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The Impacts of COVID-19 on the Academic Performance of Graduate Students

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Abstract

This research aimed to study the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on the academic performance of graduate students during the first wave. Phone interviews were conducted with three York University graduate students. The findings highlight that the pandemic had unequal impacts on the academic performance of the interviewees depending on their family status. Furthermore, the data shows that the interviewees experienced increased academic and financial precarity and engaged in high levels of emotional labour for their families. The interviewee with caregiving responsibilities also participated in mental work and was constantly on the run to take care of her family. The research participants emphasized the importance of compassionate teaching, maintaining academic integrity, and the need for the university to increase graduate students' financial security. In addition, the research participants exercised resilience using various coping strategies. Marxism informs data analysis to illustrate how the interviewees' subjective experiences of academic, financial, and health inequality and precarity are linked to macro-level forces of neoliberal capitalist economic social organization and relations such as the commodification of higher education. Thus, the neoliberal university, whose primary objective is to produce surplus value, has led to the economic and academic exploitation of TAs, which has become more visible and exacerbated under COVID-19. In conclusion, the paper highlights the need for the dissemination of anti-capitalist knowledge to displace capitalist culture with its antithesis to build wider collective political actions in the pursuit of radical social transformation.

Literature review

Karl Marx's theory of historical materialism provides an excellent explanation of how the educational, financial, and health precarity that students experience at the micro-level is linked to the macro-level forces of the capitalist mode of production. In capitalist societies, such as Canada, economic and social relations are based on the private ownership of the means of production, resulting in class exploitation and class struggle.

The primary objective of the capitalist class is to maximize surplus value or profit through extreme exploitation and dispossession (primitive accumulation) of the working class and environment (Bruczak, Garnett & McIntyre, 2018, p. 50; Berbeshkina, Yakovleva & Zerkin, 1985, pp. 52-96; J. Das, 2017, pp. 391-414). Therefore, “the deprivations of the propertyless in a capitalist system are not simply an unfortunate byproduct of the capitalist pursuit of profit; they are a necessary condition for that pursuit” (Wright, 2000, p. 8). Similarly, gender inequality and racism in their creation of a stratified labour market are inseparable parts of the capitalist mode of production, which historically developed through the histories of patriarchy, slavery and colonization (Bannerji, 1995, pp. 59-61).

Furthermore, since the core focus of the capitalist system is on the production of profit, other forms of value—such as free access to universal health care and education; the rectification of gender, race and socioeconomic equalities; and environmental protections that are essential for the well-being of the general population and the planet's health—have been overlooked. This has meant that education, which has value beyond its ability to increase the value of labour power in the market, is reduced to a mere commodity. Even prior to the pandemic, many post-secondary students had precarious academic experiences as they juggled between work and study to cover skyrocketing tuition fees and other school expenses to make ends meet. The negative impacts of the commodification of higher education on students have only been exacerbated and become more visible during the pandemic (Day et al., 2020, pp. 1-13; Green et al., 2020, p. 1309- 1312; Mair, 2020, 588-596).

Although students are paying higher tuition fees as education is increasingly commodified, they are not receiving proper value for this exchange. A reduction in education quality increased during the pandemic, with approximately 2.1 million students enrolled in public Canadian universities and colleges having been affected (Statistics Canada, 2020c, n.p.). According to Statistics Canada's three separate analyses of crowdsourcing data collected between April 19 and May 1, 2020, of 100,000 postsecondary students, 26% of students experienced course cancellation or delay in

the first wave of the pandemic. The proportion of master's and doctoral students whose courses were cancelled or delayed was 28% and 14%, respectively. Many participants indicated they did not have proper learning environments or the necessary resources to engage effectively in virtual learning. The proportion of master's and doctoral students whose courses moved online and who could not complete their courses was 7% and 6%, respectively (Doreleyers & Knighton, 2020, pp. 1-5; Statistics Canada, 2020 a, pp. 1-6).

Similarly, 35% of participants experienced work placement cancellation or delay; work placement cancellation was 45% in master's and 32% in doctoral programs. Hence, it has been predicted that student work placement cancellation or delay could adversely affect students' job market integration and financial status as some work placements were paid positions (Wall, 2020a., pp. 1-6). In addition, 70% of the participants stated that COVID-19 had impacted their financial status. The majority were worried about their limited or lack of ability to pay for their tuition fees and rent. They were concerned about an increase in their student debt, and 61% were concerned about using their savings. Graduate students who participated in the study were worried about not having access to research funding to complete their programs (Wall, 2020b., pp. 1-5; Statistics Canada, 2020b, pp. 1-6).

