

## **Acknowledgements**

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## **Abstract**

This study aimed to explore the perspectives of children about their well-being through participatory research in the context of an urban slum area in Islamabad, the capital city of Islamabad. Eighteen children: ten girls and eight boys participated in this study and generated a rich data. During this research I used qualitative research methods which include informal conversations, guided tours, group discussions and interviews and observation. These methods were selected in consultation with the children that participated in the study. This highlights the essence of childhood studies which acknowledges children as active agents and beings whose lived experiences are worth studying. Also, they should be included in the research as participants rather than only objects or subjects of the research. The major theoretical perspectives which provided a starting point for this study are: sociology of childhood, child well-being indicators and capability theory. These three perspectives intertwined really well providing a broad knowledge base to build my study upon by highlighting the importance of viewing children as a structure in society which needs to be studied on its own, especially their quality of life and looking at it from the perspective of capabilities and not just deficiencies.

The children in this study not only listed money, education and family and friends for a good life but also included freedom, respect, self esteem and good environment. However, the way children in this study described those indicators may differ from the dominant view prevailing in the society. For example, while money was considered important for a good life excess of it was considered bad. Also, children had high moral standards about the way this money was earned. It was also worth to note the ways boys and girls defined a good life. There were some commonalities between boys' and girls' indicators of well-being but they did not describe those indicators in the same way. This highlights the need of child well-being to be studied in the social and cultural context in which the children live. The children in this study also contested the mainstream definition of slums and did not consider their area as a slum.

Until now there have been very few studies in the field of child well-being which involve them as participants. This is especially important for policy makers and others working with and for children to find out what children actually say about their lived experiences, only then we can be able to create a positive difference in their lives.

## **List of Acronyms**

AFC	Adolescent Friendly Center
CBO	Community Based Organization
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
OECD	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
OWB	Objective Well-Being
SWB	Subjective Well-Being
UN	United Nations
UNCRC	United Nations Charter on the Rights of Child
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
UNICEF	United Nations Children’s Educational Fund

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# Chapter 1

## Introduction

The living conditions of children and young people are gaining more interest and recognition across the globe. At the same time children's well-being is a growing and popular field especially for policy makers, international development and child rights organizations and all those who are involved in improving the lives of children. Child well-being has come a long way from child saving to child development (Khan, 2009) and from child welfare to child wellbeing (Kamerman, Phipps, and Ben-Arieh, 2009).

Previously, attention was focused on studying children at risk for assessing the future negative attainments which would result as growing poor (Duncan and Brooks-Gunn, 1997). However, this focus is shifting in the field of studying child well-being from a perspective of deficiencies to capabilities which, for example, has resulted in moving beyond the income indicator of child poverty to their capabilities and life satisfaction. This point of view is helpful because perspectives of poverty focus on what children lack for a good life; whereas views on well-being explores both objective and subjective dimensions of life that is in line with recent theories on the discursive aspects of child's life. Moreover, well-being opens up the possibility for enquiring 'what it takes to get good life' and 'what values are attached to those things'; which in its own way is linked to Sen's notion of capability and functioning approach. While understanding and investing in positive future outcomes for children is extremely important, this does not mean we should neglect the study of children's well-being now, while they are children (Phipps and Burton, 2010).

Well being is a multifaceted concept and has perplexed researchers and policy makers for quite some time. There is still a lack of knowledge about what children consider as well-being, how it looks like and which factors influence in shaping their conceptualization of well-being. Kristen Moore (1999) discussed the indicators of child and family well-being. Her assessment was that we do not even know what positive well-being for children look like, let alone to develop indicators and measure this well-being. This assessment highlights the need of involvement of

children in all stages of research efforts to measure and monitor their well-being, if we want to measure the well-being of children in an appropriate and effective way (Ben-Arieh et al. 2001).

Fattore et al. (2007) have come up with five dominant applications of social indicator research to measure and research children's well-being. However, these applications are not totally mutually exclusive from each other. These include the quality of life approach (e.g. Cummins, 1995; Gilman et al. 2000), the domain approach (e.g. Land et al. 2001; Thornton, 2001), developmental health and well-being approaches (e.g. Keating and Hertzman, 1999) and 'State of the child' reports (e.g. Bellamy, 2004) and the child focused approach (e.g. Hood 2005). The last approach has emerged recently over the last five years as a result of the Multi-National Project for Monitoring and Measuring Children's Well-being. This project brought forward new perspectives of seeing child well-being which focus on needs of children beyond survival, moved from negative indicators to positive indicators and from traditional to new domains.

In order to understand the children's well-being from their perspective starts with the notion of accepting them as social actors whose opinions and experiences are equally valid as much as adults. Ben-Arieh et al. (2001: 6) emphasize the importance of focusing on children as a 'distinct population group who need and deserve a unique policy or set of policies to promote their well-being'.

There has been a development in the perspective of sociology of childhood and childhood studies, in which children are seen not just as 'becomings' but as 'beings' whose ideas, approaches to life, choices and relationships are of interest in their own right (James and Prout, 1997). This academic turn has contributed to a wider change of perception: that "children have to be involved in decision making, that children form a social group, and that children form a social group, and that children make a valued contribution to society" (Kirby et al, 2003). This concept was reinforced by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Child, which promote the notion of 'listening' to children's voices through their right to participation: "the modern children's rights movement is distinctive in its emphasis on the child's participation and perspective and the emergence of a number of relatively new organizations to advance their rights" (Foley et al, 2003:109). However, it is not so straightforward since "children's voices and perspectives as multifaceted, changing, and conceptualized" (Kjorholt et al. 2005: 178). Their opinions and perspectives are affected by the socio-cultural environment as well as adult's views.



But this does not provide any excuse not to include children in research and matters that concern them.

All of these points provide a background for my thesis. I have been interested in policies and programs which are developed to improve the quality of life for children at national and international level. I always questioned if they held the same meaning and value for children and if they succeed in fulfilling the needs and aspirations of children in reality.

### **1.1. Aims, objectives and research questions**

The overall aim of this study was to provide an opportunity to children especially girls to participate and state their views about what they consider as well-being, what are the indicators of well-being and how is this shaped by their context.

#### ***Objectives:***

The objectives of this study are as follows:

- To explore children's perspective about well-being in an urban slum area.
- To develop and describe well-being indicators from children's perspective.
- To seek recommendations that would improve the well-being of children.

#### ***Research questions***

In order to achieve the objectives of the study, some of the pertinent research questions that were discussed with the research participants were:

- How do children define well-being?
- What are the indicators of well-being?
- How do they describe those indicators?
- How do they describe their lives in context of an urban slum?
- What would they like to change in their lives surroundings to enhance their well-being?

## **1.2. Significance of this study**

This thesis is a contribution towards the knowledge depository of the child well-being indicators research. Unlike most studies about child-well being which are quantitative, I conducted a qualitative study. This is not to argue that one is better than the other, however, I am more interested in conducting a qualitative study in order to get a deeper insight about children's lives and perspectives rather than just having quantitative data. Also, adhering to the shift from negative to positive indicators, this study would explore new domains of well-being particularly in the context of urban slums which are generally seen as social pathology and sites for crimes and illicit activities.

In addition to this, most of the studies related to child well-being indicators which involve children directly have been conducted in developing countries. During literature review of field of child well-being indicators, Ben-Arieh (2012) found that there is considerable reports available about well-being of children internationally (mainly 'State of the World Children' reports by UNICEF) but there just a few local and regional reports about it. There is a shift toward localized reports, however, the difference between global north and global south in moving towards localized perspective is huge (Ben-Arieh, 2006; Ben-Arieh, 2012). This supports the need of my thesis to develop a localized perspective of well-being of children in their particular context and background.

Last but not the least, there is a growing demand from policy makers, NGOs and others institutions working with children for policy relevant report about child well-being (Ben-Arieh and George, 2006). This study would contribute towards the policy and programs targeted at improving well-being and quality of children's lives in urban slums. Although in developing countries the basic data about child well-being is still in demand and the reports are strictly quantitative and factual but I argue that there is a need to include the broader domains in the child well-being research and to look at the 'being' aspect of the children in addition to the 'becoming'.

### 1.3. Limitation of the Study

This study was conducted in one of the urban slum areas of Islamabad with a small sample of children suitable for a small qualitative project. The limitation of time and resources for this study should be noted before moving further.

Also, I had limited opportunity to spend more time in the community and gain access to children which were ‘hidden’ in their homes, such as, girls who were not allowed to go out or talk to someone (researcher) alone, working children, and those with physical disabilities etc.

### 1.4. Structure of the thesis

Child well-being is a growing field and it is important to outline the important and relevant theories and developments in this field. Thus, **Chapter two** presents the theories of child well-being indicators and some insights about the development in this area of research. In addition to this, it also presents the theory of capability which affects an individual’s agency and freedom to achieve what she or he values in life and hence influences one’s well-being.

This study is conducted in an urban slum area of Islamabad, Pakistan. **Chapter three** presents the necessary background information not only about the research site but also the country which helps the reader to understand the context in which these children live and experience life. This context does influence their perspective and choices in life and in deciding what to value.

In **chapter four** research methodologies are presented and discussed. The first section presents researcher’s preposition and the subsequent sections give information about the research methods, data processing and analysis, and methodological and ethical dilemmas faced in the field. **Chapter five to seven** focus on the data presentation, analysis and discussion. In the end, **chapter eight** presents the summary of the study, conclusion and recommendations for way forward based on my experience.

Before proceeding to the further chapters, it is important to comment on the use of a few terms which are used throughout this thesis. One of these terms is ‘children’, although the participants in this study are technically ‘adolescents’ aged between 13 and 18 years. However, there is no definite way of defining the terms ‘adolescents’, ‘young people’ and ‘youth’ in international law. Some organizations such as UNICEF, World Bank and World Health organization have adopted

working definitions to facilitate their programs<sup>1</sup>. This age group overlaps with the definition of children and young people according to UN. However, using UNCRC as the reference point I have used the term ‘children’ to refer to my research participants. Another reason for using the term ‘child/children’ is based on the understanding of the research participants who referred to themselves ‘children’ in the sense that they did not have freedom or agency to do all the things that they wanted to and needed permission from adults. The second term is ‘well-being’ and ‘good life’ which has been used interchangeably in child-well being researches. I used the term ‘good life’ or *achee zindagi* during my field work since it is hard to operationalize well-being in Urdu (national language of Pakistan). Therefore, I continue using both terms but they refer to the same concept.

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<sup>1</sup> [http://www.hrea.org/index.php?doc\\_id=146](http://www.hrea.org/index.php?doc_id=146)

## **Chapter 2**

### **Background**

This chapter will provide the background information about Pakistan as well as Islamabad, the capital city of Pakistan, in which the research took place.

#### **2.1. Pakistan**

##### **2.1.1. Geography and History**

Pakistan became a nation on 14<sup>th</sup> August 1947 as a result of partition of British India. It was officially named 'Islamic Republic of Pakistan' in the constitution of 1956. It was created by the demand of Muslims of the Indian sub-continent for a separate nation state for them. It had two parts: East Pakistan and West Pakistan. East Pakistan – present day Bangladesh – was located on the Bay of Bengal, bordering India and Burma, and had Bengali as their national language. Language was one of the disagreements between East and West Pakistan, since Urdu, which was the language spoken in West Pakistan, was declared the national language of the country. In 1971, there was a civil war and East Pakistan, supported by India, won its independence from Pakistan and became Bangladesh. What was formerly West Pakistan became modern-day Pakistan.

Today Pakistan is comprised of five provinces: Punjab, Sindh, Balochistan, Khyber Pakhtounkhawa (previously known as North West Frontier Province) and Gilgit-Baltistan, Federally administered Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) and tribal areas (FATA); and the state of Azad Kashmir, which is part of disputed territory of Jammu and Kashmir state. The geography of Pakistan stretches from Himalayas to the Arabian Sea. It is blessed with beautiful mountains, fertile plains, desert and sea.

Pakistan sits in a very crucial space geo-politically especially after the USA's 'War on Terror'. In the South, Pakistan has a coastline along Arabian Sea and Gulf of Oman and shares a marine border with Oman. It is bordered by India in to the East, Iran to the South-west, Afghanistan to the West and North and China in the North-east. It is separated from Tajikistan by Afghanistan's Wakhan corridor in the north.

### 2.1.2. Demography

Pakistan is a home to 180.4 million people<sup>2</sup>, and is the 6<sup>th</sup> most populated country globally. It is a Muslim majority country (96.4 %) while Christians, Hindus and others comprise about 3.6 % of the population<sup>3</sup>. Literacy rate for Pakistan is 54.9%, measured by the ability of a person to read and write his/her name, with 68.6 % and 40.3% for males and females respectively. There is high rate of poverty among the population with 61% of people living on less than 2 USD per day<sup>4</sup>. It has also a high level of urbanization which has increased from 7% in 1951 to 36% in 2010. With a high average growth rate of 3.1% (1990-2010), the urban population is expected to reach 130 million by the year 2030. This rapid pace of urbanization causes significant challenges in terms of effective urban governance, public service delivery and urban poverty<sup>5</sup>. Ayesha Siddiqa, a social scientist claim that “Pakistan has a shortage of about five million houses and the housing schemes that one sees are meant for the middle or upper-middle classes and do not cater to those from the lower or lower-middle classes. She adds that there is no strategy or actions being adopted by the local government to mitigate the increasing class divide in society<sup>6</sup>.

Adolescent population (15-19 yrs) (000); % of total	184,753; 36%
Number of women of reproductive age (age 15-49)(000); % of total	19,899; 11% 45,740; 25%
Total fertility rate (children per woman)	4.0
Crude birth rate (per 1,000 population)	30
Births per year (000)	5,295
Number of maternal deaths	14,000
Neonatal mortality rate (per 1,000 live births)	42
Gross secondary school enrolment (male; female) %	37; 28
Literacy rate (age 15 and over) (male; female) %	67; 40

Country Indicators for Pakistan presented by UNFPA<sup>7</sup>

### 2.1.3. Political Landscape

Pakistan has a federal parliament system, but it has been unstable for quite some time with alternating periods of civil and military rule. Civilian government and political parties in the past

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.popcouncil.org/countries/pakistan.asp>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/pk.html>

<sup>4</sup> [http://www.popcouncil.org/pdfs/2012IS\\_Pakistan.A4.pdf](http://www.popcouncil.org/pdfs/2012IS_Pakistan.A4.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.saneinetwork.net/Files/PPT.Pakistan.pdf>

<sup>6</sup> <http://tribune.com.pk/story/469260/urbanisation-in-pakistan-and-its-consequences/>

<sup>7</sup> [http://www.unfpa.org/sowmy/resources/docs/country\\_info/profile/en\\_Pakistan\\_SoWMy\\_Profile.pdf](http://www.unfpa.org/sowmy/resources/docs/country_info/profile/en_Pakistan_SoWMy_Profile.pdf)

few decades have been tainted by corruption, inefficiency, and continual confrontation between various institutions such as parliament, judiciary, clergy and military.

Pakistan gained a lot of attention globally after the 9/11 attacks in USA. As a result of 'War on Terror' lead by USA, Pakistan had to drop its support for Taliban regime and became an ally of United States, being propelled into the frontline fight against terrorism. This alliance had repercussions for Pakistan, and its forces had to struggle to maintain control over the tribal regions bordering Afghanistan, where Taliban militants became entrenched. These extremists have expanded their attacks to target local population especially minority groups of Shia-Muslims and Christians. Since, 2009 the Pakistan Army carried out sporadic missions to flush out militants from the tribal areas, which resulted in a huge influx of internally displaced persons and affected the economy immensely.

## **2.2. Islamization of Pakistan**

Pakistan today reflects the weight of culture and tradition, but Islam is an important and influential overlay. Although the process of Islamization of Pakistan began in 1956, the decade of rule by the military dictator, General Zia ul Haq left a strong impact on the culture of Pakistan. There are three major areas that were severely affected by changes in legislation during Zia's regime: women's rights, education and minority rights.

In general, Islamization tends to reinforce conservative ideas regarding the role that women should play in society. At a minimum, this slowed down policies and programs designed to bring women more into the public sphere, and thereby exacted an economic cost. The concept of Islamization has been exploited for political purposes by every government in Pakistan since its founding. The tension between Shari'a (Islamic religious law) and established human rights standards and women's rights is well documented. Coleman (2004) explains that although Pakistan's constitution guarantees women equal rights, over the years, a parallel Islamic legal system has been promoted that undermines those rights. Pakistan's controversial Hudood Ordinances, particularly with regard to *Zina* (adultery), are also discriminatory. By blurring the line between rape and adultery, the Hudood Ordinance creates the possibility that a woman can be convicted of adultery if she cannot prove rape.

Ashraf (2012) states that Zia's Islamization reforms transformed and deteriorated the educational system of Pakistan entirely. During this era, there was a mushroom growth of religious schools, or *madrassa*, which received official government patronage and international funding. Five thousand mosque schools were approved and the curriculum of the public schools was rewritten with an emphasis on jihad and Islamization.

Pakistan's educational system can be subdivided into four tiers of education providers: public schools, private elite and non-elite schools and *madrassa*. The majority of the population goes to public schools, private schools offer a comparatively better education and facilities for those who can afford it and then there are '*madrassa*' mainly attended by poor people who cannot afford education in addition to the basic needs of life. This discrimination in the education system reinforces the class difference in the society. However, non-muslim children do not attend '*madrassa*'. This does not imply that they are economically better than the others but because *madrassas* are religious schools; therefore, non-muslim children do not attend those schools.

Blasphemy law in Pakistan carries a potential death sentence for anyone who says anything against the majority religion. Pakistan inherited these laws against religious offence from British Empire after independence in 1947. However, between 1980 and 1986, a number of clauses were added to the laws by the military government of General Zia-ul-Haq including the death penalty. According to Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP) Muslims constitute the majority of those booked under these laws, followed by the Ahmadi community. However, hundreds of Christians are among the accused - at least 12 of them have been given the death sentence for blaspheming against the Prophet<sup>8</sup>. This law has been manipulated by many to settle their personal grudges and dispute; sometimes it is used to take people's property and other personal gain.

Rimsha Masih, is one of the recent examples of such a case. This is the first time in Pakistan that anyone was bailed out of a blasphemy case. Rimsha, a fourteen year old girl with Downs Syndrome, was arrested in August 2012 from a slum area in Islamabad after being accused of burning the pages of Holy *Quran*<sup>9</sup>. She was released after three months, after it was found out

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<sup>8</sup> <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-south-asia-12621225>

<sup>9</sup> <http://blogs.telegraph.co.uk/news/robcrilly/100190638/rimshas-justice-is-the-exception-not-the-rule-in-pakistan/>



that the local imam had fabricated the charge of blasphemy because he wanted the Christian community to leave the area<sup>10</sup>.

### **2.3. Islamabad – The Capital of Pakistan**

Islamabad is the capital of Pakistan and is the ninth largest city of Pakistan. It was built during the 1960's to replace Karachi as the capital of Pakistan. Islamabad is a planned city that is divided in different sectors and zones, unlike other cities of the country. Bensen (1972) says that "Islamabad provides the most advanced university facilities in the country, the best laid-out and equipped colleges, school of all kinds, parks, playgrounds, tree-lined streets, underground utilities as well as an underground garage.... Large air conditioned office buildings, and the most elegant Islamic firehouse in the entire world". Islamabad was considered as the model city for the rest of the country. In those years it was the only city that had an equal number of males and females in educational institutes. Life in Islamabad is hierarchical although not in the extreme as it used to be. A person's house, size of the garden, grades at school, health facilities and even social companions to a large extent are determined by one's employment, for example, people working at higher grades in government offices would not socialize with those from lower grades. It has been basically a city for bureaucrats (ibid). This trend is changing due to increased opportunities of education and employment in other sectors, but one can still see the remnants of the older class difference.

#### **2.3.1. *Kachi Abadis* (Slums) in Islamabad**

It is estimated that about 30% of the population of Islamabad lives in the slums. It all started with the huge labour demand in the development of the city from its beginnings. This encouraged labourers to migrate from villages and small cities to Islamabad. However, the housing for the workers and labourers was kept in mind neither by the planners nor by the government. It was resolved on ad-hoc basis when workers occupied the 'unoccupied land' in Islamabad usually near the rain water drains. However, CDA allotted 100, 66 and 48 Quarters (three different communities) in sector G-7 and F-6 for the lower income staff, mainly the sanitary workers (Akhter Hameed Khan Resource Center, 2007).

