To sum up, it is clear to see that all participants encounters multiple role barrier but despite that, all of them shows a desire to gain new skills and knowledge that can push them forward in career achievements.

4.2.2 Situational barriers

The situational barriers mostly occur with respect to a certain situation. As the analysis showed, only one participant confessed that financial instability in her family is following her and pushing her to stop studying. During her study, she was not involved in large projects at her company and received only half of the salary because she was absent due to studying. One of the participants, #3, said that: “Nevertheless, priority was placed on study, because the well-being of my family depended in part on whether I would take a diploma and change my life”.

Another situation is having a busy work schedule and too much homework and tight deadlines. This situation leads to stress, and all participants mentioned that they felt it. They feel guilty because of the unavailability to spend more time with family and even worse when it occurs simultaneously. It is difficult to be highly involved in both education and family at the same time. According to Quimby and O'Brien (2006), the ability of mother student to balance

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their work and family roles has an impact on academic satisfaction. Three of the participants mentioned about the situation when they were pregnant and gave a birth during academic learning. The child demanded special attention, and memory lapses occurred. One of the participants, #8, said that: “I could sit for 10 or 20 minutes to recall a phrase that I wanted to insert into my work. I think my situation worsened with the birth of a child during my studies”.

Being a mother student is “difficult to find enough time to navigate between studying and parenting” (Adair, Brown, Clark, Perez-Cotrich, & Stanfield, 2007, p.136). Different situations of mother students show the struggle they face in obtaining a degree.

4.2.3 Dispositional barriers

During the analysis, it was disclosed that six of the participants felt the role of conflict when their kids got sick and at the same time, they had to submit assignments. They felt mentally and physically stressed which caused guilt in not spending enough time with family. Seven of the participants felt overloading because they had to manage work, homework and family responsibilities. There was always a huge demand of their attention especially when the time is not enough and it is hard to maintain priorities. One of the participants, #4, said that: “The only thing that is hard for me is to do homework, because professors ask a lot of tasks and cases that need to be completed in a short time. Therefore, I often have to perform them at night”.

In addition, five of the participants replied that they felt a preoccupation with a role while performing another. There is always a time constraint and many commitments outside of the university. One of the participants, #7, said that: “Sometimes I feel really stressed when I need to do all my assignments and follow all the deadlines, at the same time, I need to do my professional requirements and teach students at school where I am working”.

All the roles of mother students are linked with each other and performing multiple roles simultaneously became a natural for them.

4.2.4 Institutional barriers

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Institutional barriers are the inconveniences and challenges faced by mother students from the educational institutions. Six of the participants responded that they had difficulties in not having a special, comfortable room for kids and mothers. One of the participants, #6, said that:

There is no playground inside of the university and it would be great sometimes for mothers who can't leave their children at home to come to university and leave their children on the playground while they are getting books from the library or meeting with professors. Playgrounds should be with at least one adult who is looking after children and keeps them safe.

Besides that, two participants mentioned about creating a support group for mother students that could help them and three of the participants' reference to having an opportunity to study online, especially in the case of the birth of a child during the period of study. In addition, the possibility of free attendance of classes for a certain period, the transfer of required exams or tests late or as agreed with the instructor. Also, granting scholarships and grants for mothers and creating associations of mothers of students with other mothers to provide support and swap childcare during classes. Two participants also complained about the prices of kindergarten and a dormitory room located at the university. The price is not affordable for regular students with a low stipend. The university should take into the consideration the price of the nearest kindergarten or provide financial support for mother students to partially fund the expenses.

4.2.5 Level of self-confidence

Only two of the participants revealed about having low levels of self-confidence associated with stress and isolation. They usually study at night, while their kids are sleeping or during the nap at daytime. It is not easy because sometimes they are sleep deprived and feel exhausted. It supports the literature review data mentioned earlier where only 6% of mother students defined success as a challenge because of how time and multiple role are putting

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pressure on their academic ability (Vyskocil, 2018). All the participants have a clear vision and very strong motivation. They all know what to expect from re-entering the university and what they have to sacrifice. One of the participants, #5, said that:

I would create an additional agreement for women that in case of pregnancy, it is mandatory to arrange academic leave (1-2 years) for the benefit of the woman and her child in order to avoid stress, mental illness and many other problems.