These negative academic and financial impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, compounded by the negative social impacts of government-mandated public health measures (e.g., social distancing), added stress and further contributed to the deterioration of the physical and mental health and academic performance of university students. For instance, many students feel disconnected from their campuses and in-person professional programs and resources, and they have lost the opportunity to engage in in-person learning opportunities, such as networking and gaining fieldwork experience (Day et al., 2020, pp. 1-13; Green et al., 2020, p. 1310; Schleicher, 2020, pp. 4-9).

Research also indicates that the stress levels among postsecondary students were already high before the pandemic (Versaevel, 2014, pp. 1-93), and there has been a significant increase in mental and physical health issues during the pandemic (Bertrand et al. 2021, pp. 265-272; Day et al., 2020, pp. 1-13; Taylor, S., Landry, 2020, pp. 706-714). For instance, studies from Australia (Rimmer, McGuire & Gill, 2020, n.p.), Canada (Hellemans, Abizaid et al., 2020, n.p.; Day et al., 2020, pp. 1-13), Hong Kong and China (Day et al., 2020, pp. 1-13), and the US (Son et al., 2020, pp. 1-14; Day et al., 2020, pp. 1-13) highlight that the adverse impacts of COVID-19 on the academic, financial, social and family lives of postsecondary students made it hard for them to succeed academically. These challenges also negatively affected students' physical and mental health, which, in turn, have further negative impacts on the students' academic performance (Day et al., 2020, pp. 1-13; Acharya, Jin & Collins, 2018, pp. 655-664; Hellemans, Abizaid et al., 2020, n.p.; Bertrand et al., 2021, pp. 265-272).

In addition, a plethora of studies on the effects of COVID-19 on Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) shed light on the unequal impact of COVID-19 on students in HEIs based on race, gender, class, family status and other social determinants of inequality (Green et al., 2020, p. 1311; Day et al., 2020, pp. 1-13; Schleicher, 2020, p. 4; Stephens et al., 2020, pp. 426-457). For instance, studies documented that COVID-19 has had more damaging effects on racialized and ethnic minority students' academic performance as their communities have suffered more from the negative impacts of COVID-19 compared to other communities, and they looked after their families and friends during the pandemic (Abuelgasim et al., 2020, pp. 1-10; Bhala et al., 2020, pp. 1673-1676; Raifman and Raifman 2020, pp. 137-139; Day et al., 2020, pp. 1-13).

Along the same line, studies documented that many economically vulnerable students do not have equal access to higher education because they have limited or no access to supportive learning environments or stable internet or electronic devices to engage effectively in online learning (Day et al., 2020, p. 6; Doreleyers & Knighton, 2020, pp. 1-5; Green, 2020, pp. 1309-1310; Murphy, 2020, pp.492-505; Schleicher, 2020, pp. 1-31; Wong, 2021, n.p.).

Similarly, much research acknowledges that the pandemic impacts are gendered. According to UNESCO's estimate, the pandemic has affected 1.2 billion students worldwide because of school closures, leading to an increase in parent care responsibilities that women disproportionately bear. Despite the growing number of two-income families, mothers are still unduly responsible for child-raising and household labour. For instance, in the context of COVID-19, mothers disproportionately engage in emotional labour, including taking care of the emotional well-being of the family and contacting one's family regularly; and mental work, including managing, organizing and scheduling family affairs (Hjálmsdóttir & Bjarnadóttir, 2020, p. 269).

Moreover, mothers also experienced time pressure to complete what is demanded of them every day at work, school, and with their families, which negatively affected their mental health and general well-being (Hjálmsdóttir & Bjarnadóttir, 2020, pp. 268-279; Qian & Fuller, 2020, pp. 589-598; Stephens et al., 2020, 426-457). Studies predict that COVID-19 has negative economic impacts on HEIs globally. It may lead to the loss of many research jobs, and since women are overrepresented among precarious positions in HEIs, they will be more affected vis-à-vis other groups (Day, et al., 2020, p. 7; Green et al., 2020, pp. 1310-1311; Hjálmsdóttir & Bjarnadóttir, 2020, pp. 268-279; Schleicher, 2020, pp. 4-9). Thus, these disproportionate impacts of the pandemic on racialized people and women illustrate the segregated nature of the labour market and how capitalism offloads the costs of reproduction of labour power onto the household, a domain that women are given responsibility for.