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<sup>10</sup> <http://www.pakistanblasphemylaw.com/?p=1513>

### **2.3.2. Demographics of Slums**

The phenomenon of establishment of slums still continues in Islamabad due to various reasons, such as better economic perspectives, land mafia since the land in Islamabad has high market price. According to a survey there are about 34 slums in Islamabad but only 11 of those are recognized by the government. Out of these 11 communities, more than 50% are Christian majority originating from central Punjab. This is because these were the first immigrants to Islamabad to take up jobs as sweepers and other employment that was not considered socially prestigious. However, now the slums are occupied by people from all over the country, including Potoharies, Sheiks, Awans, Afghan refugees, Pathans and some people from Balochistan as well. The average size of the family is about 5-8 persons in the slums, and most of them live in joint family systems<sup>11</sup>. The research shows that more than 50% of the persons who contribute in the family income are under the age of 18 years. However, this varies from community to community. The income level of these slums is very low with about 53% earning between 30 – 50 USD per month which makes it difficult for people to make a decent living (ibid).

## **2.4. Situation of Children in Pakistan**

In this section I will focus on the children from age group 13-18 years, which corresponds to the ages of children in my study. This will provide a contextual lens through which the empirical data of my study can be understood in a better way. This section makes use of a research conducted by Population Council (2003) about the situation of adolescents in Pakistan.

### **2.4.1. Social Context of Children**

Children in Pakistan can have a different life based on their gender, rural and urban background and socio-economic class. Still, there are some things which affect all children, though the degree of influence may vary. There is also a huge gap between aspirations of young persons in terms of education and work and the opportunities that they can avail.

### **2.4.2. Education**

There is a great gender disparity in female and male education in Pakistan, with 50% and less of girls aged 15-24 attending school. Even if they do go to school the drop-out rate for girls is

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<sup>11</sup> A family system is one in which children live with their parents, grandparents and sometimes paternal uncle and aunts as well.

higher due to reasons such as unavailability of schools in local areas, girls being considered mature after puberty and not being allowed to go out, or parents' inability to afford the school fee. School enrollment for girls is least among the lowest social economic strata of society. Although the school enrollment for girls has increased over the past ten years it is still not satisfactory. This situation is a little better in case of boys. It is worth noting that children themselves want to acquire education at least till high school or university level.

### **2.4.3. Employment**

One can see the gender difference in the employment and work of children as well. Although boys are expected to work in the labour market but girls start working as household help at a very early age in their homes. There is a gender segregation of the professions as well which girls and boys are expected to adopt, such as agriculture, work in factories and offices, and skilled labour for boys, while girls are expected to become teachers, nurses, and other professions considered to be women's professions.. However, this trend is changing and girls are joining employment sectors which are not traditionally considered as female domains.

### **2.4.4. Decision Making and Mobility**

Children in Pakistan have limited autonomy to participate in matters affecting their lives and make decisions about themselves. This is situation is worse for girls than boys, and is especially constrained in the matters related to marriages, going out of house, and schooling. Pakistan being a patriarchal society, boys have more chances to exercise their agency and freedom. The unrestricted movement of children outside the house or local neighbourhood, is a major concern for parents, particularly for girls, due to lack of security for girls or family reputation because they think that their girls will develop a relationship with some boy if allowed to roam unsupervised.

### **2.4.5. Early Marriages**

Pakistan is a signatory of CRC and has defined the age of children as younger than 18 years. However, with the onset of puberty children are considered old enough to be married. There could be several reasons for this, including poverty, saving family honour so that the girls don't deviate from the social norms, and economic benefit. However, this is more common in rural areas than urban areas.

#### **2.4.6. Challenges Faced by Children in Slums**

Another study conducted with people living in slum areas brings out some issues faced by children living in the slums (Akhter Hameed Khan Resource Center, 2007). These findings present the adult perspective and may not necessarily mean the same for children, but still they are important to note here. They highlight the barriers that children living in the slums face in getting admission to schools because of social discrimination. This discrimination and exploitation continues in various social settings, which hampers the mainstream participation of slum dwellers. Moreover, the environment of slums is uncongenial environment for children's growth and development. The environment is not clean and during the rainy season the slums get flooded because majority of these are located on the bank of the rain water drains.

## Chapter 3

### Methodology

This chapter discusses the methodology used during this research and different challenges that emerged during the course of the field work and writing the thesis. In the first section, I present my own position to the research topic, my initial research plan and the ways in which I reached decision to choose the field site. The second section describes my experience of actually being in the field. This section includes brief description of the process adopted to enter the field, sampling and description of participants and methods of collecting empirical data. In the third section, I will briefly present the data processing and analysis framework adopted by me for this study. Subsequently, I will reflect on my role as researcher and the socio-cultural and ethical dilemmas that arose during the field work.

#### 3.1. Researcher's Preposition

During this research, I anticipated my role as a *'traveler'*, exploring the domains of lives of research participants and encouraging them to tell their narratives of their lived world. However, these narratives would be re-told through my traveler's interpretation of those narratives and may involve a lot of reflexivity and question my taken-for-granted notions and knowledge. I would agree with Brikmaan and Kvale's statement that "*the journey may not only lead to new knowledge; the traveler might change as well*" (Brikmaan and Kvale, 2003).

Before going to the field, I was very much aware of my *'insider'* position. This refers to the fact that I as the researcher and the participants shared a similar cultural, linguistic, ethnic, national and religious heritage. Our insider status can make us accepted within the group, but it can also affect the way in which others perceive us within this relatively close social world. As insiders it is easy to take-for-granted our social proximity and the advantageous consequences this may have. It is important, however, to be aware of the fact that such a status as an *'insider'* can provide others an access to our private selves and vice versa (Ganga and Scott 2006).

As Martiniello (1997: 6) warns us that "during data collection, for example, an ethnic background can be very helpful. Ethnic researchers can have privileged relations with immigrant

groups, which can facilitate access to the field. Similar advantages arise from familiarity with the languages and the physical space of the researched group. On the other hand, such closeness between a researcher and his/her subject can also harm the research process". I found out later that I was not only an 'insider' (as I considered myself) but was also an 'outsider' as seen by children in the research area. The way my 'insider-outsider' status played out in this study will be discussed later in this chapter.

These critiques as mentioned earlier about 'insider' and 'outsider' position illuminate the subjectivity of knowledge production (Madge et al., 1997), and the importance of reflection at all stages of data collection, analysis and representation (Ganga and Scott 2006). The critiques effectively showed that in social research, researchers and participants are equally involved in this production (Geertz, 1993), demonstrating the need to consider qualitative research more holistically.

My knowledge about slums comes from my work experience on development projects with children in the slums in Islamabad, although I was not directly involved in the implementation of the projects but was responsible for providing technical support. During this work, I always wondered what children living in slum areas think about their lives and what their aspirations are.

### **3.1.1. Initial Plan**

My initial plan was to focus on children and young people of age 13-17 years and that twenty participants would be selected through purposive and snow ball sampling techniques. In order to make it an inclusive study, the participants were to be selected from various backgrounds, socio-economic status, religion and gender. A specific aim was that children with special needs (physically disabled) will be particularly involved.

However, considering the practical realities in the field I had to be reflexive about the target group and age. Some of the reasons for these decisions included issues such as the access and mobility of girls, and especially children with special needs, the time availability of children and the exclusion of the minority religion in the community, which here refers to the people belonging to the Islamic religion here. Although they are in majority in Pakistan, in context of this slum community they are in the minority.

Also, I had planned to employ multiple child-friendly or research friendly methods used by other researchers (Punch 2002; James 2006). But I found that children who participated in my research were not interested in any method that required writing or drawing. During the mapping exercise, they said, “we can tell you about the community and you can draw the map”. I asked them write stories or diaries but none of them agreed to it. Later, I found that they were reluctant to write as they cannot write properly and also they were not confident about drawing either. In school and at home children are expected to follow a set of rules and routines and they are not encouraged to express their opinion and question the dominant discourse in society. My asking them questions about their lives and interest in their opinions was something new for them.

“Adult child model’ is an important approach in research which treats children as mature and knowledgeable persons and as research participants rather than subjects (James et al. 1998, cited in Ansell, 2001). Abebe and Skovdal (2012) applied this approach by employing diverse research methods that the children are comfortable with and have a good command of those methods. While they used story writing, photography and drawings I decided to focus on interviews, group discussions, informal interviews and observation since that made my research participants more comfortable.

### **3.1.2. Choosing the Field Site**

This study was conducted in one of the slum areas of Islamabad. The reason for selecting this site was due to convenient sampling. Being my own city, it was an advantage to be able to spend more time there. Moreover, almost everyone speaks and understands Urdu (the national language) which might not be the case in other cities. Also, I had worked with children in slum areas and I thought this could be helpful in establishing the rapport with children and community members.

I selected one of the slum colonies out of six colonies in which Plan International’s Urban Program Unit (UPU) was working. The main reason for selecting this area was that it had both Christian and Muslim populations, which I thought would be interesting in exploring how religious identity shapes children’s lives and well-being. Later I found that people from both religions did not interact with each other and children from both sides consider the other as

‘another colony’. Considering the time limitation, in the end I decided to focus on the Christian population, which made up the majority of the colony.

## **3.2. Being in the Field**

### **3.2.1. Field Entry**

Considering the limited time available to accomplish my field work, I started to look for an efficient way to do it. I contacted Plan International – Pakistan, as this is the only organization working extensively in the urban slums of Islamabad. They showed interest in my research and found it to be useful for their work with children in slum area of Islamabad. It served two main purposes for me; one it helped me to access the community without going through formalities and meetings with community gatekeepers, secondly, this research would reciprocate the cooperation of children by communicating their voice and opinion to adults and organizations working to make their lives better.

I gained acceptance with the children, especially the girls, very quickly. It could be because they are used to having trainers, researchers and other NGO personnel visiting their community. However, this researcher was different as I spent more time with them and did not assess their knowledge and behavior but was interested in their lived experiences and world view. Another factor that helped me to build better rapport with the children and their families was my affiliation with the same religion as them. I did not mention my religion during introduction, but later some children asked me about it. Some of them did not believe it until I took part in praying with them and said the ‘Lord’s prayer’.

### **3.2.2. Sampling Procedures**

Sampling is an important step in the research process because it helps to determine the quality of inferences made by the researcher that stem from the underlying findings (Collins et al, 2002). As opposed to quantitative research, sampling is different in qualitative research as researchers are more interested in gaining insights about a particular phenomena, group or event in detail rather than making any generalizations (Connolly, 1998).

For my study I used purposive sampling scheme. Purposive sampling techniques are also referred to as non-probability sampling or purposeful sampling or “qualitative sampling”. It



involve selecting certain units or cases “based on a specific purpose rather than randomly” (Tashakkori and Teddlie, 2003: 713). Maxwell (1997: 87) further defined purposive sampling as a type of sampling in which, “particular settings, persons, or events are deliberately selected for the important information they can provide that cannot be gotten as well from other choices”.

My sample included girls and boys between the ages of 13 to 17 years. This criterion of selection was communicated to the sponsor, who organized a meeting with children attending the Adolescent Friendly Centers (AFC) established by Plan International in the community. In this case, the term ‘sponsor’ refers to the organization “that support and vouches for the research activity” (Nilsen and Rogers, 2005: 345). After explaining the purpose of the study, children who showed willingness to be part of my study were included in the research activities. However, the number of girls and boys was less than targeted sample size; therefore, snow-ball sampling was used as well to recruit more children in the study. Snow-balling proved to be more useful as children who had already been interviewed and participated in the group discussions encouraged others to experience the same and were able to clear up misconceptions about the research, if there were any. For example, one of the boys thought that it was going to be an evaluation of the knowledge that was imparted through the AFCs and thus was reluctant to give an interview. On the counter side, it limited the inclusion of children from different or lower economic levels living in the community as they were not ‘friends’ with the research participants.

Researchers often have to make sampling decisions based on available resources e.g. time, money (Teddlie, 2007). This was true in my case as well. As discussed above, I had planned to include children with special needs and an equal number of boys and girls, but I had to make a compromise due to limited time, accessibility and gender norms.

According to Teddlie (2007) sample sizes in qualitative research should not be too large as it creates a difficulty of extracting thick, rich data. On the other hand, it should not be too small that it becomes difficult to achieve data saturation (Flick, 1998; Morse, 1995). There were eighteen participants in my research; 10 girls and 8 boys. In my opinion, it was enough to obtain useful insight about their lived experiences and world view.

### **3.2.3. Description of Participants**

Using the aforementioned sampling techniques, I was able to engage eighteen children in research who participated in individual interviews and three to four group discussions. Out of these eighteen participants, ten were girls and eight were boys. Most of these children attended schools and belonged to almost the same economic strata. Their parents worked in Capital Development Authority (local municipality or government office) as sweepers or other low grades and as household helpers. However, no details were obtained from children about their economic background and the research concentrated more on their lives and opinions. Due to the use of snowball sampling, the sample comprised of relatives or children belonging to the same caste.

### **3.2.4. Informed Consent**

Informed consent entails that research participants are given sufficient information to ponder upon the risks and benefits involved in their participation and hence are able to make a conscious decision about their participation in the research (Williamson, Kent, and Ashcroft, 2005). This implies that “participants have consented to take part in research after being informed of and understanding the aims, methods and processes, and topics of the research and what the data will be used for, as well as making clear that they can withdraw from the research at any time” (Ennew et al., 2009 in Sovdal and Abebe, 2012: 8).

I did not have to deal with community gate keepers since I was introduced by the sponsor organization which acted as an institutional gate keeper. This organization was convinced about the value and usefulness of this research to bring forward the voice and opinion of children which could contribute in future projects designed to improve their well-being. I did not use written consent forms since signing documents could have created a false alarm among research participants about having some hidden purpose of this research. Abebe (2009) faced a similar situation about securing written consent in Ethiopia. He found that it was difficult to obtain a written consent, not only because people were not literate, but also because they were reluctant to sign documents which was seen as some legal binding. Therefore, I preferred to use an oral consent and an informed consent sheet was read for children explain the purpose of the study, voluntary participation, confidentiality of information and their right to say ‘no’ to any question

which they did not want to answer and also to leave the research if they felt like it. I emphasized their right to say ‘no’ as I was aware that in our culture children are taught not to say ‘no’ to adults. Except for one child, all agreed to be part of the research.

The next step was to obtain consent from their parents. Although they were adolescents between the ages of 14 and 17 years, still I deemed it important to obtain consent from parents so that they were aware of their children’s activities. However, the children did not see it in that way. For them, their personal consent was good enough and it should not matter as their parents would not know any way. But upon my insistence they informed their parents, and to validate that I visited some of the participant’s home. It was helpful in gaining the trust of the parents and community, so that the children, especially the girls, could move freely with me in the community. But at the same time, I felt burdened with an additional responsibility of taking care of the children which was at times beyond my role as a researcher.

### **3.3. Research Methods**

During my field work, I used different methods to obtain data and building rapport with children, although these methods do include the list of methods that I had planned to use initially. These methods include: observation, informal chats, individual interviews, group and focus group discussions, and field notes. These methods are discussed as follows:

#### **3.3.1. Observation**

In order to gain acceptance among children and to allow them to get use to my presence, I started with observation. Initially, I started to hang out with the group of girls since it was more convenient because of cultural norms. This was more or less the same group which took part in the group discussion. In the beginning I was seen as an adult, a teacher and a counselor. Children would try their best to put up a good behavior in my presence. However, gaining access to the location did not mean that one would become part of the group (Fine and Standstorm, 1988). I could hear them whisper to each other and giggle about their secrets. Suddenly, it made me realize my position as an ‘outsider’ rather than just as an ‘insider’ which I considered myself earlier. As an insider I was aware of the cultural norms and practices and that helped me to understand the context of data provided by children through interviews, discussions and observations in a better way that added a layer to the data interpretation. However, I was an

outsider being from a non-slum area, a different class and educational background and had to 'earn' their trust and acceptability.

However, it is hard to say that belonging to one of those positions would have benefited me more. While being an insider researcher may present a different set of dilemmas in terms of winning the trust and confidence of research subjects, having an outsider-insider status may both facilitate the research process and close off opportunities for more detailed knowledge in interesting and contradictory manners (Skovdal and Abebe, 2012). Based on my experience I would argue that more than the insider or outsider position of the researcher, the generation of data is influenced by the personal traits and communication skills of the researcher.

Some researchers emphasize on adoption of least adult role (Mandell, 1988) and possibilities of equality of friendship between an adult and child. Since I was doing research with adolescents, I think it contributed positively towards creating a 'peer' relationship. Although researchers are refrained from taking up the role of counselor, it helped me to gain acceptance among the group. I counseled one of the girls (who was the leader of group) in her relationship problem without being judgmental. From that moment onwards, I was considered as a friend by everyone. This not only helped me to gain the trust of girls but also their mothers; hence, I 'negotiated a rapport with adult authorities' (Fine and Standstorm, 1988). She helped me throughout the research in field by encouraging other children to be part of the research, organizing group discussions and interviews etc.

I could not do participant observation with boys because of the prevailing social and cultural norms regarding gender segregation. Girls and boys had the freedom to interact but these interactions were scrutinized by the parents and other adults in the community. So, I could only observe boys in mixed groups. Since I had already gained trust of the girls it did not take me long to become friends with boys. Although at times there were some awkward moments due to my own perceptions about what is considered appropriate. But they were not such a deal to affect the research process in any way.

Children even gave me a nick name and introduced me sometimes to their parents and other community members by that name. I played along and that contributed towards obtaining the ‘least adult role’ that we strive to achieve in our research endeavors with children.

### **3.3.2. Informal Conversations**

I had informal conversations with the girls and boys in between participant observation, group discussions and interviews. We would strike these discussions while waiting for others to join us at the Adolescent Friendly Center (AFC)<sup>12</sup> or after my work for the day was over and I waiting to be picked up. These conversations were useful in gaining a deeper insight about children’s lives and not just limited to the research topic. However, during these friendly conversations I was able to ask more about some particular topics which came out as a result of group discussions or anything that they wanted to add to the previous comments. These conversations were recorded to ensure that I did’t miss any important point. Children became used to the recorder; in fact they liked to replay the recorder to hear their voices. Sometimes they would sing songs and record those. This gave me an opportunity to give full attention to what children were saying and not worry about taking notes.

### **3.3.3. Guided Tours**

Guided tours were useful to introduce me to the community and physical space of the slum. It was also an opportunity for some of the girls to see their community as well; they mentioned that they have never been to the other side of the community where they have no relatives. They were really excited. With the boys it was not the same. They did not want to be seen with a ‘girl’ even if she was a researcher or older than them because of the people in community. Although on my insistence they took me on a round of community which was not as detailed as the ones I took with girls. This could probably be because boys experience their physical space in a different way than girls.

### **3.3.4. Group Discussions and Interviews**

I used group discussions with the girls and boys respectively to introduce myself as a researcher and objectives of the research. We started with a ranking exercise which helped to generate a

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<sup>12</sup> These centers are established by an International NGO which works with children in the slum areas of Islamabad and provide them with information about child rights and life skills.

discussion among the group members. The dynamics within focus groups are also heralded as a useful addition to developing a 'new politics of knowledge' by accessing un-codified knowledge and stimulating the sociological imagination in both researcher and participants (Johnson, 1996). Also the children felt confident in the presence of their peers and this later affected the interviews as well. I observed that the children who had participated in the group discussions were more confident and eloquent during individual interviews as compared to those who just gave an interview. McCracken (1988) is also of the opinion that focus groups are useful when respondents are forthcoming either due to the stimulus or the safety of a group of fellow respondents. Afterwards we had a few more formal and informal group discussions with the girls, boys and both together.

According to Kvale and Brinkmann (2009: 2) a research interview is a tool "where knowledge is constructed in the inter-action between the interviewer and the interviewee". During interviews, information is not simply transported from one participant to another but both parties are actively making meaning out of the questions raised, producing knowledge as a result of two-way communication (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007). After the group discussions, the children were invited to give individual interviews to which a majority of them agreed. Again, I conducted interviews with girls and then boys as it was convenient for me.

Interviews took place in the AFC which had become a base camp for me. All participants were told that it would take about 45 minutes to an hour. Sometimes it took longer as well when participants started to tell about their community and friends. This helped me to gain insights about other children in the group, which helped me to develop a better understanding of their experiences.

According to McCracken (1988) participation in qualitative interviews can take a lot of time, jeopardize privacy, and is intellectually and emotionally demanding in ways that are sometimes not foreseen by the participant. This puts an extra responsibility on the researcher to see that the respondent is not overtly or subtly victimized by the interview process. Again to counter this, children were told that they could tell me if they didn't want to answer any question. At the end of the session, they were asked about what makes them happy and also given a chance to ask questions from me (in most cases they did not ask any question).

### **3.3.5. Field Notes**

My field notes were a way of catharsis for me. Although I was genuinely interested in finding out opinions of children, still I found it challenging and stressful to go to a new place and become a part of a group of children. I had to put in a lot of effort to refrain from taking up the role of a counselor or mentor. Where do you draw a line between your responsibility as a human being towards children, your standards of behavior and your role as a researcher? I often thought about that but never found an answer. For example, children would sometimes give me time to take interview and then forget about it. Participation was voluntary and they were not bound, but still I wished they were a little more responsible. My field notes proved to be helpful to deal with all this. After putting it down on paper I was able to be more reflexive and to change my strategy and methods to involve children in research. Reflexivity refers to the ways in which researchers reflect upon their research practices (Gaskell and Bauer, 2000). McGraw, Zvonkovi and Walker (2000; cited in Guillemin and Gillam, 2004: 276) argue that reflexivity is ‘a process whereby researchers place themselves and their practices under scrutiny, acknowledging the ethical dilemmas that permeate the research process and impinge on the creation of knowledge.’

