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Working Girls Education and Life Goals: A Multiple Case Study of Mothers Perspectives

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Abstract: *Poverty and illiteracy are two major socio-economic issues plaguing Pakistan's growth. Despite many efforts, getting an education for working children has always been a tough task. Children who have mastered that skill manage their professions, phase, and lives efficiently. It is necessary to comprehend the perspectives of the mothers of working girls in order to understand how and to what degree these characteristics influence their schooling and aspirations in life. This multiple case study also aids in showcasing the issues along with identifying comparable and disparate trends among those five cases. The research findings clearly highlight that there is a strong dedication to education, with four out of five instances stating that they have a good chance of achieving their objectives. Besides various hardships and financial problems, parents are willing to support their daughters' education and understand that education can help their girls achieve a bright future.*

Key Words: Education, Mothers Perspectives, Out of School Children, Workers, Work-life

Introduction

Child labour is very common in developing nations, and it has become a staple of most economic activity in urban as well as rural areas. Poverty, one of the most powerful forces, is inducing these children into hazardous labour, followed by the lack of basic education, hence increasing the number of out-of-school children.

As a result of their involvement in child labour, most of these adolescents are exposed to various dangerous risks. Physical abnormalities, sexual abuse, and the danger of sexually transmitted illnesses such as HIV, along with psychological and mental disorders, and even death in difficult situations, are only a few of them. The topic of child labour has become an ever-increasing source of apprehension in the blooming era of industrial work. Child labour has been a hot topic of discussion, prompting several

research studies globally ([Emmons, 1996](#); [Riediger, Freund, & Baltes, 2005](#); [Wiese, Freund, & Baltes, 2000](#)).

Literature Review

Educational scholars have been interested in the positive benefits of parental participation in the academic achievements and triumphs of kids over the past two decades. Parental participation boosts academic attainment and self-esteem while lowering absenteeism and behavioural issues. Parental participation includes parent-student communication, family rules with penalties, parental academic support, parental contact with the school rather than just the teacher, and parents ensuring the completion of homework. Due to there being a substantial association between parental participation and student performance, educators are concerned

about family involvement in education. As a result, several research investigations have found a continuous link between parental participation and academic success.

Furthermore, parental engagement is a key component of the solution to many educational challenges, and it has a favourable impact on the academic performance of a child. On the other hand, parental supervision had a limited link with a students academic accomplishment, according to [Fan and Chen \(2001\)](#), but parental desire or expectation for their child's educational achievement had a far larger relationship with the students academic achievement. Furthermore, the correlations between parental participation and student motivation, parental involvement, and academic accomplishment indicated an unanticipated negative link ([Fan & Chen, 2001](#)).

Pakistan's low literacy and the high poverty rate have resulted in the employment of minors. There are over 23 million children who are not in school, including 9 million in the province of Punjab, the biggest and most developed area of Pakistan. Lahore, being the capital of Punjab province, now has about 1.2 million working children. In Pakistan, many of these young children are employed in car workshops, tea kiosks, hair salons, brick kilns, weaving businesses, power looms, small manufacturers, trash collectors, and household labour. Begging is another type of labour that involves the allocation of minors to certain areas to beg for money, which is later given to their employers. Despite civil society's outcry, which resulted in certain legal reforms and numerous governmental efforts to control this problem in recent years, the number of working children continues to rise. Like other underdeveloped countries, Pakistan faces a significant and notable problem in reintegrating these children into schools and preserving their childhood.

[Khan \(1982\)](#) conducted a research study on 100 child labourers from three big cities in Punjab (Lahore, Gujranwala, and Sialkot) and discovered poverty, the struggle for survival, and a lack of opportunities were the primary reasons these children were forced to work. The average age of these working children was found to be 11 years. [Hussain \(1988\)](#) investigated the links between economic development, poverty, and child labour. Her findings highlight the additional hardships that

working children face, which include the allocation of a lower pay as compared to their adult counterparts, even after the excessive hard work and laborious working hours that these children are unfairly subjected to. Some of these working children have attended school at some point in their lives, but their socio-economic status has forced them to abandon their education in most cases. Although some children are unwilling to continue their education due to an unappealing educational system, a lack of counselling and consultation with children and their parents inspires them to value education. It is difficult to persuade parents to enrol their children in a part-time educational institution, which would minimise their gross household income.