Thus, many studies acknowledge the urgent need for systemic interventions on the part of governments and HEIs to adopt student supportive and pro-equity policies that effectively help students and staff cope with the pandemic's negative impacts. Although the Canadian federal government has provided the Canadian Emergency Student Benefit (CESB) and the Canadian Emergency Response Benefit (CERB) to postsecondary students, these financial measures are temporary and unsustainable, and not all financially vulnerable students (including students who receive OSAP) are

eligible to receive them (Department of Finance Canada, 2020, n.p.; Schleicher, 2020, p. 8).

Studies call for governments' and HEIs' sustainable interventions to address the challenges faced by post-secondary students. In terms of health, researchers suggest governments and HEIs should adopt harm reduction and allocate sufficient resources to address students' mental and physical health needs (Hellemans, Abizaid et al., 2020, n.p.). HEIs also must promote compassionate teaching, be flexible with students in terms of the time they need to complete academic work, and provide different teaching and learning methods while offering supportive environments and showing care for students (Hensley et al., 2020, pp. 349-357). Similarly, governments and HEIs must ensure students have equal access to education by providing financially vulnerable students access to needed resources. Along the same line, governments and HEIs must significantly increase the number of permanent and decently paid jobs for vulnerable students and staff, including women (Day et al., 2020, pp. 1-13; Schleicher, 2020, p. 26; Stephens et al., 2020, pp. 426-457), and systemically promote sustainable equity during and beyond the pandemic.

Research findings

The researcher in this study conducted qualitative interviews with three graduate students at York University to study the impacts of COVID-19 on the interviewees' academic performance during the first wave of the pandemic. Please note that we used the pseudonyms *first*, *second* and *third interviewees* throughout the paper, and they consistently refer to the same research participant. The overarching finding is that the pandemic has compounded the negative impacts on different aspects of the interviewees' lives, including academic performance, familial relationships, finances, and mental and physical health. One of the primary themes that emerged is the unequal impacts of COVID-19 on the participants according to their family status.

For instance, the graduate student who was the sole source of support for the wellbeing of her family could not perform any academic work during the first few months of the

pandemic since she spent most of her time taking care of her family. The other two graduate students without caregiving responsibilities continued with their academic work. However, they shared other concerns, such as dissatisfaction about the intensification of their TAship due to moving courses online and the lack of compassion and understanding on the part of the course director, who did not adjust academic expectations for students in the context of COVID-19. The unequal impacts of COVID-19 on the interviewees are well reflected in the interviewees' following messages:

First interviewee:

First of all, [COVID] has made my TA-ing much more difficult. Because when it all started, I was TA-ing. I was travelling down to York and TA-ing. And so, it altered my students' assignments and everything, and there was a lot of confusion. It increased the intensity of my TA-ing position. I have to prepare a lot more than I normally would. It's taking up a lot more of my time now that COVID has led to me teaching online.

Second interviewee:

I felt like one of my professors was really accommodating, really understood, and was empathetic to the fact that not all of us might have the same situation at home. But some of us have kids or partners that work from home or things like that, which might make it challenging to find space or time to engage in a lecture. Whereas my other professor, still, you know, her expectations didn't change at all. And I didn't necessarily feel like she was in tune with the fact that this wasn't normal business as usual, but was rather like a very kind of extreme situation that was causing a lot of stress and logistical challenges for a lot of people.

Third interviewee:

Even though it may seem as if we have more time, it is not true for me. It may be true for someone who has no children, no family responsibilities, and the only thing they do is sit down and do schoolwork, which will be a different situation. I have ageing parents: my father is 84, and my mom is 85. They live by themselves. I also have children, and I am very worried about my children, especially when COVID just started. [COVID] has affected me a lot. It is the mental space to sit down and concentrate on

schoolwork; that is my biggest challenge because I am exhausted by the time I have time for me. It is mentally exhausted and physically exhausting, and I have a few hours to sleep, and it starts all over again. Schoolwork is not a part of that.

The unequal impacts of COVID on women with caregiving responsibilities and on students with less financial resources and conducive environments to engage in effective academic work have been documented in the literature (Hjálmsdóttir & Bjarnadóttir, 2020, pp. 268-279; Stephens et al., 2020, pp. 426-457).