### **3.4. Data Processing and Analysis**

After the extensive field work came the next phase to process and analyse the rich data collected during the field work. My data analysis phase was inspired by thematic analysis (Buarne and Clarke, 2008) and some stages of constructivist grounded theory (Charmaz, 2002), although these stages are not just exclusive to the aforementioned approaches but are used in other qualitative analysis frameworks too. Thematic analysis is a poorly demarcated and rarely acknowledged, yet widely used qualitative analytic method (Boyatzis, 1998; Roulston, 2001). Through its theoretical freedom, thematic analysis provides a flexible and useful research tool, which can potentially provide a rich and detailed, yet complex, account of data.

#### **3.4.1. Phases of Data Analysis**

I followed the following stages of data analysis presented by Braun and Clarke (2008):

##### *Phase 1: Familiarization with data*

Interviews and focus group discussions were conducted and recorded in Urdu, the national language of Pakistan. These were later transcribed and translated into English generating a rich

data set. It was challenging to translate the data since Urdu language has a rich vocabulary and it is not always possible to find a suitable word in English. In such cases the word which was closest to the original meaning was selected. I read and re-read the data and noted down the initial ideas on an excel sheet. I was aware of the fact that even though the process of transcription may seem time consuming, frustrating and at times tedious, still it is a very useful way to familiarize oneself with the data (Riessman, 1993). Some researchers argue that transcribing should be seen as ‘a key phase of data analysis within interpretative qualitative methodology’ (Bird, 2005:227), and should be recognized as an interpretative act, where meanings are created, rather than simply a mechanical act of putting spoken sounds on paper (Lapadat and Lindsay, 1999).

#### *Phase 2: Generating initial categories*

This phase refers to refer to ‘the most basic segment, or element, of the raw data or information that can be assessed in a meaningful way regarding the phenomenon’ (Boyatzis, 1998: 63). So once I was familiar with the data, I started to note down initial ideas and categories that I deemed important and corresponded with my research questions. At this point I was able to see commonalities between children’s perspectives of a good life.

#### *Phase 3: Searching for themes*

During this phase the initial ideas and categories were collated to develop broader themes. “A theme captures something important about the data in relation to the research question, and represents some level of patterned response or meaning within the data set” (Braune and Clarke, 2008: 8)

These themes were the start of the analysis and data interpretation in a way that I could see relationship between different categories and subsequent themes. I organized the data into tables which facilitated the generation of themes from the data.

#### *Phase 4: Review of identified themes*

This phase is divided into two steps: first, the themes were reviewed to make sure that nothing important is missed from the data set and secondly, these themes were refined based on the commonalities or differences between them. This phase requires careful scrutiny of the themes to make sure that they are representative of the data and the accurate representation of the data depends on the selected theoretical and analytical approach (Braun and Clarke, 2008).



### *Phase 5: Defining and naming the themes*

This phase is marked by defining the themes, that is, how is each theme is described and what aspect of the data it holds. I was able to generate themes from my data which represented the views of the children about what makes a good life. Later, I refined those themes by describing what meaning it held according to my research participants. According to Braune and Clarke (2008: 92) ‘it is important that by the end of this phase you can clearly define what your themes are and what they are not’. Also the titles for these themes must be concise and self explanatory which provides the reader a sense of what this theme is about.

### **3.4.2. Reflexivity during Data Analysis**

Data analysis is described as ‘a range of techniques for sorting, organizing and indexing qualitative data’ (Mason, 1996: 7). The constructivist approach in grounded theory places an importance on the phenomena under of study. This approach considers that both data and analysis are created from the shared experiences of researcher and participants and is also influenced by the relationship of the researcher with the participants (Charmaz, 2000; Charmaz and Mitchell, 2001). Subsequently, constructionists also view data analysis “as a construction that not only locates data in time, place, culture and context but also reflects researcher’s thinking” (Charmaz, 2002: 677).

Hence, it is importance to build reflexivity into methods of data analysis and also to create dedicated times, spaces and contexts within which to be reflexive. It requires a profound level of self-awareness and self-consciousness to become aware of our own perspectives and how it affects our data (Mauthner and Clarke, 2003). We can try to minimize this bias but it is hard to say that we can eliminate it completely. Grosz (1995: 13) points out, ‘the author’s intentions, emotions, psyche, and interiority are not only inaccessible to readers, they are likely to be inaccessible to the author herself’.

In my case, it helped me to be aware of my views as an activist for child rights and child participation. I always questioned my opinions to determine if they were based on my personal feelings or if the data was communicating them. Another thing that helped was to distance myself from the field and my research participants; therefore, it was very useful to come back from the field and then start the analysis and data interpretation process.

### **3.5. Methodological and Ethical Dilemmas**

Doing research with children about children is very different from caring for them or teaching them. So, for example, teachers, play-workers or youth workers cannot simply do research with the children and young people they work with, as if the research is part of the service, and as if no one needs to ask for children's informed consent. Every culture has its own set of ethics. Therefore, ethical research needs to be sensitive and adaptive to local concerns, values and customs (Sen 1999).

#### **3.5.1. Confidentiality**

Children were told that the information that they were providing would be confidential and remain anonymous. They were excited and would joke to each other that people in another country would read about this. Some of them wanted to use their real names, to which I complied. Another researcher faced the similar dilemma where many participants insisted on using their real names. The possibility of fame outweighed possible threat or embarrassment in their minds. However, the researcher decided to use pseudonyms because he considered that children were not sufficiently aware of the possible ramifications of their decisions (Fine, 1987). In my opinion, the children's decision should be respected and they have a right to their opinion, no matter what it is. I think that if it jeopardized their safety they would refrain from using their real name.

#### **3.5.2. Power Difference**

The researcher's role is perhaps more delicate when dealing with adolescents than at any other period of childhood, as sensitivity about one's own rights and powers are heightened as full adult responsibility is seen part of their near future. Mayall (2000: 121) points out that 'the concept of generation is a key to understanding childhood. This means that the adult researcher who wishes to research with children must confront generational issues. But one has to be careful, as an adult acting like a child might not be respected by children and might be taken as an intruder or not genuine especially by the adolescents. In order to undertake the 'least adult role', creating a relationship of intimacy and trust between the researcher and the informants is crucial, and that in this respect some methods might be better than others (Ennew and Boyden, 1997). I decided to be friends with my group of research participants although it has ethical

dilemmas of its own. I participated in their discussions about fashion, movies and songs, prayed with them, ate with them and listened to their gossip. I had a more friendly relationship with girls than boys because we spent more time together. However, almost all the children (and their parents) called me ‘ma’am’ against my liking and sometimes they would call me by the nickname given to me by them. The children in this study lead me around to show the community and provide me information about places around it and I showed them how to take photographs and record their voice in the recorder. This helped to balance the power relation between us; in fact, the children had more agency in some cases. On the other hand, it is hard to say ‘Good-bye’ to your friends. I tried to make it as smooth as possible by going out for dinner with them at the end of the research period, and we talked about how they felt before participating in research and what are their feelings now. It made everyone feel better.

### **3.5.3. Reciprocity**

Reciprocity is another area without any clear agreement and is loaded with moral question of right and wrong (Bostock, 2002). There are different opinions concerning different forms of compensation for the time children allocated to research, for example, whether to give them money, food/meals, school materials, photos or clothes (Kjorholt, 2012). There is ambivalence about reciprocating children with money, while some researchers use it (Abebe, 2009) others see it as a mean of buying information and this may create doubts about the validity of data generated (Aptekar and Heinonen, 2003).

In my opinion, reciprocity depends on the context of the research and the researcher is the best one to decide (either on his/her own or in consultation with children). In my case, I did not use any specific expression of reciprocity. I tried to compensate with food, but after the first time I took snacks and drinks for them, they organized a party for me. So, in a way it was balanced between us. I used to take food for them, helped with their studies and in return they invited me to their homes. On Christmas, I got small gifts for all of them which made them really happy. One of them commented that “I have never received a nicely packed gift on Christmas before.” My intention was not to reciprocate their contribution to the research which cannot be valued in monetary terms but rather this was a small token to say ‘thank you’ and to share the joy of Christmas.

### **3.5.4. Gender Issues**

Considering that Pakistan is a strictly gender segregated society, my gender affected my relationship with the participants. It was easy for me to access the girls and become friends with them. With the boys it took a longer time; however, my rapport with girls and their parents contributed towards involving boys in the research. On the other hand, I was conscious about gathering boys and girls for group discussions and interviews. This issue was tackled by sometimes involving mothers in the group discussions or sitting together in an open space where people could observe us. Although it affected the data generated as children did not share their opinions openly due to lack of privacy, we tried to make the best of the given circumstances.

### **3.6. Personal Experiences as Researcher**

In qualitative research separation of self from others and the research itself is not so easily accomplished and as Katz argues, the research, the researcher and the researched are tightly bound together and the boundaries become redefined and continuously blurred during fieldwork (Katz 1994). My experience in the field not only influenced my perspective about the children in slums and their lived experiences but it also made me aware of my own taken for granted things in my life and position as a researcher. There were some occasions when comments of children in this study made me reflect on my position as a researcher and how that may influence my research participants. For example, one of the boys commented that the girls in their colony should have freedom to go out and move freely as I had. It was poignant for me since freedom is something that I took for granted but for many it is a privilege.

The children in my study told me that they felt good talking to me and this feeling was mutual. I felt encouraged by their positive feedback about my field work and studies.

*Hannah: What will you do with this research later?*

*Me: I will get my degree and also I will share it with people who are working with children.*

*Hannah: That is a good work!!!*

This certainly made me feel better about my work and boosted my morale to continue further and come up with work which brings out the voice of my research participants.

## **Chapter 4**

### **Theory**

The focus of this study is to highlight the significance of incorporating children in developing and conceptualizing the indicators of well-being. It is mainly shaped by the theories of Ben Arieh who provide a comprehensive concept of child well-being and useful criteria to assess the existing indicators of measuring child well-being. The first section of this chapter provides a brief introduction of the concept of child well-being and the historical development of child well-being indicators. This development in perspective of child-well being attributes to the two major discourses in the academic and policy world: the first is structural sociology of childhood which sees children as a permanent category in any given society (Qvortrup, 2000) and second is the discourse of the rights of the children which sees children as competent agents rather than passive recipients of developments around them. The second section of the chapter deals with the indicator child well-being, its course of development and the recent domains which are used to measure and monitor the quality of children's life. The last section builds on the capability theory presented by Sen in which he focuses more on the individual's capabilities and functionings, and how it plays out for the well-being of children.

#### **4.1. Concept of Child Well-being**

Well-being is a complex phenomenon which is related to the optimal experience and functioning of human beings. (e.g. Diener, 1984; Huebner, 1991; Wilkinson and Walford, 1998). An important aspect of well-being is one's overall evaluation of life, or life satisfaction (Gabhaain and Sixsmith, 2005). Although absence of distress is considered as a major component of one's well-being yet presence of positive states such as happiness and self efficacy are equally important. Well-being is a multi-faceted concept and many scholars have been struggling to define 'optimal experience' and 'a good life'. It is useful to explore what the concept of 'well-being' and 'good life' entails because it will affect the influences policies, teaching, parenting and preaching and all those actions that are supposed to change people for better (Ryan and Deci, 2001).

Another important concept in the study of well-being is the categorization of Objective Well-being and Subjective Well-being. The difference between these two categories is explained as Subjective Well-Being is a measure of happiness which is measured by asking survey respondents how they felt about their life. While Objective Well Being is a measure of observable variables, such as life expectancy, that we believe are important for a good life. The distinction is important (Argyle, 2001). However, these two terms must be used with care because they do not just refer to the methods of measurement (self-report or non self-report), but to what is measured, such as feelings or non-feelings (Gasper, 2007). Also, the two labels are not perfect—for example, the concept of OWB is not value-free but depends on what aspects of being are considered as of value, while much research in recent decades indicates that SWB can be reliably, satisfactorily measured (Kahneman et al. 1999). I would refer to these terms in my thesis as objective well-being as a measure of basic needs, income and survival of children and subjective well-being as a measure of self efficacy and capabilities rather than deficiencies.

According to Kingdon and Knight (2006) the conventional approach of economists to the measurement of poverty is to use measures of income or consumption. This has been challenged by those who favour broader criteria, such as fulfillment of ‘basic needs’ and the ‘capabilities’ which means to be and to do things of intrinsic worth. Their argument is that any attempt to define poverty involves a value judgment as to what constitutes a good quality of life or a bad one. Therefore, an approach which examines the individual’s own perception of well-being is less imperfect, or more quantifiable, or both, as a guide to forming that value judgment than are the other potential approaches. Hence, well-being needs to be understood in the context of the choices available to an individual and the opportunities that she get (Sen, 1999). It is worth to note that having an equal access to resources does not guarantee an equal level of happiness. The view that well-being is dynamic concept and is beyond just the reflection of income level supports the argument that in order to improve an individual’s quality of life we need to focus on their capabilities rather than deficiencies such as poverty. Since the values and references for an individual’s well-being change according to social and cultural values and historical period.

The concern about assessing children’s situation is not new and is evident from the amount of ‘State of World Children’ reports published by UNICEF since 1979. However, the past few years have seen an increased interest and effort in measuring the status of children (Ben-Arieh, 2006).

The concept of 'well-being' and its monitoring has become a priority international policy matter. However, it has also been criticized for focusing on the economic growth and GDP as the measure of well-being which fails to capture the social advancement and quality of life. Although it is hard to define 'well-being', there has been an increasing agreement that it is knowledge of what one needs for a good life, what people think of their circumstances and how they are able to use their capabilities (White 2009; Gough et al. 2006).

This applies in general to everyone but especially in case of children the context defining well-being change not only because of their surroundings and circumstances but also because of their age. Something that they value as a child might not be that relevant when they are adolescents. Also the context and socio-cultural values affect the well-being of different social groups and gender differently which needs to be taken into account (Ben-Arieh and Frones, 2011)

#### **4.1. 1. Indicators of Child Well-being**

The movement of social indicators as a sub branch of social sciences emerged in 1960's. Atkinson et al. (2002: 2) defines social indicators as "a parsimonious set of specific indices covering a broad range of social concerns". Thus, indicators can be used to measure from factual material realms to the abstract values, goals and aspirations of life. But social indicators should not be just seen as plain statistical indices which show the empirical trends but instead these are analytical tools which bridge the gap between conceptual framework and empirical reality. A vital function of information generated by these social indicators is to inform and support the policy making process (Ben-Arieh and Frones, 2011).

Recent years have witnessed a dramatic increase in the number of reports published by governmental, non-governmental organizations and academics to measure and monitor the quality of life of children (Ben-Arieh, 2006). These indicators range from measuring the developmental milestones to psychological development to subjective happiness, highlighting the need for unifying the taxonomy of child well-being indicators. Frones (2007) asserts that there is a stronger need for a common framework of understanding of child well-being indicators for a more useful analysis.

Dimensions of child well-being often include: material well-being, housing and environment, education and quality of school life, health and safety (OECD, 2009). Although these are dimensions are important in measuring the well-being of children but should not be limited to just these. These indicators are used by different social actors such as policy makers, child rights activists, researcher and media for several different purposes. The importance of these indicators could be related to the change in accountability based policies which requires more accurate picture of children's circumstances, their function and capabilities (Ben-Arieh and Wintersberger, 1997).

The recent development in the domain of child well-being indicators can be attributed to two major theoretical changes: first, the sociology of childhood which sees childhood as a stage in its own right and second, the concept of children's rights (Ben-Arieh, 2008). In the following section, I will discuss these two theories since these are not only related to the child-well being indicators but also provide a starting point for this particular study.

#### **4.1.1.1. Structural Sociology of Childhood**

One of the underlying assumptions for the development of child well-being indicators by Ben Arieh is the structural sociology of childhood. It is one the main three branches of social studies of childhood and is mainly propagated through the work of Jens Qvortrup (1999). He sees childhood as a constitutive and distinct part of the social structure and this view is important to understand the sociological meaning of childhood.

Qvortup problematizes the idea of child. In his view child is a supra-historical individual and this idea diverts attention from seeing children as collective entity having constructive abilities in their own right. Also, the concept of 'child' rather than 'childhood' hampers the analysis of childhood in historical variability and separate the child from the society in which it lives (Qvortup, 2002). He further proposes that sociology of childhood should think about childhood in terms of structure. Childhood constitutes a particular structural form which is neither defined by the individual characteristics of the child nor their age. All children share the some similar traits which could be but is not limited to going to school, having a status as minors etc. He argues that children may interpret the world differently but they are influenced by the major events occurring in their microcosms (ibid).



Looking at childhood as a stage in itself brings forth the discourse of child well-being in terms of well-being and well becoming (Frones, 2007). Childhood is a stage with its own social characteristics. Qvortrup (1999: 54) argues that for “too long... we accepted that the adult world is something that children must adapt and that socializing measures are directed toward children’s standpoint and children’s priorities”. This supports the view that children should be considered as beings rather than just becomings and their childhood is a stage which needs to be acknowledged and respected.

One of the criticisms of the earlier studies of well being was that they did not involve children and were based on the data which did not assess children at all. These may focus on mothers, parents or families as unit of analysis. These studies took a child’s opinion for granted and did not conceive that a child might have a different definition of what may constitute a family etc. Children were often invisible in statistical reports based on social indicators (Jensen and Saporiti, 1992).

In past, children’s lives and experiences were measured in terms of variables such as household income, parent’s occupation etc. which maybe alien to children’s own perspective of life. These variables are infact the description of their parent’s lives which in many ways influence the lives and opportunities of children but are not the only determinants of their lives. Their reality could be different from that of adults. “It is not to deny the importance of traditionally used socio-economic factors, but in applying them we may also hide another interpretation: that there may be reality which is common for children irrespective of their children’s backgrounds” (Qvortrup, 1997: 381)

Hence, this concept of childhood as a stage in itself and structure in society highlights the importance of having studies at macro level rather than at micro level which are beneficial to the policy development for children, in general. Because policies are made at macro-level for all the children, therefore, one needs to strive for providing information about children’s lived experiences and finding commonalities between them, after all, the children are shaped by their structural, economic and cultural circumstances.

I agree with Qvorturp’s (2000) argument that childhood sociological research is concerned with finding commonalities among children, and as mentioned earlier such studies have an important

implication for policies and programs designed at a large scale. However, these commonalities should be based on the context in which children live. Therefore, I have decided to conduct my study of well-being in a slum area of Pakistan as children living in those areas experience life in a different way which cannot be counted as equivalent to someone living in a developed country such as Norway or Canada, or even in a slum area in any developed country.

#### **4.1.1.2. Children's Rights**

The United Nations's Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) is one of the most ratified and adopted convention by states. This document has been used as a frame of reference by policy makers, NGOs, civil society representatives and child researchers to assert children's right as citizens.

Children are defined as individuals, rights bearers and active contributors exercising their rights within the context of their families and community. Core principles that should govern our relationships with children include fairness, equality and respect for children's integrity, identity, dignity, views and privacy. The UNCRC states that children have rights to protection (from abuse, harm and exploitation), provision (of services, guidance, information and support) and participation (including involvement in decision making, social and cultural life, freedom of expression, thought, conscience, religion, association and respect for identity) (Alderson, 2008). The significance of the UNCRC lies in the fact that it has taken out children from the domestic arena and brought them forward in the public arena which places a different set of obligations on all adults in their relationships with children as co-citizens and bearers of rights. However, the question that whether recognition of children as citizens will contribute to their empowerment as social actors and to enhance their well-being and quality of life still needs to answered (Kjorholt, 2008).

United Nations Convention on the Rights of Child, promote the notion of 'listening' to children's voices through their right to participation: "the modern children's rights movement is distinctive in its emphasis on the child's participation and perspective and the emergence of a number of relatively new organizations to advance their rights" (Foley et al, 2003:109)

The articles 12 of CRC, in particular, states that:

States Parties shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with age and maturity of the child ...

The article 27 of Convention of the Rights of Child states that: “State parties recognize the right of every child to a standard of living adequate for the child’s physical, mental, spiritual, moral and social development”.

This point is further strengthened by one of the articles of Agenda 21:

‘The needs of children and youth, particularly with regard to their living environment, have to be taken fully into account. Special attention needs to be paid to the participatory processes dealing with the shaping of cities, towns and neighborhoods; this is in order to secure the living conditions of children and of youth and to make use of their insight, creativity and thought on environment’.