Understanding these working children's opinions on schooling and their aspirations in life is crucial. The education of working children is made increasingly difficult due to their difficult financial situation. The thought of earning money at an early age and contributing to their family's household may entice some people to focus on their careers rather than their long-term objectives and education.

The study focuses on five case studies of working girls mothers. At the outset, each of the mentioned cases was given a fictitious name and major demographics, including the participants details, ethnicity, and work nature. A brief discussion on the sources of income in the person's household is also included. The interview guide for the working children participating in this study was written using Cassandra Massey's framework. Semi-structured interviews were selected to obtain most of the information

Theoretical Framework

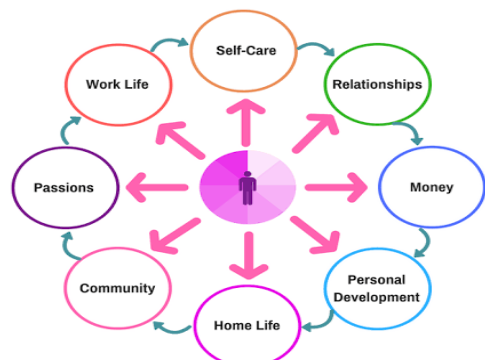


Figure 1

[Massey's \(2020\)](#) framework describes the numerous variables that individuals must examine and focus on when achieving their life objectives. As a qualified practitioner, she advocates for a model for working women. It is intriguing to use the same criteria to evaluate the viewpoints of working children on their life aspirations. Self-care, relationships, money, personal growth, home life, community, passions, and work-life are the eight aspects included in the framework. It is necessary to comprehend the perspectives of the mothers of working girls in order to understand how and to what degree these characteristics influence their schooling and life aspirations.

Methodology

The current research uses a multiple case study technique, qualitative inquiry, and research design. ([Yin, 2009](#); [Thomas, 2021](#)). Case studies, according to Creswell, are an inquiry approach in which the researcher investigates an event, activity, process, or one or more people in-depth. In-depth description and analysis of numerous cases is the focus of multiple case studies ([Creswell, 2013](#)). The case study method is a common choice in academic work in education. This study utilised multiple case study research designs to investigate and emphasise the issue of child labour in their environments over a time span of approximately four weeks.

The context becomes increasingly significant to study the viewpoints of five parents of working children chosen as case studies that resulted in multiple case study research with a single location: STEP Sunday school for working children, a non-profit initiative for working children in the Gulberg neighbourhood in Lahore. In this school, classes are only offered on Sundays from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., and these students receive a completely free education. The school provides books, clothing, bags, and meals.

The multiple case study used in this research study has also aided in showing the topic generally and obtaining comparable from the answers of the five cases. Participants are the mothers of working girls chosen using a targeted sample strategy. Cassandra Massey's framework is used to create the self-constructed interview guide. Each case study

thoroughly investigated the eight qualities of the framework using the deductive research method.

The interview guide consisted of 20 open-ended questions with room for further investigation. The research goal was to explore the perspectives of the mothers of working girls on their education and life goals.

Semi-structured interviews ([Seidman, 2019](#); [Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015](#)) were done with all five participants. The length of the interviews varied, but the average was around 35 minutes. Interviews were taped and transcribed verbatim to ensure no information was lost while capturing all their responses. Although the face-to-face interviews are the primary source of data, the academic achievement of all participants was documented in their progress papers, supplemented by observations and comments from their instructors and parents. Each case study's data was also shown using quotes from participants. Qualitative content analysis is used as a data analysis approach. Each participant was assigned a pseudonym to conceal their true identity and maintain their confidentiality and anonymity ([Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2020](#)).

The study paradigm was Social Constructivism, as researchers focused on comprehending the life of the interviewees from their viewpoints and interpretations, recognising that the backgrounds of the participants influenced their perceptions. People who practice Social Constructivism aim to comprehend the world in which they live and work. They interpret their events in their way ([Creswell, 2013](#)). It aided in forming different interpretations for characteristics that contribute to life goals and vocations that the five examples discussed throughout the interactions.