The theme of precarity—which here refers to the lack of control and uncertainty in one's academic, financial, social, and familial life—is also echoed throughout the interviewees' narratives as follows:

First interviewee:

I'm writing my Comprehension Exam for my PhD, and it's very, very difficult to stay focused. With the world crumbling at your fingertips, pretty much, it's very difficult to stay focused. It also has impeded my ability to get books from the library that I needed. It has caused a lot of financial issues, which has also impacted my ability to concentrate. My dad was out of work for three months and we were really struggling financially, and then my mom is ill, and she is still working.

Second interviewee:

I think I came away with the grades that I was happy with, but I think just on a personal level, my whole family is in the US, and my partner's family is in Lebanon. It is challenging from the perspective of just having an added stress of not being able to see your loved ones, sort of not knowing when the next time you will be able to see them. It's frustrating not to have control over when you'll see people you care about.

Third interviewee:

COVID has affected my TA-ship. Thankfully, the government gives us the student relief fund. Besides my TA-ship, I was also doing an extra part-time job supervising exams. That was a big chunk of my income—almost half of

my income has been affected. This is because I work on campus, and there is nothing on campus to work on. There are no exams on campus to supervise. There is nothing to TA. I do not know if they are still going to pay for our school fees. The Fall term is still up in the air. I do not know if I am going to get that TA-ship next year.

This finding is in line with the broader COVID literature, which argues that financially vulnerable students—especially Indigenous, Black and racialized students who had been in financially precarious positions with HEIs prior to the pandemic—have been significantly affected by COVID, and this precarious position has negatively affected students' academic performance (Green et al., 2020, pp. 1309-1312; Stephens et al., 2020, pp. 426-457). In this research paper, the researcher did not explore the role race plays for the research participants. Although, we know that the third interviewee—who = was Black, a single mother and had caregiving responsibilities—was affected more by COVID-19 than the other two research participants whose ethnicity is unknown to the researcher.

Furthermore, worries about one's family's financial status and health and safety took a significant emotional toll on the interviewees' mental health. From the interviewees' excerpts, the themes of emotional labour, mental work, and being busy mothers having adverse effects on the interviewees' academic performance reverberated as follows:

First interviewee:

My mom is ill, and she is still working. We are trying to keep her out of the public because she has a weak immune system. If she gets COVID, she probably won't make it. So COVID has impeded my academic work in so many ways. It is very challenging in the context of COVID to perform efficiently academically.

Third Interviewee:

I do not know how to concentrate and do schoolwork. Schoolwork is the last thing on my list of priorities. Family is a big thing for me. Of course, I have children; I have to worry about my son. He is at the age where he is very independent, and I am more worried than he is. I am worried if he

wears a face mask or not, especially when it was not mandatory at that point. My parents are ageing, and it is my biggest concern, and my mom right now lives with me, but in her building, at one point, there were 30 cases of COVID. Because my parents do not live together, and they live in two different locations, I have to dedicate a day for one and another day for the other. It is like I am constantly on the run.

The above finding is consistent with the COVID-19 literature on gender inequality and health (Hjálmsdóttir & Bjarnadóttir, 2020, pp. 268-276; Stephens et al., 2020, pp. 426-457).

In addition, we found that social isolation did not directly impact the interviewees' academic performance, including school grades, TA-ships, and PhD requirements. The interviewees also indicated their graduate funding package remained intact. However, the third interviewee, who was highly dependent on on-campus paid work, such as supervising exams, lost a significant portion of her income due to a lack of available work. Furthermore, participants indicated that they preferred in-person learning and teaching methods to online learning since they found online teaching and studying depressing and less conducive to learning, socializing, and networking.

Moreover, the interviewees highlighted the need for TAs and professors to balance between being compassionate towards students while maintaining academic integrity and the need for the university to provide graduate students with financial security. The necessity to address our society's pre-existing inequalities, made more visible by the pandemic, has also been pinpointed in HEIs literature (Hensley et al., 2020, pp. 349-359; Green et al., 2020, pp. 1309-1312; Stephens et al., 2020, pp. 426-457). The following messages from the interviewees illustrate these themes:

First interviewee:

I would like to be able to see my students' faces. Yes, I have two out of 25 that let me see their face, and the rest of them don't show their faces. I'm staring at blank screens. And I don't know if they're there, technically, and I don't believe I'm legally allowed to ask them to put on their camera.