These global policy frameworks are one of the most ratified documents which support the participatory development and creation of sustainable living environments. This asserts the legitimacy of children and young people’s participation in the development process- like other groups of communities. It is not only a way of reaching meaningful development but also contributes towards social transformation in communities. In this way, the conventions lay explicit emphasis on well-being as a key to realising the child’s rights (Camfield, et al, 2009).

The four general principles of CRC: non-discrimination, best interest of the child, survival and development and respecting the view of children provided a better understanding of the conceptualization of children’s well-being. This view of children as citizens and right bearers has helped shaping the child indicators movement in many important ways. It highlighted importance of children on the policy agenda thus calling for more data and research about their lives and well-being. Secondly, CRC calls for a mechanism of monitoring and reporting the situation of child rights which entails development of new indicators. Finally, it has a broader view of children’s lives which demands indicators in the areas and domains which were not given due attention before the development of CRC (Ben-Arieh, 2008). This thesis could be seen as an attempt to explore the domain of well-being and contribute towards the development of indicators of child well being by asserting children’s right to participation.

#### **4.1.2. Development of Child Well-being indicators**

The field of child well-being measurement and monitoring is going through evolution with accompanying changes in the policy focuses and research with children. Ben Arieh (2008) proposed four major changes in the field of child well-being based on their analysis of state of the children reports and some other events. These four changes are: well-being beyond survival, moving from deficiency to capability, from well-becoming to well-being and evolution of new domains of measuring child well-being.

This study builds upon the aforementioned four shifts in the field of child well-being and aims to involve children in the well-being studies to identify and describe indicators to measure their well-being. These four points are discussed as follows:

##### **4.1.2.1. Well-being beyond Survival**

In past children's well-being was measured in terms of child mortality rates, school enrollment, immunization etc. Yet these indicators neither provide much information about the quality of children's lives nor about their experiences. Nor do they inform us about the emotional growth and development of children. Therefore, it was a major change when focus of the indicators moved beyond survival to include a broader meaning of well-being. In 1990's many researchers argued that it is about time to move beyond the basic needs of development and highlighted the need for indicators and actions further than survival in order to promote child and youth development (Aber and Jones, 1997; Pittman and Irby, 1997).

Pittman and Irby (1997: 242) argue that 'successful adolescence and successful adulthood is based on positive development in number of key areas: safety and structure; membership and belonging; self worth/contribution; mastery and sense of purpose; responsibility and independence/ interdependence; and self awareness and spirituality. This is not an exhaustive list but a reflection about qualitative measures that may entail when we talk about 'quality life'. These efforts were fruitful and resulted in expansion of indices to shift efforts which are now directed towards better understanding of what is meant by 'quality life' for children and its implications for them (Casas, 2000; Hubner, 2004). However, this is not to undermine the importance of measuring children survival since it is very much needed especially in developing and least developed countries but it argues to broaden the scope of measuring and monitoring

child well-being to become more aware of the disparities that exist between different groups of children.

#### **4.1.2.2. Moving from Deficiency to Capability**

This point is based on the postulate that the absence of problems and failures do not necessarily indicate a good growth and success (Ben-Arieh, 2005; Moore et al. 2004) and the absence of risk factors are not the same as presence of protective factors (Abner and Jones, 1997).

Ben Arieh (2008) argue that emphasis on the negative indicators without any contextual information has led to speculation about causal factors and may lead to blame and punishment and may ignore the core issue. This kind of politicization fails to address the real interest of children. Pittman and Irby (1997) observe that the real challenge is to develop indicators which hold societies and adults accountable for the well-being of children which goes beyond the mere survival of children. They further argue that child development needs to be defined and understood as both a product of and a contributor to family, community, and economic development.

Therefore, attention is being focused on presence of positive indicators to measure child's well-being rather than just focusing on the negative ones. Resnick (1995: 3) states that "children's well-being indicators are on the move from concentrating only on trends of dying, distress, disability, and discomfort to tackling the issue of indicators of sparkle, satisfaction and well-being".

Abner and Jones (1997) suggest that the difficulty in developing positive indicators for children's well-being is partly due to our lack of agreement about what 'positive development' for children looks like. That is why it is important to involve children in defining a positive development or a good life and coming up with positive indicators. However, we should keep in mind that child's positive outcomes are not static and are a productive various positive and risk factors surrounding them which include their parents, family, friends and wider society. These factors change constantly and so does the capacity of children with reference to their age, agency and capability to mediate with the different factors surrounding them (Ben Arieh, 2008). Antonovsky (1987) describes this process in his concept of salutogenesis in which he suggests that people move on a continuum between health and disease, balancing stress and resources.

Similarly, children move on the continuum of positive to risk factors and mediate and influence the power structures in society.

#### **4.1.2.3. From Well-becoming to Well-being**

Children's well becoming is more oriented towards their future and development as an adult while well-being refers to the present experiences of children and their quality of life in the here-and-now. Qvortrup (1997:101) argues that "the conventional preoccupation with the so-called 'next generation' is, however, basically a preoccupation with adults, which is not wrong as such; as a student of childhood, however, I dare venture an interest as well for present childhood as well as future childhood". Similarly, Richard de Lones argues that children are instrumentalized by the forward looking perspective in the sense that their 'good life' is postponed to adulthood and until they reach that stage, as children they have opportunities rather than provisions" (De Lone 1997 cited in Ben Arieh et al 2001).

There has been a long debate about these two concepts of well-being and well becoming which, although seems to be contrary, are actually complementary to each other. Ben Arieh et al. (2001) argues that although the measuring and monitoring of child's well-being is gradually shifting and should shift to the study of children's everyday lives and lived experiences does not mean that we should exclude the forward-looking view of the next generation. Children themselves demonstrate an interest in the provision of resources and services such as education and health which will maximize their future choices. Fronès (2009: 32) states that "the present shapes the future, and the images of the future influence the present". Certain aspects of children's lives like citizenship and rights are dominated by present while other aspects such as education and development are useful to see how the present influence the future. This means any model of well-being which emphasize one aspect more than the other will affect the policies which would miss out the social position of children (Ben Arieh et al. 2009).

Ben Arieh et al (2001) further argue that both perspectives of children's well-being and well becoming are equally important, and legitimate and are necessary for social sciences and public policy. But since the focus on perspectives which highlight the well-being of children has not been highlighted, there is a space for developing new measures and indicators for child well-being. This new perspective has added new vigour to the addition of child centered perspective

to the measuring and monitoring of child well-being and has introduced new ideas to the child well-being indicator movement.

#### **4.1.2.4. Evolution of New Dimensions**

The new dimensions of child wellbeing include studying children's understanding of poverty, their activities and culture (Ben Arieh et al. 2001). It can be argued that these 'new' domains are more child centered and inter-disciplinary than their predecessors cut across various services (Ben Arieh and Frones, 2008).

#### **4.1.3. Recent domains of Child Well-being**

The above discussion shows that child well-being indicators are increasingly becoming important for monitoring the status of children and its implications for the future policies. Andrews and Ben-Arieh (1999) assert that in order to do comprehensive studies about children well-being, it should not only include various domains of their lives but should also strive to include various sub groups of children especially those living in difficult circumstances such as war, natural disasters, minorities and indigenous populations etc.

Ben Arieh et al. (2001) have come up with five new domains of measuring children's well-being as a result of the evolution of the well-being indicators. These domains are responsive and oriented towards child rights as well as their development. They are based on the perspective that children's lives are worth being study in its own and more information is needed about their participation in the society. These domains are: children's activities, economic resources and contribution, social life skills, personal life skills and protection.

##### **4.1.3.1. Children's Activities**

Children are active citizens who participate in work, play, family and community life and other activities just like adults; however, the context and meaning of those activities might differ depending on the age and socio-cultural surrounding of the child. Some activities of the children which have been studied extensively are those related to the perspective of 'well becoming', for example schooling. Updated information about children's activities is not available in many countries. Ennew (1994) highlights that there has been little research showing the patterns of children's everyday life which affect their well-being.

Ben Arieh et al. (2001) draw our attention to the fact that children are active as members in their families, among peers and community groups; in social institutions such as schools, playgrounds etc.; as consumers and as users and creators of information networks and media. They propose that indicators in this domain must be related to the extent of engagement in different activities, the nature of those activities, places in which those activities occur and children's perceptions of their value and contribution in their lives. Also, this data would be useful in providing comparative information about daily activities of children belonging to different groups based on their age, gender, ethnicity, social class, special needs etc. This information would be essential to understanding the well-being of children and preparing and planning better policies for them.

#### **4.1.3.2. Economic Resources and Contributions**

Children are not just passive recipients of resources but they also contribute towards the economic growth as well. Their activities whether it is schooling, help in the household or as labour influences the economic system. It is not just limited to that, the economic conditions and system also impacts the lives of children. However, they are only few policy arenas which explicitly focus on childhood while there is no child neutral policy at the macroeconomics level (De Vylder, 1998).

Ben Arieh et al. (2001) emphasize two dimensions of macroeconomic developments, one is expenditure on children that is how much government, families and other social institutions spend on children and the other one is child poverty which means which resources are available to children and how much freedom do they have to utilize those resources. This thesis is more concerned with the concept of poverty and child poverty as an indicator for the measuring of child well-being.

Child poverty in developed countries is largely conceived of in terms of income. However, there are two conceptual issues with this definition. First the measure is not child-specific. Although children are affected by the household income, material condition is not the only thing that affects their quality of life. Secondly, not all people in a poor household might be as poor: it actually depends on the intra-household allocation. Thus, we need to take into account the generational distribution of income among the family members (White, Leavy and Masters 2003).



Income-poverty data refer to the number of children living in poor households, rather than the number of children living in poverty. If poverty is defined solely in terms of income, then economic growth will appear to be the best poverty-reduction policy, provided of course there is no deterioration in income distribution. Maintaining a broad conception of welfare matters since: (1) people value things besides material well-being; (2) material well-being is only imperfectly correlated with other aspects of well-being; (3) policy choices depend on which dimensions are prioritised; and (4) the different dimensions of poverty reinforce one another (Cornia and Danziger, 1997 cited in White et al. 2003: 381)

The development literature stresses the importance of adopting a ‘multidimensional’ view of poverty; that is, poverty is measured not just with respect to lack of income, but also directly with respect to basic needs such as health, education, nutrition and shelter. Broader definitions encompass security and ‘empowerment’, meaning control over one’s own life, which may be defined in various ways (e.g. political participation at either national or local level). McCulloch and Joshi’s (1999) analysis of child poverty and child well-being in the UK finds that ‘parental competence’ plays an important role independent of income, a finding that fits well with Sen’s argument of the importance of capability (Sen 1999).

Child welfare indicators are different from the ‘standard’ poverty indicators, since they need to reflect the special position of children. That is, we require child-specific poverty measures, which may not be the same as the measures used for adults. Indeed, the indicators used are likely to be age specific, and so not the same for different age groups. From a rights perspective, measures are needed that reflect the things that matter most to children.

#### **4.1.3.3. Social Life Skills**

This domain of child wellbeing indicators is focused on the social and civic skills of children. According to Ben-Arieh et al. (2001) children develop social relations and responsibilities at a very early age. They start with participation and cooperation in family and among friends and peers and the limited community they have. However, they expand these skills and participation in the society with the expansion in their capabilities. Indicators in this domain should include the extent to which children acquire and exercise their self expression, their participation in legal and social activities, knowledge about their own rights and respect for the rights of others (Torney-Purta, 1999).

Children's right to participate in matters affecting them is one of the most important rights. They should be accepted as active in construction and determination of their own social lives, the lives of those around them and of the societies in which they live. They are not just the passive subjects of social structures and processes but are active agents (James and Prout, 1990). Children's social skills and involvement are important in contributing to children's sense of self in a positive way. This domain is not only useful for children's well-being but also for their well-becoming.

#### **4.1.3.4. Personal Life Skills**

Personal life skills are sometimes defined as adaptive and positive behaviors to deal effectively with challenges of everyday life. This domain is variable according to different cultures and societies, age groups and gender differences among children. Different individuals use personal life skills to respond to different challenges and opportunities in life differently. Their competence of life skills supports them in enhancing their own well-being. But it should be kept in mind that a children's capacity to learn or use life skills is affected by several factors, including their perceptions and abilities. Nevertheless, the environmental factors also affect the personal life skills of a child in a positive or negative manner. Therefore, the indicators of children's personal life skills must include perceptual, behavioral, and environmental measures. Emotional and behavioral skills, for example, coping skills to overcome adversity and resilience etc. are important as well as important indicators of children's well being and so are the practicing of socially responsible behavior such as sexual responsibility and resistance to alcohol or other drug abuse and avoiding crime (Ben-Arieh et al. 2001).

#### **4.1.3.5. Safety and Protection**

Safety of children has been a basic indicator to measure and monitor the well-being of children. It is somewhat related to the survival of children because a child who is not safe will not develop in an optimal way and in worst cases may not survive. Safety of children encompasses the protection of children from physical and emotional harm which include physical and sexual abuse, substance abuse etc. Research with children and young people reveal that they are concerned about their safety. Many children live in difficult and threatening circumstances due to family violence, community violence, sexual exploitation, war and civil conflict, or their institutionalization, homelessness, or refugee status. Although survival of children is not

irrelevant to their well-being since millions of children in the world are still fighting for their mere survival (Ben –Arieh et. al 2001).

The historical development and evolution in studying child well-being provides a useful background and lens for this study starting from the social studies of childhood and child rights discourse to the major shifts in child well-being indicators and evolution of recent domains of indicators such as children’s activities, economic contributions, and social and personal life skills. It highlights the importance of the evolving new domains and dimensions to measure the well-being of the children with time. It is about time that we move a step forward and promote involvement of children in the studies and process of measuring and monitoring their well-being in the context in which they live.

#### **4.2. Children’s Well-being and Capability Approach**

The child well being indicator movement has now incorporated child centered indicators, taking up Sen’s approach which takes into account an individual’s functioning, capabilities and agency to achieve the living standard which they value. Sen argues for measures that reflect the life a person is actually living rather than the resources or means a person may have available (Sen 1997). Thus applying his approach to assess the living conditions emphasize the need to focus on child as the unit of analysis rather than household or community (Ben-Arieh et al. 2001).

This thesis is influenced by the capability approach as put forth by Amartya Sen because it argues for looking at well-being in a broader way rather than just in monetary terms. This approach to development is inclined towards the approach which expands what people are able to do and be, which could be referred to as their real freedoms (Sen 1999).

##### **4.2.1. Describing the Capability Approach**

The capability approach is a broad normative framework for the evaluation and assessment of individual well-being and social arrangements, the design of policies, and proposals about social change in society. It can also be used as an alternative evaluative tool for social cost–benefit analysis, or as a framework within which to design and evaluate policies, ranging from welfare state design in affluent societies, to development policies by governments and non-governmental organizations in developing countries. However, it should be noted that the capability approach is not a theory that can provide an explanation for poverty, inequality or well-being in a society;

instead, it provides a tool and a framework within which the aforementioned phenomena can be conceptualized and evaluated (Robeyns, 2006).

According to Cohen (1993: 7) the four main points which support the capability approach are:

1. The capability approach captures the intuitively attractive idea that people should be equal with respect to effective freedom and so has some initial plausibility.
2. Because it is attentive to the fact that preferences and values are sometimes adaptive, it compares favorably with views that focus on “subjective” achievements.
3. Because it is attentive to the issues of responsibility and diversity of aims, it contrasts favourably with views that focus on achievements, however they are understood.
4. Because it is attentive to diversity in abilities to transform means into achievements, it is preferable to views that focus on equality of means.

The core characteristic of the capability approach is its focus on what people are effectively able to do and to be; that is, on their capabilities. Sen argues that policies should focus on what people are able to do and be, on the quality of their life, and on removing obstacles in their lives so that they have more freedom to live the kind of life that, upon reflection, they have reason to value (Robeyns, 2006). Also, well being is influenced not only by economic factors such as money or commodities, but also non-economic factors such as family relations, friendships, beliefs, self perception and so on (Gasper, 2005).

#### **4.2.1.1. Functionings and Capabilities**

Sen presents two main concepts which are distinct component of this approach: capabilities and functionings.

- a) Functionings are defined as ‘the various things a person may value doing or being’ (Sen 1999: 75). Functionings are activities and states which make up people’s well-being. For example, being education, having a good job, healthy and well nourished. These functionings are related to goods and income but also describe what a person is able to do or be with these.
- b) Capability is defined as ‘the various combinations of functionings (beings and doings) that the person can achieve. Capability is, thus, a set of vectors of functionings, reflecting the person’s freedom to lead one type of life or another... to choose from possible

livings' (Sen, 1992: 40). Thus, capabilities are 'the substantive freedoms one enjoys to lead the kind she has reason to value' (Sen, 1999: 87).

The distinction between achieved functionings and capabilities is between the realized and the effectively possible; in other words, between achievements on the one hand, and freedoms or valuable options from which one can choose on the other. What is ultimately important is that people have the freedoms or valuable opportunities (capabilities) to lead the kind of lives they want to lead, to do what they want to do and be the person they want to be. Once they effectively have these substantive opportunities, they can choose those options that they value most.

For some of these capabilities, the main input will be financial resources and economic production, but for others it can also be political practices and institutions, such as the effective guaranteeing and protection of freedom of thought, political participation, social or cultural practices, social structures, social institutions, public goods, social norms, traditions and habits. The capability approach thus covers all dimensions of human well-being.

Hence, knowing the goods a person owns or can use is not sufficient to know which functionings he/she can achieve; therefore we need to know much more about the person and the circumstances in which he/she is living. The capability approach thus takes account of human diversity in two ways: by its focus on the plurality of functionings and capabilities as the evaluative space, and by the explicit focus on personal and socio-environmental conversion factors of commodities into functionings, and on the whole social and institutional context that affects the conversion factors and also the capability set directly.

#### **4.2.2. Development as Freedom**

The notion of capability is also related to that of freedom. It is defined by Sen (1992: 31) as 'the real opportunity that we have to accomplish what we value'. According to him, freedom has two aspects: opportunity and process. The aspect of opportunity focuses on the 'ability of the person to achieve those things that she has reason to value', while the process aspect is about 'the freedom involved in the process itself' (Sen, 2002:10).

Another important concept in the capability approach is that of agency which is related to the personal process of freedom. Agency refers to a person's ability to pursue and realize goals that

she values and has reason to value. And an agent is ‘someone who acts and brings about change’ (Sen, 1999: 19). The concept of agency is useful ‘in assessing what a person can do in line with his or her conception of the good’ (Sen, 1985: 206). Agency is related to other approaches that emphasize self determination, authentic self direction, autonomy, self reliance, empowerment and so one. The collective desire for agency highlight the importance of development processes which foster participation, public debate and democratic practice (Deneulin and Shahani, 2009).

### **4.3. Well-being in a Context**

People’s capabilities cannot be enhanced through the acquisition of goods and services. There are other means that function as ‘inputs’ in the creation or expansion of capabilities, such as social institutions broadly defined. The material and non-material circumstances that shape people’s opportunity sets, and the circumstances that influence the choices that people make from the capability set, should receive a central place in capability evaluations. For example, both Sen and Nussbaum have paid much attention to the social norms and traditions that form women’s preferences, and that influence their aspirations and their effective choices (Sen, 1990; Nussbaum, 2000). The capability approach not only advocates an evaluation of people’s capability sets, but insists also that we need to scrutinize the context in which economic production and social interactions take place, and whether the circumstances in which people choose from their opportunity sets are enabling and just.

A focus on functionings and capabilities does not have to imply that a capability analysis would not pay any attention to resources, or the evaluation of social institutions, economic growth, technical advancement, and so forth. While functionings and capabilities are of ultimate normative concern, other dimensions can be important as well. In summary, all the means of well-being, like the availability of commodities, social institutions, and so forth, are important, but the capability approach presses the point that they are not the ultimate ends of well-being.

### **4.4. Way forward for Child Well-being Indicators**

Theories of child well-being and movement of child well-being indicators show a positive advancement towards the development of child-centered indicators to measure and monitor children’s well being. However, there is a concern that these measures may not be applicable to children and young people as they are predominantly developed through research on adults

(Fattore et al. 2007). Another concern raised by Fattore et al. (2007: 12) is that “the potential of subjective well-being measures to take into account children’s own experiences and the complexities of their lives has not yet been realized..... Ultimately, we do not really know whether the domains and measures identified by adult researchers are meaningful to children”.

Drawing on children’s perspectives, this study seeks to not only explore children’s experiences of life in slums in Pakistan but also develop ideas regarding what constitutes good life. The various dimensions of well-being that the children themselves chose to focus upon reveal both the subjective aspects of well-being; and how their perspectives is congruent with and departs from conventional indicators of well-being. This is important because any intervention that has the aim of improving children’s quality of life need to incorporate on how children hold certain views perspectives about their lives in the here-and-now as well as what the future should hold for them. In this sense this thesis aims to combine the perspectives from childhood studies on childhood as a unit of analysis, and how it is important to listen to their views and opinions.