Most mother students who participated in the interview displayed strong self-confidence and as we know, there is a strong relationship between the level of self-confidence and performing role related tasks.

4.2.6 Family and Social Support

Nine participants responded that their family helped them a lot. Their husbands took up some of the household duties. For example, they take and pick up children from school and spends time with them. Their mothers prepare meals, do housework and some of them decided to stay with them for the period of study. They all understand the importance of studies and they always call and encourage them to continue studying hard no matter what. Only one of the participants, #3, said that: “My oldest daughter is 12 years old and only she could go to the store, make a purchase, do homework, she is independent. The rest of my family are not willing to support”.

However, for her it was impossible to live like that and she took an academic leave for a year and hired a nanny so she could attend the classes. In addition, three of the participants replied that their fellow students helped them a lot. For example, sometimes they pulled them out of many group projects, helped to babysit a child. Another three participants said that they received help from professors. For example, they extended deadlines, and during pregnancy, some professors psychologically supported them. They were interested in their health and condition. One of the participants, #7, said that:

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I think that in the provisions all the rules are clearly spelled out, if you follow them, then any student will feel independence and he will not need support or help. Let's say, for example, to ask for a postponement of a task three days before its delivery, and not on the day of the deadline. In this case, it is difficult to get support from the teacher.

On the other hand, there are two participants who are disappointed and did not agree regarding the faculty support. One of the participants, #3, said that:

The faculty, by the way, did not care, because at our faculty more than half of the students are women and everyone is at that age when they think about the child. There were many student mothers who also came to classes with children. Children sat in the hall while their mothers were studying.

One of the participants, #8, said that:

The school doesn't care much about how students live their lives after getting out of the school environment. School administration pays more attention to punishing students for the late submission of assignments without assessing the reasons why the students didn't submit the assignment on time and you can be suspended or given poor marks, and it is complicated to appeal and win the case.

Faculty and peer support is necessary for mother students to successfully complete a degree. University and departments should pay more attention to the needs of mother students. Neglected attitudes from the side of the faculty sends a message of not accepting mother students' needs and challenges they face.

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Chapter Five: Discussion

Overall, the research questions were fully covered by participants. As we can observe, all mother students are encountering multiple role issues. Some of them have dual and some triple roles. Those mother students are workers, students, mother and wives. All of them maintain more than one commitments. All the participants fall under the criteria of role strain, when they faced the demand of role in particular time and space, the demand of different commitments, and the demand of action in several activities. During the interview, participants described ways of reducing their multiple roles through delegation, setting priorities and time management. Those skills help them to reduce the multiple roles demand. Multiple roles created for all participants some complex challenges and they have learned how to balance it. However, the tension to mothers with young kids were difficult compared to others.

During the interviews I identified that all mother students participated were facing situational barriers. Situational barriers occur when mother students feel guilty because of their unavailability and when they compromise their study or work to take care of their kids. Situations differ and mother students have to compromise time and effort based on that. The situation might be related to work or family issues. They compromise the time being with their family and focus to obtain a degree. Some of the participants feel emotional pressure from the family side and vice versa. One of the participants had financial difficulties and was responsible to support her family's needs. It should be highlighted because this struggle did not prevent her from acquiring new knowledge. Moreover, after collecting all the answers it was found out that all participants have dispositional barriers issues. It means that they faced the role of conflict, for instance, when they have to finish their homework and at the same time, their kids got sick. In this case, they have to choose whether they take care of their child or meet the deadline.

All the participants faced the role of conflict, the role of overloading and the role of preoccupation. Experiencing each of these roles caused them difficulties during their studies.

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Successfully finding the balance between roles enhanced their skills and knowledge. Likewise, when the tasks are overloading mother students encountered a time constraint. All participants indicated that they have a lack of time; of course, it is inevitable if you have kids. It is important to mention that financial limitations were also a key aspect of why mother students decided to study.

Regarding the institutional barriers, participants mentioned that university is not well structured. Mother students whose kids are young and need feeding struggled with the accommodation and condition. The price for a room in the dormitory of the university is high; there is no any room for feeding the child. The price of kindergarten is also high because it was created for international parent's kids. The system is not designed to meet the needs of mother students and does not recognize them for who they are and the challenges they face. Most of the participants are not engaged in out of class activities because they have so many responsibilities.

