

Examining the Reasons Behind Street Children Working and Staying on The Streets in Pakistan: A Narrative Analysis

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Abstract

This study explores the underlying reasons that compel children in Pakistan to live and work on the streets, using a narrative analysis approach. While poverty is often cited as a major factor, this research reveals a more complex interplay of cultural, emotional, and societal influences. Conducted in Lahore, Pakistan, the study involved semi-structured interviews with 25 street children, allowing their lived experiences to guide the investigation. Through narrative analysis, three central stories emerged—Born into Poverty, Parental Death/Illness, and Going to School and Working on the Streets—each reflecting overlapping but distinct realities. Six key themes were identified: Becoming the Parent, Being Poor and Helpless, Familial Relations, Educational Aspirations and Realities, Societal Reflections, and Lost Childhood to Hopeful Future. These narratives shed light on issues such as disrupted family structures, dissatisfaction with the public education system, abuse by authorities, and the children's emotional resilience. Despite their harsh circumstances, many children expressed hope and a desire to support their families, reflecting the collectivist values of Pakistani culture. This study emphasizes the need for more qualitative research into the mental health and socio-cultural realities of street children in Pakistan, with implications for developing culturally sensitive support and intervention programs.

Keywords: cultural factors; education; poverty; resilience; working children