## Chapter 5

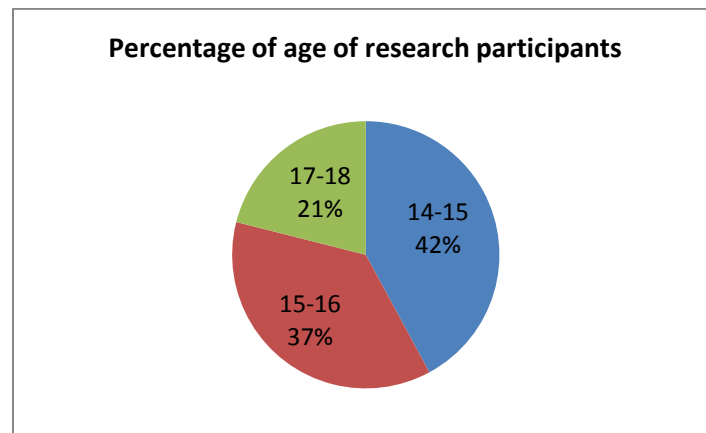
### Presentation of the research participants

In this chapter, I present information about the research participants and the context in which they lived. This chapter is different from the background chapter in that it focuses more on the research participants and their lived experiences rather than on a general description of their profiles and area of residence. In my opinion it is important because we need to see well-being of children in their context and lived experiences although this cannot be generalized for all children. In this sense it maintains the concept of ‘childhoods’ rather than just ‘childhood’. The first section presents the basic profiles of the research participants. Then I will present their daily lives which can provide an insight about their lives and what they think about it. The last section will focus on the context or their residential area as experienced by them.

#### 5.1. Profile of the Research Participants

The research included 19 participants: 10 girls and 9 boys. These children participated in interviews, group discussions and guided tours of the community. All the children in this study knew their correct age since all of them were going to school or went to school earlier in the life as in some cases and for that they need a birth certificate to prove their age for admission.

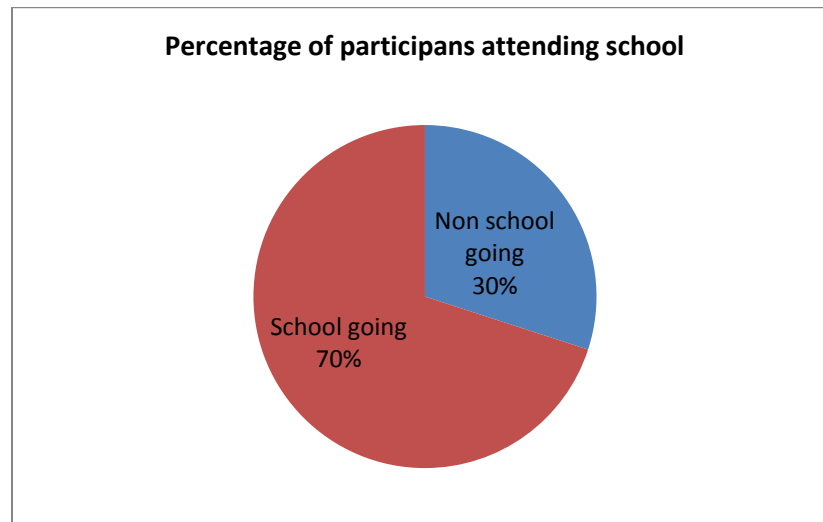
They were all adolescents aged between 14 to 18 years. Adolescence is an important developmental milestone in many respects which includes but is not limited to physical, psychological, social, cognitive and spiritual aspects of one’s life.





### 5.1.1. Education

Education was considered important in the community, which will be discussed more in the later chapter. The following chart shows that 70% of the research participants were attending schools. Among rest of the 30% most of them had completed their high school education except for one boy and a girl who had dropped out after finishing their primary school. This decision was based on their personal choice rather than any constraint from the families. Their families actually wanted them to continue schooling but the children did not want to go to school for one reason or the other. The children in this study were friends both in and out of school (since they attended the same school) and spent most of the time together.



### 5.1.2. Family Background and Parent's Employment

I had a prior knowledge that almost all people living in the colony have migrated from other areas of Pakistan, mainly small villages in Punjab. So I asked the children about where their parents come from. Most of the children that I interviewed told me that their parents or grandparents came from Narowal or some small village near Sialkot. This indicated that these families had some relationship among themselves. This relationship ranged from being members of the same family, extended family to belonging to same caste and village. Some of them reported to have lived in another colony before moving to this one.

As mentioned in the background, slums in Islamabad were created by the working class and people belonging to the lower economic status. Lower economic professions are considered as

less prestigious. Due to this, I noticed that sometimes the children were not comfortable telling me about their parent's profession.

*Anja: Both of my parents work. I don't know what my father does and my mother works as house help.*

*Sara: My mother is a housewife and my father has his own business..... (upon my asking about the business she told reluctantly) ... he has a 'taal' (a place for buying and selling recycled material)*

At times, they told me that their father works in CDA (Capital Development Authority, Islamabad) and that was it. It was taken for granted that they occupy some lower grade. After that I stopped asking about the profession. However, we did discuss if one or both of their parents worked and the rest was up to them if they wanted to tell me what they did. Some of the fathers worked as cleaners or driver in CDA, private guards etc. while the mothers worked in houses as household helpers.

*Rachel: I see my parents working in other people's houses. I think that if they were educated then they would have better jobs and would not need to work in people's houses.*

*Me: Do you think that your parents have a difficult life?*

*Rachel: When one has peace at home then life is good. They work hard but they have a peaceful home to come back to at night.*

The children in that I interviewed may not liked that their mothers work outside the house but at the same time they understood that in the current economic situation<sup>13</sup> it is important to have more earning hands in the family. The point is highlighted by the following chart which shows that more than 50% of the children had both parents working to earn a living.

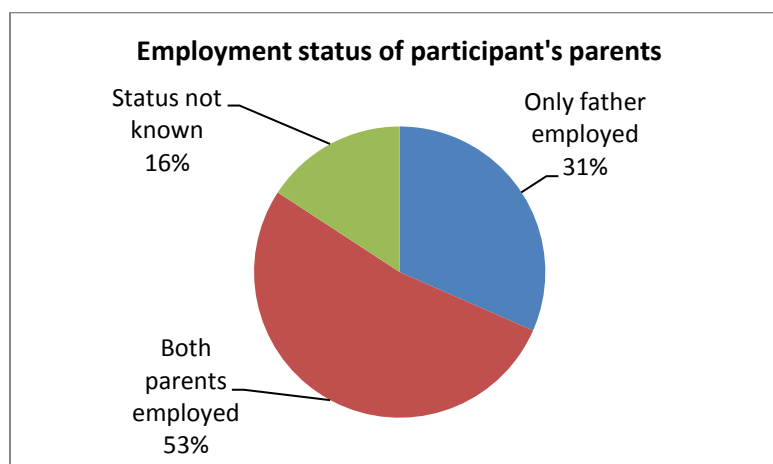
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<sup>13</sup> The current economic situation in Pakistan is difficult to the political instability, terrorism and other internal conflicts. The inflation rates are high while people have low incomes, also the gap between rich and poor is huge.

*Hannah: I don't like it at all (that my mother works). When others come back from school or college their house work is done and food is prepared. I don't like it that she works in other people's houses. I want her to stay at home but we need money as well.*

Children appreciated that their parents worked hard to raise them up. But it was girls that mentioned mostly that they will give all their earning to the parents. In traditional Pakistani families children earn and give their income to the parents as they are responsible for running the management of the family and house. But boys sometimes deviate from this norm; they contribute in the family budget but they may not hand over their whole earning. It could be because they have an outer social circle of friends and need money to maintain that. While girls spend their time in house and has limited social circle. This could be because of the social expectation from girls to be more confirming to the familial norms as opposed to the boys who are expected to be deviant and have freedom to make their own decisions.

They mentioned professions such as teachers, doctor, nurses which are traditionally considered prestigious but also gender specific professions for women in Pakistani society. This in a way indicated that they followed the gender norms and rules of the society in which girls are subordinated and have specific roles which are confined mostly in the four walls of the house. However, this does not imply that they agreed with and did not want those to change.



### **5.1.3. Daily lives of Children**

I observed that the day of children participating in this study was strictly divided into hours and activities. Most of these activities were related to their schooling and education, however, they

did take out an hour or so from their routine to socialize with friends and it was during that time I talked to them as well.

*Me: What do you do every day?*

*Natasha: I get up at 7:00 a.m. Wash my face and take my breakfast. Then I get ready for school and walk to school with my friends. I come back from school around 2:00 p.m. I come to the center and meet my friends. I go back to my home around 4:00 p.m. and clean my house. Afterwards I go for tuition at 5:00 p.m. I come back from tuition sometime around 7:30 p.m. I take my dinner, watch some TV and then go to bed.*

Drawing on the interviews and my observation, I was able to gather information about how average school going girls spend their daily lives. It was very much filled with activities related to education. They had to do house work as well because their mothers worked outside the house, so the girls were suppose to do it. While some girls did not like to do it others enjoyed doing it. It was very important for them to keep the house clean for the guests. Although they did not have permission to stay out of the house for long but since they were relatives or belonged to the same village, it was easier for them to go to each other's homes. These findings somehow confirmed the ascribed gender roles in society in which girls were supposed to be responsible for the household work. I noticed that in that respect boys had a different daily routine.

*Robert: I get up at 8:00 a.m. and get ready for school. I take my breakfast and walk with my friends and other boys to school. After school I come back and finish my homework. Then I go up to the road to play cricket. After that I come home, eat my dinner and go to bed.*

Some boys went for tuition as well. Tuition is now considered as an important component of children's education by parents and those who can afford send their children for extra help with homework. Boys had almost the same routine life as girls except for that they did not participate in the house work and had more time to go out and play with friends. During holidays boys could spend the whole day on the road playing cricket.

Boys who did not go to school spent their whole day playing cricket and girls doing the house work. Most of the children found their routine life dull and boring and wanted some change to it.

The rest were satisfied with what they had and thought ‘*there is no more to life*’. But what they wanted to change in their lives depended on their circumstances. Girls wanted to change their lives and have more freedom while boys wanted to have some responsibility in their lives.

*Sean: There should be a change in our lives. For example, we don’t have a routine of studying every day. We study only during exams. During regular days, we either go and play cricket or stand together in streets.*

When asked about what makes them happy, they told that religious festivals such as Christmas and Easter, and weddings made them happy. It was mainly because they got an opportunity to socialize with each other especially the children from opposite gender. They did not go out of the colony that often but on public holidays they went with their families for small picnics in nearby parks and monuments.

## **5.2. Slum – As Seen By Children**

After my first few meetings with the girls I proposed that they could show me their colony. I only knew the street where I met the girls and it was close to the entrance of the colony. This street was narrow and usually wet with water coming from people’s homes. Girls were excited to take me around. Later they told me that most of them had not seen the whole colony themselves, so it was an opportunity for them to explore as well.

They had a name for almost all the streets and these names were based on either the caste of majority of people living there or some person who was famous in the colony for some reason such as president of Community Based Organisation, alcohol dealer or their friend. They also showed me the houses of boys who would participate in the research. They were so confident and socialized with almost all of the people in those streets. It seemed like one big extended family to me. At every step they met an uncle or an aunt who would invite me for tea. Girls were happy to show me their streets but then one of them proposed to show me the garbage drums. Since the garbage drums were on the main road outside the colony, they did not want to go there. They told me that there are usually people standing in groups on the road and they stare at passing by girls. This made them feel uncomfortable and hence they avoided going there.

*Natasha: Come let us show you the 'naala' (rain drainage)*

*Michelle: No, there is no need to go there.*

But we all walked towards the other side to see the *naala*. Some girls complained about the place being so dirty. Then we walked in streets further down from where the girls lived. We passed the shops and one of those was a games shop where there were many boys. This shop was mentioned as a nuisance in the colony especially by girls because there are always many boys in that shop. These boys fight among themselves, use abusive language and comment on passing by girls. I could feel that the girls were not confident any more as much they were in their 'own area'.

*Hannah: We have never been here in this street only when we were young.*

We walked in a circle and came back to the *naala* and then back to girl's center. The girls told me that they feel happy to back in their own streets and very peaceful since other streets were very noisy with the children playing around and adults standing or sitting in the streets.

While girls were enthusiastic to show me around, boys were reluctant to take me for a guided tour. It was mainly because of the gender segregation in the society in general. Still they took me out for a tour of their colony because girls had done the same. They were willing to do everything that the girls had done from group discussions to the guided tour. So we crossed the main street where they showed me the games shop. They were ambivalent towards it. They disliked it because boys get into fights and use abusive language which is not considered appropriate for the children and families living around the shop. We met another boy on the way and included him in our tour. They told me that they know everyone here. We went to the main road where they play cricket. After that we went to an open space which they called a garden. Although I did not see it as a garden since it had no flowers or grass but was just an open piece of land. It was very important for the children, both girls and boys, because this place was used for community functions and was decorated over Christmas. Boys called it '*love garden*' because they come here to attend mobile calls from their girlfriends. As it is a strictly gender segregated society boys and girls have to make clandestine arrangements to talk and meet each other. They showed me a big house which was considered as the best in the colony. For me it was just a three storied plain house but most of the children took it as a standard and

wanted to have a house like that. Then we came to the *naala*. They told me that they have never been here even when they were young. It came as a surprise to me since I expected them to go everywhere in the colony. After that we came back to the boy's center from where we had started earlier.

When I asked them to describe their area, they told me that their colony has paved streets and that it is cleaner than most of the other colonies. They do not have problem of drug addicts. Almost all people living here belong to the same religion and share same villages. They have everything from shops to tailors and these are very accessible. All these things made it a nice place to live. One of the girls described it as:

*Mary: Our colony is the best. If you go to other colonies then you would know. They are such dirty places that you would not even want to walk through those streets and there are boys standing at every corner. Our colony is cleaner than those. Before Christmas we went in all streets to clean. People asked us what we were doing. We told them that your children get sick because of lack of cleanliness and also Christmas is approaching. After that people helped us in cleaning too.*

Another important point mentioned by girls was that they had freedom to move, for example, they could go to their friend's houses. But they only had freedom to go their friend's houses in the colony as they were not only friends but relatives too. Boys told me that only in this street (where most of the girl research participants lived) girls have freedom to go out in the colony. They also liked that there were many churches in the colony and that people shared the same religion. It made them feel good and secure in many ways especially during Christmas and Easter.

On the counter side, they did not like that people throw garbage in the *naala* and in some streets. They did not keep the place clean which was very important for them. They complained about games and alcohol dealers in the community. Boys felt pressured by the older peers who forced them to join in drinking too while they do not want to do it. Also, they think that because of these dealers everyone outside the colony thinks of them as alcoholics. Another thing that all the children in this study mentioned in their interviews and group discussions was the vegetable

seller whom none of them liked. He was seen as a total nuisance and they wanted him to go away from the colony.

*Sean: He is not nice. He stares at passing by girls and women and sing cheap songs. He has a bad language and abuses everyone and everything even food and tea. Whenever he sees a girl outside of her house he reports it to her parents. We don't like him.*

I asked them why their colony is called a 'kachi abadi' (slum)? To which they had similar answers. Most of them said that it is called *kachi abadi* because people are used to calling this colony by this name. But none them agreed that it was a slum area.

*Michelle: Look at our houses... do they look 'kachay' (temporary).*

Girls told that they feel angry when someone calls it a 'kachi abadi' while boys disagreed with it being a *kachi abadi* but they did not expressed it openly.

*Michelle: I don't understand why people call it a 'kachi abadi'. Perhaps these are not quarters that is why they call it that. Everyone has built nice houses now. I get angry when they call it a 'kachi abadi' in my school. Once my teacher wrote 'kachi abadi' on the bus card instead of my address. I tore it right away.... Look at my house! Does it looks as if I live in a kachi abadi?*

Another girl told me that:

*Hannah: I think people find it a strange place because here houses are not properly constructed as government quarters across the road. Once my friend said that it is a colony of sweepers. I told her to visit the colony sometime and I will show her how sweepers look like. Then she apologized. She was dark skinned herself.*

In local Pakistani society, Christians are generally supposed to be dark skinned however this is not always the case. In this case Hannah had a fairer skin, therefore, she commented to her friend to visit the colony so that she could relate herself to them.

For the children, a *kachi abadi* or slum area was one which had temporary houses, unpaved streets and no basic facilities such as electricity, gas and water. It was not only that the houses were not good enough in slums but also people did not have education and there were drugs and



other crimes. This confirms with the normative definitions of the slums which are considered as a social evil which emerge as a result of urbanization.

*Andrew: Kachi abadi has mud houses like in a village and has buffaloes and other animals. Also it has no dispensaries and very few shops.*

I told him that there are buffaloes here too. But he replied that two buffaloes do not count, there has to be more of these to qualify as a 'kachi abadi'. It was interesting to note that most of the children wanted to live in the colony even if they were provided with an opportunity to move out of the colony.

*Samantha: We were born here. All my friends and relatives live here.*

*Andrew: I will stay in this colony. I have been living since beginning. I get homesick and miss my friends if I visit some relative's place.*

The children in this study liked their street best in the whole colony. However, they wanted to improve their environment both physical and social. They wanted to remove all the garbage and *naala* from the colony as it was not good for their health and was dangerous for the children who could fall in the *naala*. They also wanted people to become educated and open-minded so that everyone could exercise their freedom to choose the things they would like to do.

### **5.3. Reflections**

Children's viewpoints made me look at the slums in a different perspective. It was no more about the legal status or physical characteristic of the community and social aspects of crime rates and drugs. They showed me that it was not a slum area as it would be according to the mainstream definitions of the slums. This area was a permanent residential area, which although seen by their neighbours in a different light, was not an evil site or a hub of crimes more than the rest of the city.

## Chapter 6

### Data Presentation and Interpretation

This chapter is based on the interviews, group discussions and informal interviews conducted to explore the perspectives of good life and well being among the children which participated in the research. The first section presents the overall views of the children in this study about a good life, and the following section attempts to merge these opinions and perspectives in some overarching dimensions and domains.

#### 6.1. Perspectives of Well-being

*“I have a good life. I am happy with my life...”* this is how most of the children responded when we started to talk about a good life. They seemed to be satisfied with whatever they received and their life mainly ran around school, home and their community. But as we had more meetings together they started to open up and shared more about themselves, their lives and perceptions about a good and bad or difficult life, their sad and happy moments and what they wished for to change in their lives. I realized that it was not a straight forward path to find out what they consider as a good life, since there was contradiction in their description of things needed for a good life. For example, they wanted ‘freedom’ but on the same time they wanted their parents to stop them from things which the parents deem not right.

They had several ideas about what make a good life? These included education, good upbringing, friends, good teachers, etc. But these were not the only things that were important for them. They also mentioned things as good personal life and love and care for others which indicated that a good life did not only included rights but involved responsibilities too.

Later, I asked them to rank the top ten things which they considered as the most important things needed for a good life. It was interesting to note that how the group influenced ranking of the things. For example, ‘freedom’ which was mentioned only by two of the girls was ranked up to fourth position during the group discussion. Similarly, living a life with God was told by one or two girls but everyone agreed to put it at the first place. This also shows the dominant discourse about God and religion in the society which indicates that religion is seen as highest priority in

one's life and generally people would not deviate from it publically. Even if people do not follow the teaching of a religion still they would pretend to be religious.

Another aspect was how one described the same thing in different ways. For example, one girl described 'support of parents' as that they provide for her needs which referred to the material aspect, while for others parents support meant permission to obtain education, to go out of the house for work or meeting with friends.

*Michelle: Oh! We did not mention good upbringing.*

*Natasha: It is included in 'parent's support'.*

*Michelle: But parent's support means that they agree to what we say.*

*Natasha: But they cannot agree to all that we say or want.*

Ranking was not an easy task as I had already expected it. Girls had a difficulty in ranking some of the things which they thought were of equal importance, such as good house, good environment and good friends were all equally important but they had to rank them. Also 'parent's support' and 'freedom' were considered same by most of the girls; therefore they are ranked in the position. After a long discussion the girls came up with the following order beginning from the most important to relatively less important:

- i. Being with God
- ii. Education
- iii. Good environment
- iv. Support from parents/Freedom
- v. Good friends
- vi. Good food
- vii. Good job
- viii. A Car
- ix. Good clothes
- x. Self help

After a few weeks I had a similar group discussion with boys. There were about six to seven boys in the discussion. I felt that girls were more open and enthusiastic about sharing their view

about a good life with me while boys were a little reluctant. It could be because of the gender difference between boys and I, as a female *Me*. However, they did discuss and came up with a list of things which in their opinion made a good life. They came up with the following ranking of things discussed earlier.