As we talked about the level of self-confidence, mostly all of the participants mentioned the need for a support group, a group of companions with whom they would feel connected socially or emotionally. According to the interview results, mother students feel like outcasts, embarrassed and have low confidence when it comes to homework and deadlines. In addition, some participants emphasized the age differences. Based on the research, it is true that mother students feel vulnerable when it comes to age and because a lot of time has passed since they were sitting in the classroom. However, all of the participants showed positive attitudes. They look positive to solve any challenges, optimistic, and energetic to achieve their goals.

Regarding the family support the survey showed that, all mother students are in need. Their close relatives and spouses are helping them to take care of kids and do house work. Almost all participants replied that without family support it would be impossible to study. However, from the side of faculty not all the respondents replied that they receive any kind of

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support. Some faculty members extended the deadlines because they understand the situation.

Help from peers would be a great support for mother students.

Chapter Six: Conclusion and Recommendations

6.1 Conclusion

To conclude, the research aimed to investigate challenges and barriers faced by mother students during their academic study. The research addressed questions on how they balance their multiple roles and what kind of support is necessary to fulfil their needs. Thus, by researching the situation as one of the mother students help me to analyze it in depth. All the barriers and challenges identified by other researchers are similar with interviewed mother students' concern. Moreover, only a few researches efforts on this or similar topics have been conducted in Kazakhstan. Such limitations make this research effort more significant in addressing the purpose and benefit of my work. In the literature review part, I have found the most common challenges faced by other mother students. This chapter showed the meaning of multiple roles and how they are divided into barriers, such as situational, dispositional and institutional. The consequences of each barrier and the reasons they occur have been disclosed. In addition, the research revealed information about the influence of university, faculty, family and peers support during the journey of acquiring an important academic degree. The source of where the support should come from and how, was discovered and highlighted in the research. I understand that resources may be limited to build new places for mother students, but creating an understandable relationship or culture is well within the capacity of universities. Conducting research based on available universities' policies and how they are implemented would be a next step from here, allowing more insights and verification of their influence and to receive results that are more widely collected and accurate.

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6.2 Recommendations

According to Wolanin and Steele (2004), some universities created special resource centers to help disabled people. For example, centers can amend the classroom for disabled people with a wheelchair, or support those people in academic years. Another example of creating a support is creating a community for athletes; these centers provide assistance (Jordan & Denson, 1990; Gabbard & Halischak, 1993). The main responsibility of generated centers is to satisfy the needs of a particular group of people. Centers are created under the guidance of university leaders by implementing policies. The purpose of mentioning above examples is to emphasize the importance of creating academic environment for different kinds of students and mother students who falls under these criteria as well.

Various literature has investigated the relationship between successful implementation of policies and programs with the performance of students. It means that if the policy implemented is weak, the success of the student will be threatened (Lovitts, 2001; Bair & Hawarth, 2004). Based on some research, it was found that there are obstacles preventing students from succeeding that are related to implementation of policies (Ehrenberg, Jakubson, Groen, So & Price, 2007). Those blocks contains a lack of support from the department, the shortage of feedback, improper flow of information from faculty to students, and endorsement financially (Ehrenberg et al., 2007).

The reason why most of the universities and institutions have few support mechanisms for mother students is that they are not fully aware of their needs. In reality, mother students' duties and roles are varied and institutions might not properly react to the flow of this type of group. After analyzing the academic literature and chronicling the experiences of mother students in this study, I adopted a possible support strategy that might be beneficial to satisfy needs and help develop targeted policies. This strategy is aimed at cooperation between institutions and their departments. Springer, Parker and Leviten-Reid (2008) presented a family-

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friendly university strategy by describing precise ways that universities may consider adapting to mother student needs. The strategy describes how the institution can support mother students. First, organize a paid parental leave program for mother students. During the interview, it was discovered that some of the participants gave birth during their studies. They have struggled without having healthy recovery support from the university or from their work. In addition, the recovery support should also contain benefits for mother students who adopt children. Some universities provide funding for students who give birth and check the eligibility while studying. Other universities offer paid leaves policies for mothers and fathers at the same time if necessary. If the leave is not possible, then universities should allow mother students to retain their student status. The birth circumstances can be different, sometimes a university takes away privileges of mother students to stay on campus houses, reduce the amount of health insurance, and if the duration of a serious condition continues, the university can withdraw the mother student from the program. Some universities practice policies for supporting students who give birth that range between one semester and one-year duration. Otherwise, if the students do not return in time, they may lose their full-time enrollment status. The policies for mother students have to cover all the circumstances and extend the deadlines if necessary. The policy should include limitations and exceptions for mother students.