The purpose of this case study is to realise the thoughts, perceptions and understanding of the mothers of working girls regarding their work life, home life, passion, personal development, self-care, community, money, and relationships while pursuing their education and life goals. At this stage, the perception is that the mothers of these working girls will consider a bright and prospective future for their daughters.

This Research Study Explores

1. The perspective of the mothers of working girls regarding their Home Life, Work-Life, and Relationships while pursuing their education and life goals
2. The perspective of the mothers of working girls regarding their Passion & Personal Development while pursuing their education and life goals
3. The perspective of the mothers of working girls about their Self Care, Community, and Money for education and life goals attainment

Findings

Case 1: Participant 1 Shafia Bibi, Mother of Samina

Demographic Profile of Shafia Bibi

Shafia Bibi works as a maid in different homes in the model colony, Lahore. She is a single parent of two sons and two daughters, and her husband died five years ago. They belong to the Tehsil Burewala of the Vehari district. Shafia Bibi and her daughter, Samina, are the two sole bread-earners of the family.

Samina lives in a privileged area with her parents and three siblings (two brothers and one sister). Her day usually starts at 9 a.m. with breakfast. She is the most attached to her sister and shares everything with her. She is very caring towards her family, especially her parents. She is responsible and takes care of herself. After coming back from work in the evening, her usual routine consists of doing some kitchen work. While talking about Samina's work and home life, *her mother commented:*

Samina goes straight to work and then back home. She does not want to go back to the village; she prefers city life because of the countless problems in the village. So, she prefers to stay here. Life is very tough for us in the village as compared to the city.

Since she was young, Samina has been very passionate about studying, becoming a good person, and having a good future. She is passionate about becoming a doctor. Her mother wants her to become a doctor but is unsure about the future. *According to her mother:*

Such children think that if they dedicate themselves to working, they will have a bright future. So, they give more importance to the things around

them because they know how much hard work it took to earn them.

Samina takes care of herself very much, and she can distinguish between right and wrong. She is very careful about not having the wrong types of people around her. Going from village life to city life was a very big change for her, and in comparison to her village life, she believes city life to be better. She is not that social and is very selective when making friends. If a mutual understanding is present, she continues to entertain that friendship. Looking at things from a financial perspective, her mother sadly discussed, People usually fail to pay these young girls enough; therefore, she only gets PKR 8000 per month. It is difficult for us to satisfy our financial expenses in such a small amount, but Samina still helps us run our family.

Samina does not have many relationships, except one friend in school. She goes straight to work and then back home. She did not want to go back to the village and preferred city life because there were many more problems while living in the village.

Samina wants to be a doctor in the future. Her ambition to achieve her life goal is determined enough to fight all the problems. Despite various problems in their lives, such children are still determined to have a better future. One of the major issues these families face is poverty. Many of these girls are sometimes forced to earn due to poverty, which helps their families meet their expenses. Samina wants to cover two standards in one year that is acceptable in her school. Her mother wants her to become a doctor, but she still depends on the future. These kinds of children can create a better future for themselves if they get equal opportunities like other students. All these girls need is financial and moral support to ensure their bright future. If someone assures them of having that, these girls can prove themselves in all aspects of life.

Case 2: Participant 2 Naz Khatoon, Mother of Zareena

Naz Khatoon is working as a maid in different homes in the model colony in Lahore. Her husband is a security guard. They have one son and one daughter. They belong to the Tehsil Burewala of District

Vehari. Naz Khatoon, her husband, and both of her children earn the family income.

Zareena lives in a downtown area with her parents and one brother. She starts her day usually at 9 a.m. Zareena studied in the village three years ago, but she had to leave school. She has now been studying for the last two years. She works from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., during which she takes care of the children and does housework with her mother. She works only in one house at the moment. *According to her mother:*

Sunday school is better. One day is enough. The people she is working with within the home take care of her; they buy her new clothes at the events.