- i. Good environment
- ii. Good education
- iii. Parents
- iv. Respect in society
- v. Good friends
- vi. Playground (Play)
- vii. Good job
- viii. Respecting elders
- ix. Good wife
- x. Freedom

Although this list was not as exhaustive as the one made by girls but still I could see some commonalities between both lists. Both groups had put education and good environment as high priority for good life. In addition to this, both lists highlight the importance of social relationships (friends and community), personal efficacy (good appearance, respect in society) and freedom.

Although there was commonality in the domains of good life included the listed but it was worth noting that both groups defined and ranked the same item in a different manner. One reason for this could be the difference in their socio-cultural status with respect to gender. For example, being a part of patriarchal society it is understandable that 'freedom' holds more importance for girls than boys. This is evident from the ranking of 'freedom' by girls at fourth place while boys put it in the end. Freedom was defined differently by both groups. For example, for girls freedom was parent's support, being able to go to school, choosing their own marriage partner etc. while for boys it was to be able to play and go out with friends where ever they want to. Another example is importance of religion or living a life with God which held more importance for girls than boys. Religion has marked to have a positive function in enhancing one's life

satisfaction and emotional well being, although the evidence is not yet conclusive. This can also be related to difference in process of socialization which influences coping strategies of men and women, the latter being emotional focused to cope with stress.

## 6.2. Children's Own Indicators of Well-being

Children's view of positive well being or *achee zindagi* (good life) as we referred in the local language, included positive feelings such as happiness, content, security, freedom. However, it is not straightforward as some children thought of well being as a life in which there is freedom to do things which they considered good and restrictions from doing things which they thought as harmful or bad. Following themes have emerged from the overall data collected through group discussions, interviews, and informal discussions with children during the field work:

	Category	Description	Total	
1	Education	It includes good school and teachers, who behaves nicely with students and do not give physical punishments. Education is important to get good jobs.	9	90%
2	Money	To acquire material possessions such as good clothes and food, car and a nice house.	8	80%
3	Environment	It includes both social and physical environment, both needs to be clean and peaceful. Some also took it as house in a good locality/ neighborhood.	7	70%
4	Family	It is important to have both parents, who take care of you and are responsible for good upbringing of their children. Siblings who do not fight with you and use abusive language. It includes extended family as well.	6	60%
5	House/ Home	A peaceful home where there are no worries and fights. A big house which is owned by you.	6	60%
6	Relationships	It is very important to have good friends, who support you in difficult times and with whom you can share everything. Also it is important to have a good husband/wife.	6	60%
7	Freedom	It is the ability to gain education, move around freely and choosing your own life partner. Also, support from parents to follow your dreams.	4	40%
8	Personal life	Living with God and having a good personal life. There should be a good purpose of life. Perseverance is vital.	4	40%
9	Rights	There should be no discrimination between boys and girls, Christians and Muslims. Respect in society.	3	30%
10	Social events	Christmas, Easter, weddings, functions organized by Plan and religious conventions.	2	20%

11	Good governance	A government which is not corrupt and makes good policies for common people.	1	10%
12	Employment	A good job such as doctor, teacher, nurse etc.	1	10%

**Table 1: Perspectives of a good life by girls**

	Categories	Description	Total	
1	House	A peaceful home where there are no worries and fights. A big house which is owned by you.	8	89%
2	Money	Wealth in general and also material possessions such as big house and car which are a status symbol. Money is needed to buy food as well.	7	78%
3	Friends	One who supports you and give you good advice.	7	78%
4	Family	Parents are important for good upbringing of their children.	6	67%
5	Services (Education and health)	This refers to social services of quality education and health.	6	67%
6	Environment	Having a clean environment without pollution and garbage. Also, the social environment needs to be cordial and cooperative, without any drug dealing.	6	67%
7	Relationships	Relationship with parents and teachers should be based on respect. Cooperation among community members	6	67%
8	Good job	Entrepreneurs/ businessman. Any office job which is well paid.	4	44%
9	Freedom	Freedom to go out as and when one pleases. Also, freedom to practice one's religion.	3	33%
10	Respect	When people listen to you and it related to your status in the society.	3	33%
11	Playground	A place to play cricket mainly.	2	22%
12	Good governance	There should be rule of law	1	11%

**Table 2: Perspectives of a good life by boys**

These tables show the overall indicators which according to the children is needed for a good life or their well being. One can see a relationship between different indicators, for example, education, employment and money. The former two were seen as a mean to gain money. Another example is the relationship between freedom and rights as mentioned by girls. For many of us freedom is a right but children in this study looked upon it more as a privilege. This indicates

that all these aspects are interrelated with each other and should be seen in a holistic approach for assessing children's well being.

### **6.3. Description of Well-Being Domains**

Following are the descriptions of domains of well-being which were taken from the aforementioned data. I have attempted to merge and categorise the domains based on the similarity and relationship between them. For example, personal life is discussed respect and self esteem and not as a separate domain. Similarly, rights are a cross cutting theme which provides a framework for all the domains described below. It should also be noted that these domains are not presented in a particular order or rank.

#### **6.3.1. Money**

Children were aware of the importance of having enough of money which can provides them an access to the increased status in the society and what is enough to obtain things which matter to them. It was one point which had equal significance for both boys and girls. As shown in table 1 and table 2, 78% boys and 80% girls felt that money was an important for having a good life. However, all of them were conscious of not asking for too much, they were not greedy but wanted just enough to get buy things which matter for them.

*John: I have heard many times that people with a lot of money and big houses cannot sleep at night. They are afraid that someone might take away their wealth. But it should not be like our lives too”.*

Money was considered not an end in itself but as a means to achieve a good life. It ranged from possessing assets such as a nice house and a car to paying for groceries, food and personal items which according to them are needed for a good life. For example, one of the girls mentioned that “*there should be enough money to buy good clothes, bags, shoes, cosmetics and good food*”. Another boy said that one, who has money, has no tension. He can pay for groceries, utility bills and school fees.

Money was also a source of happiness, because then they could buy things which they like or need. However, these things were not uniform and varied between boys and girls. A life without money was considered a difficult and bad life by them.

*Me: What is a difficult life?*

*Michelle: Poverty and unemployment.*

*Me: Why?*

*Michelle: Because money is very important, money makes the mare go! ..... it should be enough to get food and fulfill your needs.*

But it was interesting to note that not all children defined poverty in the same way. I realized this when I asked them who lives a difficult life in their community.

*Andrew: Poor people lead a difficult life here.*

*Patrick: and us? Are we made of gold?*

*Andrew: Don't you get clothes to wear?*

*Patrick: I do!*

They thought of people without jobs or could not earn money as 'poor' or those who did not have proper houses to live in. They did not think that all people living in slums as poor. None of the children mentioned that they were poor, although they may not have many of the material things which they listed as important for a good life. People with money were considered to be leading a good life in the community, but their income was not considered as 'legitimate' or 'halal' because it was earned through selling alcohol. While others who had hard earned money were respected more than others.

*Rachel: People say that he ones who have cars, big houses, bank balances etc. have a good life. But we have a good life as well. We get food to eat.*

They did not think that people living in the colony were poor except for a few which did not have good or proper houses. It is worth noting that children used relative poverty rather than absolute poverty to determine their status. Although they referred to the conventional economical oriented definition of poverty but did not consider themselves poor since their families earned enough to provide for food, shelter and education for them.



### 6.3.2. Education

Education is another important aspect which children deemed as necessary for their well being. However, apparently it held more importance for girls than boys with 90% and 67% respectively shown in table 1 and 2. This difference of opinion could be because girls considered it as a privilege while for boys took it for granted. However, despite their disagreement on the value of education, they all differentiated between ‘education’ and ‘good education’. All of the research participants were taking their education in the public schools, which are generally not considered as par with private and elite schools in the country in terms of infrastructure and highly trained teachers. The capacity to attend private schools reflects and contributes enormously to create a difference between ‘haves’ and ‘have nots’. Yet, some children considered that good education should include both general education as well as religious knowledge. Others thought that good education not only includes going to a good school but also having good teachers who do not use corporal punishment with students. This indicates that children consider education not just as the content which they learn in schools but also the environment in which this learning occurs which includes infrastructure of the school, behavior of teachers towards students, and most importantly having friends and a support network in the school.

Again, acquiring education was seen as a means to an end, that is, to gain an employment and subsequently earning money for a good life. But importance of education was not only limited to gain employment opportunities but also influenced the personal life of children. For example, girls mentioned that in order to find a good husband you need to be educated. Girls were more concerned about getting education and finding a good job and a good husband than boys.

*Samantha: If we don't study then we won't get any job, and then we will become sweepers..... but with education we will get a good job in office.*

*Other girls: Education is very important otherwise we will not get any job.*

Education was a source of happiness for many children. Most of them counted getting education as one of the best things in their lives. This was especially important for the girls to have the permission and support from their family to go to school. According to them not everyone is allowed or can afford to go to school therefore they feel fortunate to be able to do it. However,

girls had more difficulties to get permission to go to school due to family norms and restrictions. One of the girls told me that it is because girls are considered as family's honor and people are afraid to send their daughters out fearing that they might bring shame to the family. While boys are usually seen as the bread earners for the family, so they are preferred to be sent to school to prepare for this future role.

Their happiness was also connected with passing exams and getting good grades and absence of it made them sad. It is worth to note that for children education was limited to the four walls of school and acquiring degrees. They did not consider vocational skills such as motor mechanic to be education. This shows how children follow the dominant discourse in society which sees that schools are necessary for children.

Education also plays an important role in building the self image of children. One of the girls, who had dropped out of school, considered that getting education means being intelligent. Another girl told me that it makes her happy when people appreciate her for attaining education. It boosts their self esteem.

A life without education was thought of as difficult. Children also considered it as a sign of poverty when you could not go to school. They told me about a boy who is working as a painter and saving money to continue his education later. Everyone agreed that his life was difficult because of this reason.

*David: A person without education has tension to find a good job.*

Children also reported being discriminated in the school because of their religious identity. Girls were more open to share these incidents than boys. It cannot be said for sure that there was more discrimination in girls' school than boys. However, boys and girls study together till primary classes and then they are segregated in different schools.

*Natasha: One of the teachers told our class that Christians are not good.*

*Alice: When I was in junior school one of my teachers complained that Christians have made our school filthy.*

Sana reported that when she was expelled from 5<sup>th</sup> grade because she was tall and looked older for her age. Her teachers did not keep her in the school even when her mother showed them her birth certificate.

*Samantha: When children grow in height, they keep the Muslim students and expel the Christian students.*

In local Pakistani society people are discriminated based on their socio-economic status, caste and religion. So these children belonging to a slum area and being a member of a minority religious group faced compounded discrimination.

### **6.3.3. Family**

Relationships are really important for well being in children's perspective. Almost all of the children in this study valued the presence of both parents in their lives. Parents were seen as the care takers who provided for their food, education, clothes and other basic needs. According to them good parents are necessary for a good life and 'good parents' are those who not only fulfill their children's basic needs but support them in right things. Most of the children felt blessed because they had good parents who were neither alcoholics nor drug addicts. Parents were seen as responsible for good upbringing of their children.

*Robert: If parents are good and educated then they will educate their children too.*

Parents' support was also considered as freedom by girls, when they supported them in getting education, meeting friends, and wearing clothes which they like. When asked what makes them happy, most of them replied that when their parents fulfill their wishes, which was mainly about buying things.

Children with bad parents were thought to be living a difficult or bad life. They were the ones whose parents were alcoholic or did not allow them to study. It also included those who married their children at a very young age as well. Children without parents or mothers were also thought of as having a difficult life since they did not have anyone to fulfill their basic needs such as food and education. This situation was worse for girls as they had to stay back at home to take care of their younger siblings and housework instead of completing their education.

*Hannah: Our life is difficult, one because our father is an alcoholic and he makes a lot of noise when he is drunk. He picks fights with everyone and uses abusive language... This makes me very sad... I cannot study when there is no peace at home... My life will be happy if he becomes good.*

In addition to parents, good siblings were also of importance for a good life. The average family had three to five children. Girls highlighted the importance of having siblings who do not fight and beat them. It was usually brothers, not necessarily older ones, who had distrust against their sisters and put restrictions on their movement, their choice of clothes and with whom they talked. Relatives and extended family members are counted under the label of 'family' as well and they are supposed to be united and cooperative.

#### **6.3.4. Friends**

Friendship was another area which was considered very crucial for one's well being by children. It was more important for boys as compared with girls. All of the children had friends from the same community, which means that they could spend more time together. Most of them went to the same school, same church and other social events. They did not have many friends from outside the community or even if they had it was mainly from other colonies.

Children had their own definition of a 'good friend'.

*Sara: A good friend is one who supports you in difficult time.*

*Rachel: But a girl's friend should be girls and not boys. You cannot share everything with boys.*

*Kate: .... you can be friends with boys, but the boys should not read anything more in the friendship.*

According to one of the boys a good friend is one 'who gives you good suggestion and advice'. He counted his friends among the top four best things his life since they are good and none of them is addict or has any other bad habit. I met the group of boys hanging out in the street; they would just stand there and talk. They were keepers of each other's secrets, play mates and school fellows. Same was the case with girls, who would hang out together indoors, in a center

established by one of the NGOs working there. They supported and covered for each other when needed. It was expressed by everyone that they are happy when they are with their friends. And being away from friends or disagreements with them makes them sad.

*Hannah: I am happy when I make new friends because it is not easy for me to make friends.*

On the other hand they were aware of that “a man is known by the company he keeps”. They said that a bad friend can make a life bad as well. S/he can indulge you in bad habits; hence you could lose credibility in community and society. According to them a bad girlfriend or boyfriend make a life difficult too.

Like any other relationship, their friendships were not prone to conflicts and disagreements. Sometimes they made fun of each other which one person took as fun but the other did not felt the same.

*Natasha: I cannot read Urdu that well and my friends mimic me and make fun. I don't like this and feel very bad.*

But their disagreements and conflicts did not last long and they were quick to forgive each other and continue as before.

### **6.3.5. Freedom**

Freedom is another important item enlisted for a good life. It had different meaning for almost everyone and ranged from choosing one's own clothes to be able to practice one's religion. As mentioned earlier, freedom had a different level of importance and meaning for girls and boys.

According to girls, freedom was to be able to go to school to acquire quality education and join college for higher studies. Girls counted this as the best thing in their life, since there were many girls who were not allowed by their parents to go to school or continue their education. Due to the wider societal notion that girls are not supposed to work in the domestic sphere, parents do not see any value in educating their girls. However, this trend is changing because of the high inflation and economic pressure in the society. It is difficult to make both ends meet in one salary therefore everyone in the family needs to contribute in the family income in one way or the other. It has also become a vital criterion in finding a wedding match for boys. Parents want their

boys to marry girls who are educated and can support their sons in running the wheel of the life. However, I feel that it will still take some time to change this norm and the process of change is slow.

Freedom was considered as parents' support by some girls which meant that your parents should support you in everything you do. Nevertheless, there was a disagreement about it as some girls said that your parents cannot support you in everything. There are some things which are not good for you and the parents must stop you from doing so. One of the girls complained about the lack of mobility for girls. She said that as soon as the girl grows up a little (reaches puberty) her movement is restricted. She is not allowed to go out to play with her friends.

*Alice: If we don't go out then how would we know what is happening in the outside world.*

These were not the only things which were considered as 'freedom' by girls, it also included wearing clothes of one's own choice. This mainly referred to wearing western clothes such as jeans, and fashionable clothes. The fashion is imported in the colony by the mothers who work in the houses of elite class of Islamabad.

*Samantha: My parents are good because they don't restrict me from doing anything, for example, the clothes that I want to wear, the places I want to go to, the things I like to do etc. There are no restrictions.*

But not everyone I interviewed was privileged to the same freedom. One of the girls was never allowed to go outside, meet friends or play with them. She never questioned her parents about it, as her sisters used to go out to play. Another case was of a girl who could go to school but was not allowed by her elder to go out and meet friends. It is to note that all these girls were not only friends but were mostly relatives with each other. I assume it was the reason that girls were excited to take me on a guided tour of their colony as most of them mentioned that it was the first time they had seen the whole colony. One reason was that they only visited the houses of their relatives and hence had seen only those parts.

Another aspect of freedom that children mentioned was to be able to choose your own life partner. Girls who had marriage of their own choice were supposed to be leading a good life. In traditional Pakistani society girls are not allowed to choose their marriage partners but it's their

parents or someone from the extended family who selects the best match for them. This match may not be compatible with the girl and she may end up living according to her husband's will. Therefore, choosing their own partners was not enough for the girls, it was equally important for them to have a good husband. A good husband was described as one who listens to his wife and gives her freedom to do things that she wishes.

*Hannah: he can stop us from things that are not good for us but he should not be very strict.*

Definition of freedom also included practicing of one's religion freely and no discrimination based on religious differences. They referred to the case of Rimsha Masih which has been mentioned earlier under challenges in the external environment. She also lived in a colony and was an extreme example of religious intolerance. But they also shared incidents from their daily life at school which targeted them as victims of discrimination. Children spend most of their daytime in school and it represents an important aspect of their environment and life. Almost all of them go to public schools which are dominated by Muslim teachers and students. The school curriculum focuses on Muslim heroes and leaders and you would rarely find an example which would mention a Christian scholar or hero. This may be due to over value ascribed to public figures from the majority community but it undervalues the prominent people belonging to the minority community. Children are mainly taught about Islamic studies but there are very few classes in which they could learn about other religions which may make children from minority religions to feel too little of them. This is an example of how wider social system shapes the lives of children and affects their capabilities and possibilities of achieving a future which they value.

Boys acknowledged that they have freedom, which according to them was to play with friends and go out. However, they admitted that girls do not freedom in general with a few exceptions. They agreed that everyone should have freedom irrespective of their gender.

*Sean: A girl's family usually stops her from wearing jeans. If her family does not stop her, then the people in the community would object to it. Everyone should have freedom to follow the fashion and people should not comment on the girls.*

Among the things that boys wanted to change in their colony, freedom for girls was an important one. They wanted girls to be able to go out as well and be able to talk to boys without anyone thinking wrong about it.

*Me: Do you think that boys and girls have freedom here?*

*David: Only in this street! I have not seen it anywhere as much as girls have freedom here.... boys have freedom everywhere.*

*Me: What would you like to change in this colony?*

*David: Freedom to girls! Girls should have freedom to go out as well.*

The above quotation reflects how the space for freedom and public sphere such as streets are limited for girls but not for boys.

### **6.3.6. Respect and Self -Esteem**

Respect is another positive feeling that was deemed important for a good life. It meant not only respect in society, but also in family and community. Boys were more concerned with their respect in society, while girls were more anxious about their self esteem. These two points are somewhat related to each other and presented respectively.

Sean was one of the boys who mentioned ‘respect’ as an integral component of a good life. He told me that “I am happy when someone listens and comply with what I say. For example, the boy I told you about, when I call him he responds immediately. I like to be respected”. The criteria for gaining respect was to attain education which would give you a good position in society and then people would listen to you. David, who had dropped out of school, regretted his decision now.

*David: I feel that I should have continued my schooling. It is very insulting. People say that I roam in the street all the time and everyone insults me in the community.*

Education was not the only pre-requisite to earn respect in society. Money was another integral way of getting that respect. David wanted to have a job so that he can earn money which according to him would gain him respect in his family. They were of the view that one person’s respect is related to his family and community, so for example, if one person in the family is



alcoholic or a drug addict then the whole family is labeled as bad. A life without respect from community is a difficult life.

As mentioned earlier, girls were more concerned about their positive self image. One of them mentioned that she becomes happy when somebody appreciates her: clothes, her educational achievement, her religious practices etc. This boosts her self esteem. While Natasha, another girl, felt bad when her friends made fun of her Urdu language skills (she could not read Urdu that well). Looking beautiful and slim was another concern for girls which affected their self esteem negatively. Senorita, who rarely goes out of her house, was conscious about her weight and wanted to be slim so that she will get noticed.

*Hannah: Everyone calls me fat because of my weight. All my friends are slim and smart. I try to go on a diet but I am never successful.*

*Natasha: If I could change something, I would change myself... get nice clothes and become beautiful.*

But appearance and dressing were not the only things which affected their self esteem, their place of residence and work also had an impact.

*Alice: .... what if someone is a sweeper, can he not dress up or be clean? My aunt always comments about my brother that you are sweeper and look at your dressing.*

*Natasha: Her brother is a sweeper but he dresses up really well. There is no shame in hard work.*

*Kate: If we dress up well then people comment that 'look at their dressing and they live in colony'.*

This explains that children valued the money earned by hard work rather than illegal mean, such as selling alcohol. However, children felt that the wider society had their own stereotypes about the slums and people living in slum areas. Some of these stereotypes were that the people living in slums are very poor; they are all sweepers and live in a very dirty environment. I observed that these stereotypes had no real value since not all children living in the slum were poor. They had all basic facilities and their parents had different jobs than as sweepers only. They respected hard

work even if it had little social status. And most of all they liked to dress up well and keep their homes and street clean as much as they could.