Second, most mother students struggle with the deadlines. Extension of deadlines and part time options would be a great support for mother students. Paid leave support is great for new parents, but after having the time off for a particular period, a parent' responsibilities do not end. Students may take some rest but academic responsibilities continues as usual. Some universities allow academic deadlines to be extended, when students give birth or adopt a child. The implemented policies of those universities allow students to take the exam later and complete the degree. According to Drago and Williams (2000), this is an alternative support for parents. They mentioned about part-time involvement of parents to academic responsibilities. In

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this case, it will be proposed for mother students to receive half of the stipend because they are unable to return at school full-time. However, the situation of mother students under this condition might be different. They might be receiving only a stipend for a leaving and supporting their family. To compensate the half of the stipend, part-time academic work at home might be proposed. This alternative could help solve the issue.

Third, most of the mothers were complaining about childcare support. The majority of mother students are not receiving high salaries and cannot afford hiring a babysitter. As in my personal situation and other mother students would agree, having free time without caring for a child is truly hard while trying to obtain a degree. For example, “the U.S. Department of Education already provides Childcare Access Means Parents in School (CCAMPIS) grants to universities in order to support low-income parents” (Springer, Parker, & Leviten-Reid, 2009, p. 13). There are many other universities around the world providing childcare for mother students. Some provide support through financial aid and some open childcare centers on campus. Financial subsidies compared to free childcare centers on campus covers only a small amount of expenses. In practice, during the conversation with moms who are studying at Nazarbayev University, they all complained about the cost of the center located at the university. So, if the university creates a policy partially supporting financially the cost of the center or fully cover childcare, then mother students could get more time for students commitments with less stress.

In addition, some universities in practice implemented financial support in the form of secondary care. It means that depending on the situation universities covers financial expenses of mother students for childcare (Springer, Parker, & Leviten-Reid, 2009). For instance, if the student has an important conference or a meeting, universities subsidize the expenses of childcare for that day. It a huge opportunity for a student to participate in conferences and fulfill their academic commitments. In some cases, faculty creates a fund to help mother students in

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difficult situations. They might subsidize some expenses related to care for a sick child, or hire a nanny for a night. These gestures can provide additional support for mother students.

Besides financial support from universities and departments, and childcare centers, there are on campus volunteers centers in some universities. People from volunteer groups could take care of a child while the mother is studying. Volunteers can help to babysit for a night or during the semester preparation. Taking care of a child for 2-3 hours every day might seem like a small amount of time, but you will not be able to focus on studying during this time. I have seen mother students who are caring for their children during the semester and leave them with someone while they are in the classroom. It is difficult to see the struggle faces of mother students at the university.

When universities consider special policies for mother students, they need to take into the consideration to make available facilities that are necessary for them. For instance, lactation rooms and changing tables are a basic need. Most of the public places are arranged restrooms for the need of everyone including parents with children. I have seen many mother students hiding at the university and breastfeeding. The reason is obvious, university bathrooms are not intended as a place to change diapers or clean small children's dirt. It is uncomfortable to change diapers in regular bathrooms. Changing tables are not expensive and could be provided by the university or department. Without having the simple item as changing tables, universities show an unwillingness to see children on campus.