Zareena wants to become a teacher. Her mother is very supportive and passionate regarding her daughter's dreams. She sees a bright future for herself. If Zareena goes to a regular school, she will have enough abilities to do something. While talking about her daughter's passion, Zareena's mother commented that it usually does not make a difference, but we should care and think about a better future for our children. If my daughter wants to become a teacher, I will try my best to help her achieve her goals.

Zareena gets PKR 5000 per month. Three people work in her family, and they hardly meet their financial expenses from their income. She did not want to live in the village, and therefore her family now lives in the city. They are altogether three people in the house. She generally watches the television, cooks dinner, and goes to sleep at 9:00 p.m. *According to her mother:*

My daughter will have a better future than me. We have faced some tough times in life. But I hope that my daughter will not, since she wants to become a teacher.

School life makes her happy, while the memory of her father makes her sad, usually resulting in tears on nights when she misses him. Zareena does not go to other friends' homes because she is an introvert. Both sisters do not have close friends, and they usually fight a lot.

Zareena aspires to be a teacher in the future. These girls face one more major problem: not being social and remaining mostly introverted. Due to security issues, the parents are reluctant to let their children socialise, which becomes the reason they do not get equal opportunities like other children. Their

parents are correct to some extent, as their children come from a rural environment and are unaware of certain aspects of urban life, hence, leaving them with unequal opportunities. There arises a question about whether these girls will be able to ensure a better future for themselves if they do not open up to society completely. Despite the difficulties of working life, Zareena is confident in her ability to become a teacher. Her will to attain her life objective is strong enough to overcome any barriers. These youngsters believe that they will have a good future if they work hard, and thus, they are grateful for everything they have because they know the value of these things.

Case 3: Participant 3 Razia Baji, Mother of Amna

Razia Baji works as a maid in different homes in the Model Colony, Lahore. She has nine children, among which five are working at different places. Her husband is very aged and not able to get a job. They belong to the tehsil Hasilpur of district Bahawalpur. Razia Baji and 5 of her children earn the family income.

Amna wakes up at 10:00 a.m. and goes to work 30 minutes away from her home. She earns PKR 10,000 a month, and she comes home at 3:00 p.m. She does not like to work, but she must put her wishes aside due to her family's financial issues. She only studies when she comes back as they do not have a television or mobile phone in their house. Amna gives her complete attention to her studies. *According to her mother:*

If we did not have enough problems, I would send my daughter to a regular school. I always wish that my daughter studies enough to make a better future for herself.

Amna wanted to learn to have a job. She wanted to have a government job, and she is very passionate about it. After completing her work, she studies with complete dedication. She is very intelligent. Amna told her mother that she would not get married until she had a good job. Most students get scolded and discouraged by their teacher, but she does not. She likes to stitch clothes and wants to earn money from making clothes.

They have been living in Lahore for the past two to three years. She does not like to go to the village

and wants to live in the city. She wanted to have a sewing machine and learn to stitch. She does not face any problems with the people she works with. She does not have any friends. She is a very introverted person and does not desire friendship. While talking about the family's financial issues and poverty, Amna's mother explained, In my family, only two people earn. I wanted to earn enough money so I did not have to send her to work. If I had enough money, I would never send my daughter somewhere to work. My eldest son has studied till 12th grade, so my daughter asks him for guidance regarding her education. Hence, he teaches all of them.

Amna is a shy young girl who is brave enough to assist her family in relocating to Lahore. Her parents decision to leave the village and relocate to the city impacted her positively. She likes to live in city life and does not want to go back to the village due to the lack of resources and other problems that living in the village results in. Amna's mother believes that working in children's lives is difficult and that achieving their life objectives while working is challenging. She is a good student in school. Even though she struggles with Math and English, her desire to become a teacher remains strong. Life is too unpredictable, her mother says, but I will do my best to fulfil my daughter's dream of becoming a teacher. The lack of resources restricts the personal development of these children, limiting their chances of getting equal opportunities. If they did get equal resources, they would have enough abilities to prove themselves.

Case 4: Participant 4 Yasmeen Bibi, Mother of Ayesha

Yasmin Bibi also works as a maid in different homes in the Model Colony, Lahore. She is a mother of seven children, among which two are working at different places. Her husband is a security guard. They belong to Alam Pur, Tehsil Mailsi of the district Vehari. Yasmeen Bibi, her husband, and two of their children contribute to the family income.