### **6.3.7. House**

A good house is also a pre-requisite for a good life mentioned by all children. It is one which is spacious and has all facilities such as electricity, gas, washing machine etc. They mentioned that people with money have built nice houses in the colony. However, they also told that their money was not *halal* as they were dealers of alcohol which is an illegal business. They also were aware of the importance of owning a house in Islamabad, the capital city and counted it as one of the good things in their life.

*Aliyah: It is a good thing that we have our own house and don't have to pay the rent. Although we don't have electricity yet but it is very difficult these days to make both ends meet, so imagine when you don't own a house.*

Some children complained about the neighborhood that there is no peace here. There are children playing in the streets always, and make a lot of noise. They wished to live in a quiet neighborhood where people spend more time indoors rather than sitting in the streets. Also in such a close community gossips travelled faster and anybody's business was everybody's concern. Children saw this as a problem especially girls.

Children's view of good house is not just about a fancy building but it also takes into account the people living in it and their relationship with each other. If there is tension of money, fighting among parents and siblings, and an alcoholic family member then it was not considered a good house.

People living in small and shabby houses without basic facility of toilet were considered poor and leading a difficult life. There were some houses near the rain drains in the colony which get flooded during the rain; their lives were seen as difficult as well.

*Me: How do you know they are poor?*

*Aliyah: By looking at their houses... they don't have proper roofs.*

So houses were in a way a symbol of social status and perhaps therefore children wanted have good and big houses. When asked about the best house in the colony, all children referred to one or two houses only. These were seen as standard for a good house. I could see the similarities from outside between both houses. They were a little bigger than the other houses, had a nice paint on outer walls and had fancy glass windows. They had seen houses in other areas of Islamabad which are huge and have a lawn and parking space. But nobody said that they want houses like those except for one or two. They seemed to be satisfied with their colony and as mentioned earlier most of them wanted to continue living there.

Again children were not just concerned about the physical aspect of the house. They wanted a good home in which there is love, care and respect for each other. They wanted good relationships among family member and wanted an environment free of worries, mainly worries of money.

#### **6.3.8. Environment**

All children reported to feel protected in their community. They liked the fact that everyone was related to each other through blood (same family and clan) or geographical areas such as belonging to the same village. They had a sense of community and therefore, most of them told me that they would prefer to stay in their colony than anywhere else. Collaboration among community members to solve common problems also forms a good social environment. An example of this as given by children was that incase there is some fight or some social event such as weddings, everyone cooperates with each other.

However, it was not a perfect picture and there were some things that children did not like in their environment and wished for those things to change.

*Me: What is a bad life?*

*Aliyah: Our life!*

*Me: Why?*

*Aliyah: Because of all the garbage and bad environment around us.... It is difficult to live next to the rain drain because the environment is very dirty and bad. Many diseases*

*are caused by the garbage dumped here. It is our house but we don't like the place..... we are human beings as well and deserve to live in a clean and good environment.*

This was one of the common conversations between children and me. They did not like their physical environment and felt that it was not clean especially when they compared it with the non-slum areas like nearby government quarters or elite sectors as F-7, F-6 etc. However, they also thought that over the time their colony has improved. Previously the streets were unpaved and there were water puddles and garbage everywhere. But now the streets are paved and some people keep their streets clean. All of them agreed that their colony was much better than the other colonies in Islamabad and they were happy to be here.

Physical environment was not the only area when children mentioned 'good environment', it also included social and human environment. I feel that they were more concerned about the social and human environment as compared to the physical environment. When asked what about good environment they said:

*Sean: Good environment is one in which people do good things..... and everyone has freedom.*

*Sunil: In which people are cooperative.....*

*Anees: In which there are no bad people who can influence you....*

According to some boys their environment was not good because people did not have freedom. He was referring to the freedom for girls and boys to talk to each other and people should not gossip or conjure up things about them. They told me that the brother of one girl has prohibited the boys from other streets to enter theirs and that she was not allowed to talk to them even if were colleagues with each other.

Alcohol was one of the major problems mentioned by children which adversely affected their environment. They complained about people who get drunk and then fight with others and use abusive language. They thought that because of such people and dealers of alcohol, other people in society have a bad impression of the colony. Boys were more concerned with this problem as they told me that the older boys invite them to drink as well but they do not want to. They felt being pressured to join their peers.

Girls' greater concern regarding bad environment were the boys standing in the streets that commented on passing by girls and made them feel harassed. They also hated the games since it always had a lot of boys, playing, fighting and using abusive language.

*Sara: Girls life is difficult here... Why... one because of these boys. When you go out you will notice groups of boys standing everywhere in the streets. When a girl passes by, they make signs to the girls even when she does not say anything or look at them. And the people in the colony think that girls encourage boys and they gossip about them.*

Boys also talked about the games as contributing towards bad environment; however, they were of the view that games in it were not bad but boys, who bet on it, fight and use abusive language etc. Everyone had a problem with the bad language of those boys as they say that there are houses near the game shops with our mothers and sisters living in it. They should show respect.

It was interesting to note how girls' perceived distance based on their comfort zone. The girls participating in this study told me that they had freedom to go everywhere in the colony. However, they did not feel comfortable visiting places where they had no relatives and especially the houses near the *naala*. They complained that one the streets are dirty and second the boys from those streets are not nice.

*Kate: Shall we go to Misha's house?*

*Natasha: No, I don't go there.*

*Kate: But I just to pick something from her place.*

*Natasha: No..... she lives far.... near naala (water drainage).*

As part of the vision for clean and good environment children wished for a clean and open environment. One of the boys mentioned that they have to keep their colony clean themselves while in the neighboring quarters and other areas of Islamabad there are government employees who are responsible for cleaning the area. He wanted the same for his area as well. Others wanted to have garbage bins in their colony where people can put their garbage instead of dumping it at the rain drain near houses. Also, boys wanted to have a proper playground because at the present they played cricket on the road which was not safe. And girls wanted a park for themselves where they could go out for a walk or some games without any fear of harassment.

## **Chapter 7**

### **Discussion**

This section makes a connection between the perspectives of children on well-being, and themes highlighted by them as presented in the preceding chapter and the current studies and debates about children's well-being in general. First, I will discuss the themes and indicators highlighted by children and attempt to relate them to other researches done with children. Then, I will make a comparison with a few popular indicators of child well-being and children's own indicators of well-being mentioned in the earlier chapter.

#### **7.1. Well-being vs Well-becoming**

Well-being has recently become a popular concept with the current emphasis of measuring a nation's development on the basis of factors other than GDP. Now, "the true measure of a nation's standing is how well it attends to its children – their health and safety, their material security, their education and socialization, and their sense of being loved, valued and included in the families and societies into which they were born" (UNICEF, 2007, p1). It has been argued over years that the 'traditional' indicators of well-being are more concerned about well-becoming of children rather than actual well-being (Ben Arieh et. al. 2001). However, in this research there is a connection between well-being and well-becoming in the indicators highlighted by children themselves. For example, children in this study were keen to acquire education because it not only provides them a sense of achievement at present but also a means for future employment. While we measure the acquisition of education as an indicator of well-being, we also need to emphasize the quality of this experience (which includes the quality of institutions and teachers) as it is important not only for the future development but also the current quality of life of children. Uprichard (2008: 311-312) argues about the dualism of the concept of 'being' and 'becoming'. He suggests that these concepts should be seen as complementing rather than opposing each other in a way that "places children in the real situation of being present and future agents of their present and future agents of their present and future lives and ultimately of the social world around them.

## **7.2. The ‘New’ Indicators of Well-being**

It is not a straight-forward task to transform the qualitative data collected during the field research into indicators for measuring well-being. As mentioned by Frønes (2007, p 14) “a good life is a meaningful metaphor for most people, but it is not an entity that exists in a given format. The good life and happiness exist as narratives, visions, and images and as economic and psychological models”. During this study, children developed their own indicators of a good life or well-being as we would say which includes both the elements of well-being as well as well-becoming. Uprichard (2008) refers to it as “temporality of childhood that children themselves voice”, which indicates that children understand the relevance of the present to the future. Therefore, it is important to include children in the process of developing and defining indicators to measure their well-being.

However, one has to be mindful that although childhood is a structural phenomenon in the society (Qvortrup, 1994) it changes over time and place and so does the way in which children conceptualize their well-being. Hence, children should be studied in their own context because no matter how many commonalities children share, they are not the same. According to Fattore et. al. (2009) “well-being dimensions can take different forms in different contexts and for different groups of children”. For example, as seen in this study the need for freedom was experienced in different ways for different children. Some girls took it as parent’s support; others wanted to have autonomy to go where ever they wished. On the other hand, boys thought of freedom as being able to go out and play with their friends or to talk to the girls. It differed not only between the two genders but also between different ages.

Children’s perspectives of well-being are important because not only they inform us about different dimensions of a life which they value based on their lived experience but also how they define those dimensions. For example, the children I interviewed mentioned ‘acquiring education’ as one of the indicators of a good life but that alone is not sufficient. This dimension of a good life also includes the quality of the school, character and teaching methodology of the teacher and a social network of friends. Following is a discussion about some of the dimensions of well-being

and their definitions translated from children's data during this study, and how they relate to the conventional domains of child well-being:

### **7.2.1. Economic Resources**

Aristotle stated years ago that income and wealth have only instrumental value. In order to understand what makes life rich and satisfactory we need to go beyond this view of income. He states that "wealth is evidently not the good we are seeking; for it is merely useful and for the sake of something else" (Sen 199: 2). Sen (1999) builds on this argument that generally people have good reasons for wanting more money. It is not because they want more money for themselves but because it is a widely accepted means for having freedom and capabilities to lead the life which we value. Children considered money as an important means to achieve a good life. However, most of them mentioned money not as an end in itself but as a means to procure things that are needed for a good life. These things included, but were not limited to, good clothes, food, a car and a house.

In Sen's (1999) opinion, inequality of incomes can differ substantially from inequality in several other spaces such as well-being, freedom and different aspects of life quality, including health and longevity. Yet I would argue that these two forms of inequality might be related: the former (income inequality) can give rise to number of latter mentioned inequalities. For example, children from low-income houses in the area of my study could not afford to go to school and this could entail a low quality of life and low social and economic status.

There is a notion that placing a high importance on money is negatively associated with well-being or subjective well-being (Sirgy 1998). This view is popular among some people in the participant society as well and is sometimes enforced through media in which rich people are shown as dissatisfied with their lives while poor are presented as happy. I assume that is why Asher told me that "people with a lot of money and big houses cannot sleep at night". He had no personal experience with any such person but he expressed what was commonly believed among them. Although children mentioned that money was the most important thing for a good life still I never felt that they were materialistic. Sirgy (1998: 243) defined materialism as "a condition in which the material life is considered to be highly salient relative to other life domains". He further argues that materialists are dissatisfied with their lives because the goals of material



pursuits that they have are unrealistic and hence the dissatisfaction when those goals are not achieved. But I did not notice any such emotion among the group of children in the research. On the contrary, their material goals were very realistic, as mentioned by one of the children “there should be enough money to buy good clothes.... and good food”.

Diener, Suh, Lucas, and Smith (1999) found that people with more money were happier than their less affluent counterparts although the effects were not that significant. I found this true in the case of my research participants who would almost always tell me “we are happy with our lives - we have a good life”. The reasons were related to their family and community life. Fattore et. al. (2005) found in their study that children were concerned about the economic status of their family and how it impacted their family members. In my study, some children were concerned that their mothers have to work in other people’s houses and they wished that only if the parents were educated they would get better employment. But still they felt contentment, as expressed by one of the girls, “even if she (mother) works the whole day she has a home to come back to which has peace and comfort”. Therefore, when the children talked about the importance of money for a good life, the usage of that money revolved around improving the condition of the house, buying gifts for the family members and rarely had any individualistic motive behind it.

Children were not only concerned about money but had high moral standards about the ways this money was earned. Hence, it was not money or income alone which made a good life but there were things which were much more important for them than this. I assume it was the same motive which led Haq to develop Human Development Index to measure the growth of country rather than just measuring GDP. Economic growth is much broader than the narrow income growth. Haq argued that a country that sells weapons should not be considered more developed than a country that chosen not to make weapons and export them, simply because the production of weapons makes the gross domestic product (GDP) of that particular country significantly higher. Similarly, children valued the money earned by hard work even as a sweeper more than money earned being an alcohol dealer and doing illegal business.

Women and girls living in slums suffer disproportionately; on average they are poorer than men. United Nations Development Program (UNDP) highlights that three-fifths of the world’s one

billion poorest people are women and girls<sup>14</sup>. But this poverty is aggravated by their lower access to resources, facilities and decision making opportunities. An organization working in slums found that women and girls often bear the brunt of problems associated with living in slums. They are burdened with fetching and carrying water over long distances, and caring for sick family members – leaving them little time for education or to make a living. In areas where sanitation facilities are poor or non-existent, going to the toilet at night or in the early morning puts women at risk of rape and sexual harassment<sup>15</sup>. I also found that girls and boys were disproportionately affected by the lower family income. While boys were only responsible for going to school and studying, girls had to take care of the house work in addition to the school, in case where their mothers are working.

Ridge (2002) showed that poverty and social exclusion impacts on the lived experiences of children and young people. She found that children from low-income families were socially excluded both at school and in their wider communities, and that they had difficulties in making and sustaining friendships. However, children in this study challenged this view about their economic and social status. It was interesting to note that none of the children considered themselves poor. This is supported by Davis (2006; pg: 25) who states that not all people living in slums are poor nor all poor live in slums. However, children used relative poverty rather than absolute poverty to measure their status. Townsend's (1979) defines relative poverty as a "concept of relative deprivation and defines households as poor when they are lacking certain commodities that are common in the society they are living in" (cited in Hagenaars and De Vos, 1988: 215). So for children in this study poor people were those who could not afford to go to school, did not have proper houses and no basic facilities such as water, toilet etc. Contrary to the findings of Ridge, these children lived in a small closed system where they had friends from the same community and they all went to the same school. This provided them with a strong social network not only in school but also in the wider community. This highlights the value in understanding children's lived world through their own perspective.

According to Kingdon and Knight (2006) the conventional approach of economists to the measurement of poverty is to use indicators of income or consumption. This has been challenged

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<sup>15</sup> <http://www.homeless-international.org/About-Slums/impacts-of-slums>

by those who favour broader criteria, such as fulfillment of ‘basic needs’ and the ‘capabilities’ to be and to do things of intrinsic worth. They are of the view that subjective well-being is an encompassing concept, which allows to quantify the relevance and importance of the other approaches and of their component variables. They argue that any attempt to define poverty involves a value judgment as to what constitutes a good quality of life or a bad one. Therefore, an approach which examines the individual’s own perception of well-being is less imperfect, or more quantifiable, or both, as a guide to forming that value judgment than are the other potential approaches.

In my opinion, money or material resources in the broader sense should be included in the list of indicators to measure children’s well-being as they have significant implications in children’s life although not as extensive as other indicators. However, increase in income should not be seen as the sole purpose of economic growth rather it should focus on increasing the capabilities and freedom of individuals to assert their rights and to achieve things for which they have a reason to value.

### **7.2.2. Development**

Children deemed freedom to be very important for a good life. The ‘freedom’ mentioned by them ranged from the ability to gain education and going out with friends to choosing one’s own marriage partner. In my opinion, these indicators of freedom stated by children are closely related to the goals of the development programs. Hence, we can say that the children’s perspectives indicate that the development programs are well-targeted to crucial aspect of the children’s well-being. However, these programs due to lack of participation of children may not define or see those aspects in the manner and may ignore some points for effective implementation of programs. For example, children in this study show that girls wanted freedom for themselves but boys were greater advocate for girls’ freedom.

Sen (1999) views expansion of freedom both as the primary end and as the principle means to achieve development. He argues that “development requires the removal of major sources of unfreedom: poverty as well as tyranny, poor economic opportunities as well as systematic social deprivation, neglect of public facilities as well as intolerance or over activity of repressive states”. He marks five distinct types of freedom each of which has particular rights and

opportunities to enhance the capability of an individual. Sen argues that individuals are not the passive recipients of the development programs rather they can effectively shape their own lives and future with adequate social opportunities. He sees all of these freedoms which are: 1) political freedom. 2) economic facilities 3) social opportunities 4) transparency guarantees 5) protective security, linked with each other and strengthening one another.

Children were mainly concerned with two kinds of freedom mentioned by Sen, which are social opportunities and economic facilities and to some extent political freedom. Social opportunities come at the top of the list. Sen (1999) puts forward that one's well-being is not dependent on just income and material basis but is dependent on subjective circumstances which could be both personal and social. However, the personal circumstances have a social meaning and need to be evaluated in a context.

According to Sen, a person's capability refers to the alternative combinations of functioning that are feasible for her to achieve. Thus, capability is a form of freedom: the actual freedom to achieve various lifestyles. However, these capabilities are dependent on factors such as: personal heterogeneities, environmental diversities, variations in social climate, difference in relation perspectives and distribution within the family. This can be related to the empirical findings from this study as well. One of the girls said that she wanted to be a doctor but she knows that she cannot achieve it; therefore, she would like to become a nurse. Unintentionally she referred to difference between her "realized functionings, the things she is actually able to do" and the "capability set of alternatives she has" that is her actual opportunities. These two things are different as the former describes the things what a person does while the latter refers to the things that a person is actually free to do. However, it not a straightforward path and this freedom or capability is affected by number of factors mentioned earlier.

Let's take these factors one by one and see how it affects the freedom of children. Personal heterogeneity includes factors as gender, age and physical abilities etc. In the case of children in this research, gender was one the main factor that affected their freedom. A boy had much more freedom than a girl: freedom to go out, get education and make choices for himself. This affected the capability of girls to achieve things in life that they had the capacity to achieve otherwise such as higher education and better job prospects. The environment had an influence on children's freedom, for example, it limited their choice of play and play time since there was no

proper playing area. This was even more difficult for girls as boys went out to play on the roads and streets but girls could not. Differences in relational perspectives are concerned with the position of an individual in the wider society or, as noted by Adam Smith, “to appear in public without shame”. These children mentioned having very few friends that lived outside their colony and they never went out to other residential areas in Islamabad either. This raises the question whether it should be counted as children’s capability or freedom to choose not to have any interaction with their peers outside the colonies or if it was that they were in a way forced to limit their social interactions. If it is the latter then it is time that the social norms about what it is to be ‘respectable’ in the society need to change and should go beyond people’s income, social status and place of residence. Distribution of resources among family members affected the capabilities of children. For example, if parents had to make a choice about spending money on education between a boy and girl, they would prefer a boy. This is related to the social norms and environment of an individual as well. Hence, we can say that all these factors that affect one’s freedom are interrelated and influence one another.

Another kind of freedom that comes out of this study is that of economic facilities. It is different from economic resources, which have been discussed previously. Economic facilities refers to the freedom of an individual to choose his or her profession and way of living. Sen (1999, p 8) argues that “economic unfreedom can breed social unfreedom, just as social or political unfreedom can also foster economic unfreedom”. Children living in the slum suffered both from economic as well as social unfreedom, although it is hard to say which breeds the other. Whether it is the economic status of these children as children of sweepers and low-income workers which hampers their social freedom or it is their social status as a minority, which creates a barrier between them and broader economic opportunities. Sen (1999, p 8) reflects that these narrowly defined identities (whether based on communities or groups) are not only a terrible burden but it also points to the fact that “economic unfreedom, in the form of extreme poverty, can make a person a helpless prey in the violation of other forms of freedom”. The case of Rimsha Masih which has been mentioned previously is a perfect example of this point. She was a mentally disabled rag picker living in a slum area who was arrested in a blasphemy case.

The economic freedom is also influenced by gender as girls complained about not having freedom to go out and work in general. Sen accentuates that in many developing countries, especially those in South Asia, freedom of women to seek employment outside the family is a major issue. This denial of freedom to women is a violation of their liberty and gender equity. He continues to highlight that although sometimes there is no formal objection on women's employment the traditions and values that girls are raised with may hamper them seeking employment outside the domestic sphere. This brings us to the perception of what is considered appropriate in the society. For example, in Pakistan women's employment is encouraged and the job advertisements specifically mention that "organization is an equal opportunity employer" or "women are encouraged to apply" but still the prevailing traditional values in the society, which considers girls and women as belonging to the household world, would be an obstacle for them.

This brings us to the point of political freedom as mentioned by Sen. Even beyond the right to vote to elect a government, I view political freedom as the power of individuals to bring about change in traditional values and culture. After all, these traditions and values need structures made by individuals to carry on. Sen (1999, p 12) states that "if a traditional way of life has to be sacrificed to escape the grinding poverty or miniscule longevity, then it is the people directly involved who must have the opportunity to participate in deciding what should be chosen". In this matter, children should be seen as active agents and not passive recipients and should be considered equally important in making such decisions and bringing about a change in which they believe.