As mentioned above about the lactation rooms, they are also in short supply or not available at all on campus. For mother students, it poses a problem because they might be in the classroom and in the break, they have to feed their child or pump breast milk. Without having secure, comfortable and decent places, mother students tend to hide somewhere or breastfeed in public. They do not have a choice because they have to feed and run to the class again. Thus, universities push mother students to choose between study and parenting. Creating lactation

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rooms are not expensive as well; it can be a small place. Any room with chair and table with door lock will be suitable for it. Universities and departments can initiate without polices and provide lactations rooms campus-wide. I understand that all the rooms are needed by each department, but I believe that there is available space at the university for breastfeeding. Each department may not be able to provide a lactation room, but when the campus is large, there should be few places for mother and child. I am not saying that the rooms should be furnished with relaxing music or any fancy unnecessary items. By creating such rooms, institutes will show support for mother students. In addition, if the university decides to create lactation rooms, it is better to inform new comers about having such opportunities. This might be provided through the official website or social media as an advertisement. Most of the universities provide brochures that include all the information about the campus life.

That was some support from the side of the university and departments. However, there are alternatives to assist mother students' well-being at the university. The success or failure of mother students depends on support and understanding they receive from the university, department, and peers. Some universities practice short training courses for the directors, faculty members and students. For example, department directors have considerable influence on student success through supervising, advising and directing them. As I have mentioned previously, department chairs can organize special rooms and change tables for mother students. The training may present best practice scenarios of other universities. If directors fully understand the situation, they may review existing policies, implement new ones, and help mother students to feel comfortable during their study. Faculty training is more concentrated on mentoring mother students. During the training faculty member could clearly deliver information to mother students about university policies. When the staff and faculty show their concern and care to mother students it has a positive impact to them. This short faculty training might be organized any time available for new comers and it could enhance the support for mother students.

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In addition, all universities provide orientation week for new students, and most of the time during the orientation faculty and staff discuss the importance of studying in their university and so on. However, if the staff and faculty could also use this time to discuss about multiple role of some students, how to balance it, then it would be beneficial to know for other students about the condition of mother students. Regular students would treat mother students with understanding and try to support them anytime. Some mother students during these sessions may lose their fears and understand that departments value them. In addition, these seminars could strengthen the relationship between faculty and students. Some students might have financial issues, so they may ask departments to provide some jobs for them. There are many opportunities to discuss when both sides understand each other's needs. Several authors recommend organizing orientation programs (Carney-Crompton & Tan, 2002; Terrel, 1990) in order to receive real expectations from faculty and anticipate what responsibilities are waiting for them. It will also help to connect students. Other departments of the universities in the USA provide field trips for students or organize picnics to enhance the relationship with students and show their support. According to Terrel (1990), family-oriented events are necessary to unite students and faculty.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Interview Protocol

Research thesis topic: “Challenges and obstacles experienced by mother students of Nazarbayev University during their graduate studies”.

Time of the interview:

Date:

Place:

Interviewer:

Interviewee:

Duration:

Questions:

1. Could you please tell me more about yourself?
2. Could you please tell me more about your major and your degrees?
3. Could you please tell me why applied to graduate studies?
4. Could you please share in what area do you spend most of your time and energy (studies, work, kids/family)?
5. Could you please tell what kind of obstacles did you face during your study?
6. Could you please share how do you cope and balance your housework, kids and work when you have your studies?
7. Could you please tell me what kind of support do you get from your family, classmates and university?
8. Could you describe your support expectations from faculty and university (if any)?
9. Could you please explain what academic support would you provide for mother-students if you were a policymaker or senior administrator of the university?
10. Could you please give some suggestions to other mother-graduates to balance their dual/triple roles?

Thank you very much for participating!

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Приложение 1: Протокол интервью

Тема исследования: «Проблемы и препятствия, с которыми сталкиваются мамы-студенты во время их обучения в Назарбаев Университете».

Время проведения интервью:

Дата:

Место:

Интервьюер:

Интервьюируемый:

Продолжительность:

Вопросы:

1. Могли ли Вы побольше рассказать о себе?
2. Могли бы Вы побольше рассказать о ваших специальностях и образованиях?
3. Скажите, пожалуйста, что послужило тому, что Вы захотели продолжить послевузовское образование?
4. Могли бы Вы поделиться, в какой из сфер Вы больше всего тратите свое время и энергию (учеба, работа, дети/семья)?
5. Могли бы Вы рассказать, с какими препятствиями Вы сталкивались во время обучения?
6. Могли бы Вы поделиться, как Вы справляетесь и балансируете между домашними обязанностями, детьми и работой во время Вашей учебы?
7. Могли бы Вы рассказать какую поддержку получаете от Вашей семьи, одногруппников и университета?
8. Могли бы Вы описать Ваши ожидания поддержки от факультета и университета (при наличии)?
9. Могли бы Вы объяснить какую академическую поддержку оказали бы для студентов мам, если были бы основателем Правил или руководителем университета?
10. Могли бы Вы дать некоторые советы другим мамам студентам как держать баланс с их двумя/тремя ролями?