Ayesha has seven siblings. She goes to work from 7:00 a.m. till 5:00 p.m. After coming back, she usually takes care of the owner's child. She worked with the mom, who is a lecturer at the university. Ayesha took care of the child, but her pay was very low, and the hours were too long. Therefore, she left

the job and is currently unemployed. While talking about Ayesha's work life and her employer, her mother disappointedly commented that Ayesha wanted to study, and the employer said she would get her educated. She said she would look after all her education expenses, but she did not do that. Ayesha took good care of the child because she had practice from taking care of her younger sister.

Just like Amna, Ayesha is also very passionate about becoming a teacher. She was fond of learning from a very young age. Mostly, working children focus more on their job and earning money, but if they get time to educate themselves, they study and consequently create a bright future for themselves. She learns to distinguish between right and wrong. Ayesha just wants to have a good future for herself and her family.

Ayesha, with her family, has been living in Lahore for the last eight years. She was very young when she came here. Ayesha does not make friends very quickly because she is introverted; therefore, she has only one or two friends. She has a good friendship with her older sister but fights with her younger brothers. She is very responsible. If she did not know how to take care of herself, no one would employ her. Ayesha is intelligent and a quick learner. While talking about Ayesha's and her financial earnings, her mother explained, She earned only 5000 rupees; therefore, she left. Three people in my family earn. I earn PKR 10,000 a month, the entirety of which I have to pay in rent. It is very difficult to meet the monthly expenses. My daughter wants to work and study along with helping her parents and the family, but these problems do not allow her to study.

Ayesha is a confident girl that wants to have a bright future. These children are unable to lead a good life because of their financial problems. Therefore, such children help their parents to meet their financial needs. They have the capabilities to perform as well as other children if they get enough financial support. These children work for their families to solve their problems. All of Ayesha's siblings are very fond of studying. She is also very fond of learning new skills. Her father is disabled, so he works on and off. Ayesha and her mother work to support the family. The important aspect is to have enough financial support to enable these children to study full time without having to bear the pressure of

financial responsibilities in their families. Despite facing all these difficulties, these girls and their parents hope to have a better future ahead.

Case 5: Participant 5 Sakeena Khatoon, Mother of Sara

Sakeena Khatoon works as a maid in different homes in the model colony in Lahore. She has eight children, among which two work at different places. Her husband does labour work for his daily wages. They belong to Chak Joya Wala of Tehsil Burewala, District Vehari. Sakeena Khatoon, her husband, and 2 of her children contribute to the family income.

Saras family includes four people: a sister, a brother and her parents. She usually wakes up at 8:00 a.m., prays, reads Quran, and goes to her job. After this, she comes back home, does housework, and helps her father. *According to her mother.*

I want her to get educated and have a good future so that she doesn't have to worry about herself.

Sara goes to work with her mother at 10 a.m., and they come back home at 7 p.m. Sarah usually helps her mother with housework. Sara likes to cut and chop, along with other basic housework, and she is very fond of doing parlour work as a beautician.

Sara does not like to involve herself with other people and is often found studying. She wants to become a doctor in the future. She is very intelligent and educates others around her about the importance of respecting their parents. She wants to study full-time, but due to her family's financial problems, she must sacrifice most of her dreams. *According to her mother:*

It is different for students who are able to go to school and study six days a week and for those who can only do so once a week. However, the latter are still satisfied with their condition.

Sara is intelligent and usually takes care of herself very well. Her cousin often helps her resolve any academic confusion or problems. Her mother used to be passionate about getting Sara educated and enabling her to have a good future. However, Sara does not have a separate salary. Her salary is included in her mother's. All young girls should have skills to help them create a better future for themselves. If Sara becomes educated, she will have a better future even while living with her husband.

They came from the village around two or three months ago and have grown fond of their life in the city. Sara usually makes friends with girls older than her. Sara is introverted and does not talk much. She is more attached to her father.