However, as Alkire and Denuline (2009) note by expanding individual's choices or 'substantive freedom', we must not conjure that the individuals make these choices in isolation. Freedom or ability to choose is not a *tabula rasa*, but is the product of certain structures of community life. Individuals have the ability to understand and interpret their identity and actions, however, 'the languages needed for such self-interpretation are essentially social, and community is a structural precondition of human agency' (Mulhall and Swift 1992, p 162). Hence, we can say that an individual's interpretations can reveal useful information about the social structure and arrangements. This view has also been supported

by Sen (1992, p 5) who states that “a person’s capability to achieve functionings that he or she has reason to value provides a general approach to the evaluation of social arrangements and this yields a particular way of viewing assessment of equality or inequality”. This is useful to understand how and why children assessed their functionings and capabilities in certain ways. For example, as one of the girls told me that she would like to become a nurse although what she really wanted to become was a doctor. She interpreted her capability in terms of the social structure in which she, being from a minority community and a slum area, might not be able to realize her dream due to financial reasons. I also noted that boys never gave a clear answer to ‘what would you like to be?’ This could indicate children’s understanding of the social system and their freedom of choosing professions. But it is not to say that children living in the slums do not achieve much in their lives; some of the people living in the slums had obtained higher degrees and good jobs, even though it was not a general trend. Children also held governments accountable for improving the lives of citizens. One of the girls explained the relationship between good governance and well-being that governments are responsible for improving the lives of citizens but if they are corrupt and there is high inflation then people would become poor and it will be difficult for them to meet their basic needs. Thus, we need to look at the individual freedom in the context of social structure and culture.

### **7.2.3. Community life and Friendships**

In his essay on the ‘Hierarchy of needs’ Maslow (1968) ranked "love and belongingness needs" in the middle of his motivational hierarchy; that is, belongingness needs do not emerge until food, hunger, safety, and other basic needs are satisfied. Children in my study emphasized the importance of family, community and good friends for a good and happy life.

Children which I interviewed had positive feelings about the community in which they lived. Unlike developed countries, children were not just seen as part of the house and family but were considered as part of the community. This colony was more or less a homogenous community with people having similar socio-economic status, caste, and religion. All of these things facilitated greater interaction among the neighbours and contributed towards safety of children. I observed that it also negated the view of slums as temporary residence

from which people move out. However, this colony was a permanent residence for the children in this study and most of them were born here and did not want to leave the colony either. They saw themselves in relation to the community they lived in and this contributed towards their self-image, and subsequently this sense of community influenced their subjective well-being (Davidson and Corter 1991).

Children listed family as one of the important things for a good life. However, friendships were ranked higher than family by children, especially boys. Friendships are an important aspect of human development. Friendship is sometimes defined as a mutual involvement between two people characterized by affection, satisfaction, enjoyment, openness, respect and a sense of belongingness (LeCroy, 1988). A friend is a confidant (Woolf, 1976) and an emotional attachment (Brehem, 1985). It is found that friendships are vital for children's healthy development and emotional well-being (Lawhon, 1997).

The findings of this study show that children put a high value on friends and friendships for a good life. They counted friends as one of the best things in their life and expressed the feeling of sadness and discomfort when they are away from their friends. In a similar study with children assessing with well-being Nic Gabhain and Sixsmith (2005) found that 'friends' were placed quite high among the indicators demonstrating the importance of peer relationships among children. Friends were seen not only as play companions but trustworthy confederates and social capital. They fulfilled the two vital criteria for formation and sustaining a friendship that are: proximity and similarity. Proximity refers to both physical and social circumstances of a given child. Physical proximity to peers in school, neighborhood, church, and so forth provide an opportunity to form the friendships (Staub, 1998; Asher, Parker and Walker, 1996). Children in this study belonged to the same neighborhood, went to the same school and had similar social circle, which strengthened their understanding of each other and friendship. They confirmed the notion presented by many scholars that friendships which are developed during adolescence include themes as trust, loyalty, and intimacy (Sullivan, 1953) and they expect that friends will not leave or betray each other (Bukowski, Newcomb, and Hartup, 1996b) neither will they be judgmental.



Companionship, or doing things together, is another feature of friendship that emerges early and remains important (Berndt, 1996).

Giordano (2003) and Call and Mortimer (2001) have extended Sullivan's theory (1953) on the importance of friendships as contexts for self-exploration and shown that friendships can provide a safety or comfort zone for self-exploration and the consideration of new roles and goals. Friendships are considered to be beneficial for the socio-emotional development of children as they provide a context in which children learn social rules, receive emotional social support. They also lay the foundation for their later relationships and life in general (Hartup, 1989; Ladd, 1988). Through friendships, children also choose the spaces and places they meet in neighbourhood environments. Children in this study were conscious about the general opinion that 'man is known by the company he keeps' and made an effort to choose their friends wisely. This view is supported by one of the research participants who emphasized the need of having good friends with whom one can share things which they cannot share with their parents and also the friends should be able to give good advice.

Most of the children in this study went to the same school. They shared that they go to school together and take a leave if their friend decides to take one. One of the boys who went to school alone complained that it is very difficult to walk to school alone and also to spend time in school. He wanted to shift to the same school where his friends were studying. Two of the children had dropped out of the school when their friend left the school. Children find a great support in their friends. It contributes towards developing a social support network as well as ameliorating some of the effects of adversity in children's lives (Attree 2004). Friendships have been shown to help children overcome shyness and associated problems like loneliness, anxiety and low self esteem (Fordham and Stevenson-Hinde, 1999). Friends provide each other with social and cognitive backing to go through many transitions and adjustments that children face in their daily lives (Hartup, 1996).

The accounts of children about their friends and friendships and its importance in their lives suggest the contribution of social relationships to their well-being. But since friendships are a measure of one's social skills, it is an indicator of 'well-becoming' as well.

#### **7.2.4. Positive Self Identity**

Lingren defines self-esteem as individual's understanding of their value in the world. As a result of positive self-esteem a child develops 'trust, security, and a sense of self-worth, which promotes confidence and a feeling of being valued' (Lingren, 1991). There is a strong and definite relationship between the "perceived self" (Miyamoto and Dornbusch 1956) and the individual's own picture of what he or she is actually like. Respect and self-esteem are related to one's positive self identity. As I pointed out in the previous chapter, children gave a high importance to self-esteem and respect for a good life and well-being. Respect and self-esteem were defined by the children I interviewed as when others listen to you, respect you because of your good conduct and don't devalue you because of where you live or what you do. They considered it not only their right but also something that they had to earn with their moral conduct.

Due to rapid urbanization and the influx of poor (immigrant) populations into slum neighbourhoods and city enclaves an image of wild unruly children roaming the streets or working as cheap labour force has emerged (Horschelmaan and Van Blerk, 2012, p.83). This is how generally slums are looked upon: as a site for illegal activities and unsafe. However, this view was challenged by the children who did not find it fair that because of few people who sold alcohol, their whole area was seen as a place for crime. According to them education was the key for social mobility and gaining respect in the society.

Jack and Gill (2003) have suggested that adolescents place great importance on their appearance and choice of clothes. Where young people neglect their self-care, this has thus been seen as a sign of low self-esteem (Parker et al. 1991), so it was no surprise that self-presentation and self care were included in the Department of Health's Looking After Children assessment and action records used by social workers in the 1990s (Ward 1995). Likewise, it did not come as a surprise that children were concerned about their dress and appearance. Yet they were not appreciated and at times were made fun of because they dressed up like people living in big houses. This shows the general attitude of the society, which restricts the capability of the children to select things for themselves. Children were supposed to behave and appear in a certain way, which I assume was stereotypical for the slum areas among people living outside the slums. In this case, this would be wearing

‘shalwar and kameez’ (national dress of Pakistan) and not western dress code (which is considered modern) such as trousers and shirts etc. and being part of some ‘gang culture’ are common stereotypes for slum areas. However, children in this study proved these stereotypes wrong, as they all went to school, were very presentable by the average society gauge and did not participate in any illegal activities such as using or selling alcohol and drugs, being member of some gang etc.

Rosenber and Pearlin (1978) argue that social class impacts the self-esteem of children and adults differently and needs to be taken into account. They explain that the ‘significance of social class for the feeling of self-worth also depends on the subjective meaning assigned to the objective fact of social class and on the position of social class in the individual’s structure of awareness and values’. This again brings us to the point put forward by Sen regarding individual freedom to be able to make a choice based on its capability rather than being judged according to social class. According to Sen (1999) personal freedom for all is important for societies. This freedom has two important dimensions, first that personal freedom is important and should be guaranteed to all that matter in a society and second that it should be equal for everyone in a society. This coincides with the opinion of children who wanted freedom for everyone to be able to earn money by hard work even if it means being a sweeper or be able to wear decent and good clothes without being criticized for it. Many studies show that children who grow up with a positive self-image prove to be useful and productive adults.

#### **7.2.5. Physical Environment**

Young people’s development is greatly influenced by their local environment, which includes an area’s physical, social, economic, political and historical characteristics. It can provide them with opportunities for positive development to grow, explore and engage with the world and can boost their self-identity and self confidence, but it can also adversely affect their physical, mental, emotional and social development. Although local environment is not the only factor which influences children and young people’s development, it is the factor which is usually overlooked. Urban planners and policy makers need to understand that their decisions directly and indirectly influence the lives of children and young people (Driskell, 2002). I argue that in order to enhance the well-being of children we need to take into

account the context in which they live and focus should be given to improve their physical environment in addition to the social environment and other basic needs.

Children in this study did not consider their surroundings as grim or dull but on the contrary they valued living in the capital city even if it was in a slum. They appreciated all the facilities they had, which ranged from the basic facilities of housing, electricity, water to small shops in every street from where they could buy snacks any time. This is supported by view of slums presented by Marris (1981) that slums are as a place where people live either by choice (with none other available) or for the opportunities that slum provided.

During the study of life satisfaction of slum dwellers in Calcutta, it was found that the respondents report satisfactory social lives, rewarding family lives and a belief that they lead moral lives. Hence, it was concluded that “while the poor of Calcutta do not lead enviable lives, they do lead meaningful lives” (Biswas-Diener and Diener, 2001:349). My respondents shared the similar opinions. Although children were not satisfied with their personal lives and complained about a lack of activities for them, they were happy with their family and social lives. They reported that they liked their community especially in comparison to the other colonies or slum areas in Islamabad that they knew about.

In the international discourse on slums and urban development, slums are defined mostly in terms of legal and physical space. UN-HABITAT defines slums as a group of individuals living together in an urban area and lack one or more of the following: durable housing of a permanent nature that protects against extreme climate conditions, sufficient living space which means not more than three people sharing the same room, easy access to safe water in sufficient amounts at an affordable price, access to adequate sanitation in the form of a private or public toilet shared by a reasonable number of people, and security of tenure that prevents forced evictions. This is a standard definition which is applied to slums throughout the global South.

However, children in this study challenged this definition of the slum area. They did not consider their area as ‘slum’ because they had durable and proper houses, which were permanent in nature. They had to share room with others but it was not seen as intrusion of privacy rather it was sharing of space with your family and siblings. During my visits in their

houses I never met a family who all lived in a single room. They might not have separate drawing room to receive guests thus the bed rooms were used for both receiving guests (which were mainly relatives in the neighbourhood) and sleeping at night. Children showed me electric motors in each street that were shared by houses there to acquire water. Their houses were built on modern architecture even if there was not enough space. These houses had proper rooms, kitchen and toilets. This slum area, which was supposed to be a 'temporary place' initially, had turned into a 'permanent setting' in the urban area. However, in the wider society and governmental records it is still considered as a 'slum area'. All of aforementioned points require us to revisit the definition of a slum area as there is more in the slums that needs to be studied to propose alternative definitions.

Adams and Ingham (1998) argue that children and young people are often more knowledgeable and concerned about environmental issues than adults. Since they experience the environment differently and might be affected most by environmental changes. Therefore, it is emphasized that children must be involved to enrich the urban planning and development process as they would contribute a different set of values and priorities. For example, children participating in the research were concerned about the garbage that people threw at the *naala*. They were aware that it is the cause of many diseases among children who play in that area. Also, the lack of proper bridge over the *naala* affected the children most since they had to cross it to go the shops on the other side to get groceries for home.

Freeman et al. (1999) argue that investment into children's urban environment should not be restricted to dedicated zones or play areas. They should be able both to experience and to manipulate the space around them. My study also shows that 'play grounds and playing areas' were not the only focus of children but they were also concerned with issues related to their social environment as well. Children needed a space in which everyone had freedom and respect. All children, both boys and girls, complained about one man in the colony whom they wished to be removed from their environment. This man was seen as a restriction in their free movement especially for girls. They told me that he stares at the girls passing by and complains to their parents if he sees a girl outside her home a couple of times. Children said that they want to change the mentality of people so that they become open-minded and

do not put undue restrictions on girls. This shows that children think about things other than just 'play' which are important for their lives and those who live around them.

Participation of children in the urban planning is beneficial since it prepares them to play an active role in shaping the environment as adults, but a 'generationally inclusive approach' (O'Brien 2003) can also improve urban life for all, not just for children and their parents (Cunningham et al. 2003). Children produce creative ideas for planning and their actions are frequently oriented towards more ecological and socially supportive communities. They direct policy planning to the long term future and their involvement is crucial for long term sustainability (Chawla 2002). Therefore, it is very important that children should be involved in matters and decisions concerning them to make better cities for everyone.

## **Chapter 8**

### **Conclusion**

This study started with the aim of exploring the perspective of children about well-being. This chapter starts with some reflections on the research methods used in this study, followed by the summary of the main findings. Finally, I will present the conclusion drawn from the findings of this study, as well as recommendations for future research and programs aimed towards improving the well-being of children.

#### **8.1. Reflections on Research Methodology**

The overall aim of this study was to provide an opportunity for children, especially girls, to participate and state their views about what they consider to be well-being, what are the indicators of well-being and how their ideas are shaped by their context, which is an urban slum area in Islamabad, the capital city of Pakistan. This was a qualitative study that intended to explore in depth children's perspectives on well-being and the ways in which they describe the indicators of their well-being. Eighteen children, ten girls and eight boys, aged between 14 to 18 years, participated in my study and provided rich data for analysis and interpretation. The methods employed in this research included: observation, informal conversations, guided tours, group discussions and interviews. These methods were selected because they seemed to me to be most suited to the type of information I was seeking, and also because they were the most comfortable for the children who participated. They are all research methods that have a basis in standard field practice and theory, and might have been used in any qualitative research not exclusive to children only.

#### **8.2. Summary of Findings**

The children that I interviewed listed not only objective indicators of well-being but also subjective indicators, such as those related to positive feelings, social relationships and self efficacy. Their list of things which are required for well-being or a good life included, among other things, money, education, family, friends, freedom, respect and self esteem, a good house and a good environment. However, the children's descriptions of these dimensions or indicators

of well-being were not straightforward. For example, they defined freedom as being able to exercise their agency to go out with friends, but it also meant the support of parents who may stop them from doing things which are not good for them. Similarly, all of them agreed upon the importance of money for a good life, but at the same they had high moral standards about the way it was earned, and agreed that money earned in dishonest or illegal ways did not have the same value for well-being as lesser but honest earnings.

The girls and boys participating in this study both came up with almost the same dimensions or indicators of well-being. However, there were differences in how they ranked the importance of those indicators, which reflected differences in their lived experiences, largely due to gender norms in their society. An example of this is ‘freedom’, which held high importance for the girls since they had less parental and social permission to roam their community or make certain choices for their lives than the boys, who ranked freedom as the last item in importance.. Another example is of ‘playground’ which was among the top six items in the boys’ list, because sports like cricket were an important part of their lives, but was not mentioned at all by the girls, who are generally not encouraged to participate in sports activities, at least publicly. The difference in the socio-cultural status and socialization of boys and girls in their society clearly shaped their choices in this exercise.

This study also revealed the ways in which the children perceived their local environment. The slum is seen by many outsiders as a place of residence for poor people and a site for illegal activities such as selling of alcohol and drugs by people living around that area. However, the children did not consider their community as a slum because they had proper houses with all basic facilities, nor did they consider themselves poor when compared to many other people. They considered that they could afford food, clothes and education and lived in a coherent and safe community. Also, they expressed high moral standards when it came to ways of earning money. They preferred to work at a less socially prestigious job, such as cleaners or sweepers, over the sale of alcohol which may generate more money but is an illegal business in Pakistan. The children in this study did not condone any such activity in their area and wanted to change this situation and the associated perceptions of their neighbourhood.



### **8.3. Conclusion**

This study started off from the current developments in the field of well-being. There are very few studies conducted about children's well-being that include them as participants and not just subjects, especially in developing countries. Therefore, this study aimed not only to contribute towards the knowledge of dimensions and indicators of child well-being but also to include children in the whole process. It becomes especially important for policy makers and others working for children, since they need to know the perspectives of children about their lives in order to facilitate meaningful and positive change.

Children's subjective understanding of subjective well-being has been given more focus in recent studies. This provides us with a deeper insight into the lived experiences of children beyond their basic needs and survival, which are important as such, but do not provide the fullest understanding of all aspects of children's lives.. The subjective aspects of the well-being of children reveals their 'capabilities' (the things they are actually able to do) and 'actual functioning' (the things they are actually free to do). The difference between capabilities and functioning reveals the structures of community and social life and how these interplay in ways that impact the lives of children. Thus, it can be concluded that in order to improve the well-being of we need to understand how social structures and arrangements impact the lives of children and work for change at this fundamental level, where necessary, so that children have an opportunity to utilize their capabilities to the maximum.

There has been a long debate about moving from a 'becoming' to 'being' understanding in the development of child well-being indicators movement. Children in this study came up with indicators of well-being that adhered to both aspects of 'being' and 'becoming'. Based on my findings it can be seen that these two aspects: 'being' and 'becoming' are not competitive but rather compatible with each other. The problem arises when the studies of well-being focus on one aspect more than the other because then those studies do not present a complete picture of what a good life for children looks like. It is useful to measure and monitor indicators such as education in terms of 'becoming' because it enhances the capability of children to gain future employment and thus have a decent living. On the other hand, it can also be seen in terms of 'being' since it influences the self esteem and sense of achievement of children. Almost every indicator of child well-being has both 'being' and 'becoming' aspects, so we should not prefer

one over the other but should see them as two faces of the same coin. Seeing children as ‘being’ alone may put an extra emphasis on their agency while ignoring the context which shapes their agency, and considering them as ‘becoming’ alone may cloud their position as someone whose opinion about their own lives is worth studying. Therefore, we need to view both discourses as complimenting each other and avoid labeling children in a single one of these timescapes.

By taking seriously the opinions of the children, this study focused on their capability with respect to their well-being, rather than on areas of deficiency. This focus on child well-being is a more valid concept as it provides us with the space to actually find out what a good life entails for children rather than just measuring poverty and its implications in their lives. This study showed that these children living in a neighbourhood generally categorized as “poor” and “a slum” did not consider themselves poor nor did they consider their area a “slum”. They challenged the normative definition of the slums as evil sites and a temporary phase in urbanization. This supports the theory of capability that children are not passive, in need of development programs as recipients alone. Rather, they are active participants in shaping their own lives provided they get sufficient social opportunities. These children aspired to get higher education and good employment opportunities in the future but still they preferred to continue to live in their colony because they saw it as their permanent home and not an undesirable place from which to escape.

Finally, it can be concluded that it is very important to engage children in exploring their perspectives of well-being and developing indicators to effectively measure and monitor their well-being. International policy statements do have a positive impact on the lives of children globally but these documents cannot be applied uniformly to every local situation without any consideration of local culture and context. Therefore, it is important to conduct localized studies on child well-being in order to support and develop local policies for improving the well-being of children.

#### **8.4. Recommendation for Future Research with Children and Policies for Child Well-being**

This study has contributed towards the growing knowledge, debates, and perspectives about child well-being and the indicators used to measure and monitor it. This has particular importance for policy and programs developed to improve the lives of children. Based on my

experience in conducting research with children and exploring children's well-being, I would give following recommendations for future actions:

- Be reflexive about the research methods used in the field with children. It is not necessarily the case that the research methods considered as 'child-friendly' by the researcher are seen as 'friendly' by children in their localized situation.
- There is a need to conduct studies differentiated by gender about well-being perspectives among children since boys and girls have different socialization experiences and this influences their views and capabilities.
- Children's well-being needs to be studied in their local context rather than simply generalized as such. While in the global north subjective indicators might be more relevant, in the global south we still need information about the basic needs and survival of children in order to strive for their well-being.
- Well-being of children cannot be studied exclusively through either a 'being' or 'becoming' lens. Rather, we need to study both aspects in order to get a holistic view of children's lives and well-being.
- Children should be involved not only in the development of the dimensions and indicators of well-being but also in defining them, since these terms might have specific meanings for them not considered by adults. .
- Policies and programs developed to improve the well-being of children should be based on the baseline studies of those children's perspectives on good life or well-being.

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