Благодарю Вас за участие!

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1-ші қосымша: Сұхбаттасу протоколы

Зерттеу тақырыбы: Назарбаев Университетінде оқу кезінде ана студенттерде кездесетін қиыншылықтар мен кедергілер.

Сұхбаттасу уақыты:

Күні:

Өткізілетін орны:

Сұхбаттаушы:

Сұхбаттасқан:

Ұзақтығы:

Сұрақтар:

1. Өзіңіз туралы көбірек айтып бере аласыз ба?
2. Мамандықтарыңыз бен біліміңіз туралы толығырақ айта аласыз ба?
3. Айтыңызшы, жоғары оқу орнынан кейінгі біліміңізді жалғастыруға не түрткі болды?
4. Сіз өзіңіздің уақытыңыз бен күшіңізді қай салаларда көп жұмсайсыз (оқу, жұмыс, балалар / отбасы)?
5. Оқу барысында қандай кедергілерге тап болғаныңызды айта аласыз ба?
6. Оқу кезінде үй жұмыстары, балалар мен жұмыс арасындағы теңгерім туралы айта аласыз ба?
7. Сіз өзіңіздің отбасыңыздан, сыныптастарыңыздан және университеттен қандай қолдау алатындығын айта аласыз ба?
8. Сіз профессорлық-оқытушылар құрамы мен университеттен (егер болса) қолдау күтуіңізді сипаттай аласыз ба?
9. Егер студенттер Ереженің негізін қалаушы немесе университет басшысы болсаңыз, аналарға қандай академиялық қолдау көрсететінін түсіндіре аласыз ба?
10. Сіз басқа аналарға студенттерге екі / үш рөлде қалай тепе-теңдікті сақтауға кеңес бере аласыз ба?

Қатысқаныңыз үшін рахмет!

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Appendix 2: Informed Consent Form

“Challenges and obstacles experienced by mother students of Nazarbayev University during their graduate studies”

DESCRIPTION: You are invited to participate in the research study on challenges experienced by graduate mother-students during their studies. The main goal of this study is to find out challenges and obstacles experiences by mother-students while their graduate studies at the Graduate School of Education of the Nazarbayev University. You will be asked to involve in interview with open-ended questions where questions will consist of your background information, your personal experiences and possible suggestions. The interviewer will be taking notes during the interview and guarantees that collected information will be confidential. Additionally, conversation during the interview will be recorded with your permission only. All gained data will be available to the researcher and supervisor only.

TIME INVOLVEMENT: The interview duration will be around 30 minutes.

RISKS AND BENEFITS: This study does not entail any social, economic or physical injury. In order to minimize the risks, the researcher assures you with the confidentiality. That is your identity will not be revealed and the potential facts which might reveal your identity will not be associated with the research findings.

The benefits of this study is that policymakers and senior-leaders of the Graduate School of Education and other Schools of Nazarbayev University will realize challenges faced by non-traditional students of their programs, also in way of implementing suggestions from this study current and future students may face minimal struggles and will have an opportunity to successfully complete their graduate degree.

Your decision whether to participate or not in this research will have no influence on your position.

PARTICIPANT’S RIGHTS: If you have read this form and have decided to participate in this study, please understand that your participation is voluntary and you have a right to withdraw your consent or discontinue participation at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. The alternative is not to participate. You have the right to refuse to answer particular questions. The results of this research study may be presented at class meetings.

Please, sign this consent form, if you agree to participate in this study.

- I have carefully read the information provided;
 - I have been given full information regarding the purpose and procedures of the study;
 - I understand how the data collected will be used, and that any confidential information will be seen only by the researchers and will not be revealed to anyone else;
 - I understand that I am free to withdraw from the study at any time without giving a reason;
- With full knowledge of all foregoing, I agree, of my own free will, to participate in this study.

Signature: _____

Date: _____