Children like Sara should also study and become skilful at creating a better future for themselves. Sara's father is disabled and is not stable enough to meet the family's monthly expenses. It is difficult for the working children to study regularly like other children due to these financial problems. If these children got proper attention and financial assistance, they could change themselves and their futures for the better. Another important element is certain demanding skills that could be taught to these working girls to help them improve their lifestyles. Working as a maid or caretaker enables them to gain valuable qualities such as financial responsibility and independence. However, they still require support and assistance to help them become more capable.

Discussion

Working children's parents' perceptions of their schooling and aspirations are investigated in their study. It is clear from all five case studies that there is a strong desire and dedication toward ensuring that their children gain a proper education. Parents' observations and opinions support the idea that working children are eager and devoted to their schooling and aspirations. Working children, compared to other children, are more passionate about fulfilling their life goals; their main shortcoming is the lack of time available to them to study. These experiences force them to mature faster than normal, both physically and emotionally. Emphasis should be placed on educating these kids about self-care and safety precautions. Parents expressed dissatisfaction with the children's lack of self-care. Due to the extensive and exhaustive labour that they must endure without following basic safety protocols, most face frightening injuries.

Underpaying working children and forcing them to endure excessively long working hours rob these children of the element of pleasure and joy in their lives. The case studies showed some different reasons and factors adding to the phenomenon. Poverty is at the top of this list. Pakistan is combating poverty, and with a rapidly growing population, this

struggle against poverty is becoming increasingly difficult. Poverty works as a trigger for parents' conceptions of their children's aspirations and schooling. For most of these people, it is a matter of life and death. Instead of decent schools, they search for better-paying jobs for their children. For families with working children, each kid provides an additional source of income. "Lack of knowledge and illiteracy are the key factors among parents who postpone taking their children to school, writes [Pasha et al. \(2001\)](#).

Unplanned migration to urban areas is another issue that contributes significantly to more adolescents dropping out of school and beginning to work. Families struggle to cope with the financial constraints of living in larger cities, resulting in each family member contributing as much money as feasible. People are compelled to relocate to larger cities due to a lack of economic prospects. If every child starts working, their basic requirements of food, clothes, and housing are met, then all the remaining amount is a bonus for covering financial problems.

When employing a child, businesses also get a terrific bargain. Working children, for the most part, believe they are not paid much. They work exceptionally long shifts, on average 11 hours, and are paid very little compared to adult workers. Employers, particularly in the informal sector, are encouraged to continue the practice due to a lack of policymaking and a shaky implementation of regulations about working minors. School dropouts can also result in a child rebelling against education due to a difficult school atmosphere and abusive teachers. Instead, they believe earning is more important.

The findings from all five instances of interviews reveal fascinating trends that fit Cassandra Massey's Life Goals framework ([Massey, 2020](#)). The main factors that help working children pursue their school and aspirations appear to be Passion and Personal Development. While Self-care remains a test for many cases, the role of Community and

Relationships remains low, although the thought of high potential. Furthermore, the imbalance between Work-life and Home life depicts a major challenge, and Money remains the most significant issue that prevents all cases from focusing more on working and earning.

Conclusion

One of the fundamental concerns with the existing dominating approach to children's work, as with most child protection, is that it focuses on a single area of a child's life rather than considering their well-being on the whole. Rather than focusing on protecting children from danger, we should look at what communities—even impoverished ones—are doing to help their children thrive. Future research should focus on what promotes well-being and how to improve these elements. We must determine whether the activity improves rather than exacerbates their position and encourage their efforts or seek better solutions. Certain labour can provide productive employment outside of school hours, avoid dangerous circumstances and hazardous activities, and, more importantly, provide lifelong learning and resilience.

The authors proposed that large-scale policy efforts should include empirical research on whether or not children gain from employment. Instead of advocating for broad restrictions on child labour, scholars, campaigners, and policymakers should identify the precise circumstances under which children succeed or suffer. When hazardous employment circumstances are uncovered, regulation should provide a variety of alternatives, such as enhancing children's working conditions and learning opportunities in their existing employers and aiding them in moving to non-hazardous employment. Work that does not damage others should be encouraged. Rather than suffocating these children, such approaches might encourage them to thrive.

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