But I don't even want to have to ask them to put on their camera. I want them to treat it like it's a classroom. Like, I mean, when you come to York, you have to attend class. The basic rule is that you are not sitting behind the class; you know, you're not hiding your face. You have to go inside the classroom.

Second Interviewee:

Being compassionate as a teacher about different students' contexts and where they are coming from is essential. Talk to your students and come up with strategies to help them to succeed academically. You can say if you don't feel comfortable because you have people in the background or don't feel comfortable about various things; for instance, using your camera or participating, here are some strategies that you can use to succeed academically. For example, going for a walk with your phone while you are in class instead of sitting where you feel uncomfortable because people can overhear should be acceptable for teachers. Professionals should adjust their expectations for students to produce the quality of work they might normally expect. It is very important to regularly check in with each student and make sure they can cope and develop strategies to help them get through this challenging situation and complete their schoolwork in whatever way makes sense for them.

Third interviewee:

If I did not have to worry about money, I would focus more on teaching and the quality of my teaching and academic work. Because if you are not relaxed and if you have nothing to pay rent or buy food or whatever, then for sure you are not giving your academics 100%. There should be more scholarships and more financial resources to help graduate students so that we can focus more on our academic work and teaching.

Last but not least, being resilient was a common theme illustrated in the following messages:

First interviewee:

So, my number one strategy is maintaining fitness. That is the one way that, for me, I managed it. It's the only thing that makes me feel good. When I run on the treadmill or something, it really helps to relieve my

stress. I also cope by trying to be social. Me and my best friend get together. She lives in the complex next to mine. It looks like now we're getting better. But at first, we would go for a walk, and we would just walk six feet apart. Another coping skill was talking and having the comfort of my mom and my dad around.

Second interviewee:

I mentioned that I like to go to coffee shops to study, and not being able to do that, I try to change my position in the house to change the scenery. I change my study positions in the house. Sometimes, I work in the office and sometimes in the living room, and I move back and forth. Choosing a different seat in the living room or doing little things like that is very helpful. Or even when we go for a walk with a dog, we are changing where we go instead of going on the same route every time and things like that; just exercising what little control I have over things is really helpful.

Third interviewee:

My coping mechanism is prayer and listening to gospel music. Prayer is my biggest coping mechanism, and I avoid listening to the news. I am talking to my family. We need to ask for divine intervention, which is God almighty itself.

Being resilient demonstrates that the interviewees are not passive receivers of the adverse impacts of the pandemic as they exercise their agency to help their families and themselves overcome the challenges they have faced and hope for a pandemic-free world soon.

Analysis: COVID-19 and the neoliberal university

Reflecting on the COVID-19 literature on postsecondary students and the interviewees' narratives, Marxist theory illustrates that the exploitative capitalist social organization and relations whose goal is to produce profit have directly contributed to post-secondary students' precarious academic, financial and health experiences. Further, the crisis of capitalism, as demonstrated with the advent of the COVID-19 pandemic, has made visible and exacerbated students' experiences of precarity.

For instance, due to the commodification of education within Canada, research participants in this study had precarious financial and academic positions, e.g., insufficient funding from the provincial government for higher education. The neoliberal university, in its attempts to reduce labour costs, also uses graduate students to perform a large share of the undergraduate teaching through their TA work while paying them poorly, which does not allow TAs to make ends meet. As a result, students have to take on additional work, even though they are nominally prohibited from doing so. One of the interviewees indicated that a significant portion of her income came from an additional on-campus job before the pandemic. During COVID-19, since she lost her job, she received the federal government students' benefit alongside her TA-ship funding package to meet her basic needs.

Similarly, the interviewees' narratives demonstrate that the economic and academic exploitation of TAs and graduate students within HEIs has been exacerbated during the COVID-19 pandemic. For instance, the interviewee who was TA-ing during the first wave of the pandemic expressed great dissatisfaction about a significant increase in her TA-ship workload as courses moved online as a result of COVID-19. The increase in workload without a commensurate pay increase further demonstrates how the forces of neoliberalism impact the university, forcing precarious and low-paid workers to compensate for the withdrawal of the state in the provision of adequate funding for higher education.

Furthermore, since non-market-oriented values such as taking care of the wellbeing of one's family members is not considered to produce profit, governments and universities do not pay for such labour. Unpaid family caregiving responsibilities are disproportionately laid on the shoulders of women in advanced capitalist countries. The negative impacts of the privatization and individualization of domestic or reproductive labours on women have intensified during the COVID-19 pandemic, which has adversely impacted women's health, and professional and academic performance.

(Hjálmsdóttir & Bjarnadóttir, 2020, pp. 268-276; Craig & Churchill, 2020, pp. 66-79; Stephens et al., 2020, pp. 426-457; Qian & Fuller, 2020, pp. 589-601).

For instance, in the absence of government or university support for domestic labour during the first wave of the pandemic, the interviewee with family caregiving responsibilities was constantly on the run and engaging in emotional labour and mental work taking care of her family. Consequently, she could not perform any academic work. Moreover, the interviewees' narratives shed light on the fact that the commodification of higher education has also led to the deterioration of the quality of higher education. In acknowledging the educational inequality among students and TAs due to the lack of access to required resources to effectively engage in academic activities, and the precarious academic and financial positions of TAs and graduate students, the interviewees called for compassionate teaching, improving academic integrity, and improving the financial security for TAs.

Furthermore, critiques of the neoliberal capitalist system argue that the pandemic has opened up spaces for non-market-oriented economic activities, the production of non-monetary values, and state expansion challenging the existing economic and political status quo of capitalism (Mair, 2020, pp. 588-596). For instance, governments have provided income benefits to people and students because of their workplace closures. Grassroots organizations like the People's Pantry Toronto provide food and essential goods to people in need and engage in economic activities outside the capitalist market, and so on. Thus, these anti-capitalist activities and value provide an excellent opportunity for social justice activists to fight to establish an economic system that promotes class, gender, racial and other forms of equality. This radical socio-economic transformation requires political actions and a cultural shift from a pro-capitalist culture that solely values profit at any human and environmental costs to an anti-capitalist culture that prioritizes equity, planetary health, and social justice (Bannerji, 2015, pp. 164-168; Mair, 2020, p. 593; Marx, 1970, pp. 64-65). Hence, social justice movements have the potential to create a strong coalition and gather masses to advocate

institutional policies and practices that support and promote basic human rights, equality, equity, and social justice.

Conclusion

This research found that the COVID-19 pandemic negatively impacted all aspects of the interviewees' lives, including their academic performance. In addition, the findings indicate the pandemic has had an unequal impact on the participants' academic performance depending on their family status. The overarching themes that emerged from the data analysis are inequality; economic, academic and health precarity; increased levels of emotional labour; mental work and domestic or reproductive work for women/mothers; compassionate teaching; academic integrity; and resilience. These themes are dominant in the literature on HEIs and COVID-19.

Furthermore, utilizing a Marxist analysis of the marketization of the neoliberal universities has shed light on the direct connection between students' micro-level experiences and the macro-level economic base of capitalist societies, which prioritizes profit at any human and environmental costs. For instance, the primary focus of the capitalist system is on the production of profit. Consequently, the commodification of HEIs has reduced the quality of education as highlighted by the interviewees, e.g., universities use an online teaching and learning format without providing adequate support to students and TAs to engage in effective learning and teaching activities. This lack of proper support by universities has led to the deterioration of the quality of education as not all students have proper access to resources and a conducive environment to perform online academic activities effectively. Similarly, TAs have to perform a high workload to save money. The economic and academic exploitation of TAs has intensified and has been more visible during the pandemic.

Along the same lines, reproductive labours, including maintaining the wellbeing of one's family and oneself, are considered the individual's responsibility and are not supported by the government or the university because such labours do not appear to directly

contribute to profit accumulation. As one of the interviewee's narratives demonstrates, this individualization of reproductive labour had substantial adverse impacts on her academic performance, mental and physical health, and general wellbeing.

Hence, critical studies consider the marketization of HEIs and economic and gender inequalities as core factors for the unequal and adverse impacts of the pandemic on postsecondary students' academic performance (Day et al., 2020, pp. 1-13; Green et al., 2020, pp.1309-1312; Mair, 2020, 391-414; Stephens et al., 2020, 426-457).

Furthermore, the pandemic has created the condition for anti-capitalist and social justice grassroots organizations to produce anti-ideological and anti-capitalist knowledge and to mobilize masses to pressure governments and institutions such as HEIs to adopt institutional policies and practices that support basic human rights of people by guaranteeing people's access to free food, clothing, housing, education, and health services outside the capitalist market during and beyond the pandemic.

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