

Resilience and Meaning of Life among Pakistani Slum Dwellers

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The present study explored the reasons behind the resilience of slum dwellers that enables them to face adverse life circumstances and helps them to fight back. Moreover, it was an attempt to have an insight on how meaningful they perceive their life to be. Gender differences were also observed. This study was qualitative in nature and Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) was employed to gain insights into the various factors as perceived and reported by the slum dwellers from their own experiences. A sample of eight slum dwellers, four men and four women, aged between 16-50 years was selected purposefully from different slum areas of Lahore. Semi structured interviews were conducted with the slum dwellers; the interviews were recorded and transcribed for further analysis. Seven major themes; tendency towards religion, social support and help seeking behavior, belief in self, adaptation, life skills, determination and positive emotions emerged as a result of analysis. The subthemes to emerge under first theme were reliance on God, religious teachings, Day of Judgment, belief in fate and prayers; the subthemes under the second theme were family and community support; whereas the subthemes extracted under the third theme were self control and internal locus of control; and the subthemes extracted under the fourth theme were acceptance and agreeable demeanor towards lack of resources; the subthemes extracted under the fifth theme were equanimity/mindfulness, patience and tolerance; in contrast, the subthemes extracted under the sixth theme were strong determination, mental and physical strength, while the subthemes extracted under the seventh theme were hope/optimism, good faith and gratitude.

Keywords: Resilience, Slum dwellers, Meaning of life, Religion, Social support, Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis.

A slum is defined as a crowded urban area distinguished by substandard housing, squalor, inadequate access to safe water, and sanitation including infrastructure, poor quality housing structure, overpopulation, or insecure tenure of residence. History of slums goes back to 19th and 20th centuries. Slums first appeared in 1820s, since then it is used to categorize the poorest quality/substandard housing. Slums are regarded as a refuge for many marginal activities. However, in the developing world, it lacks the derogatory connotation and refers to the informal/lower quality housing (UN-Habitat, 2007). There are different reasons for rapid growth and formulation of slums worldwide such as migration, unemployment, social conflicts, poverty, natural disasters, informal or stagnant economy, politics and poor/inadequate planning.

Policy makers have always tried to decrease or change slums in many countries with varying success, including slum relocation, up gradation or removal, urban planning and some public housing projects (UN-Habitat, 2011).

Orangi Town in Karachi, Pakistan, Cape Town in South Africa, Kibera in Nairobi, Kenya, Dharavi in Mumbai, India and Neza-Chalco-Itza in Mexico are the largest slums worldwide (Young, 2013). About 33% of the urban population lives in developing world and about 863 million people live in slums (UN-Habitat, 2012). A large part of the slums is in South Asia's fast-growing cities that are facing unplanned development, lack of resources and flooding (Perera, 2012). Pakistan has been ranked 141 of 182 in United Nation's Human Poverty Index (HPI). 48% of the total population of Pakistan

lives in slums and is facing fast slum growth rates and lacks basic needs (Homeless International, 2013). In Pakistan slums are largely known as 'Katchi abadi' in Urdu, that means incomplete, simple, rough, illegal, temporary, or immature. Abadi means settlement or neighborhood or quarter (Asian Society Organization, 2014). Orangi Township, Karachi is the largest slum in Asia. Slums sit in the heart of the financial capital but, strategies to transform it face strong opposition. Slums are overpopulated, strings of riddled iron shacks contain the belongings of residents, young children play with stray dogs among litter and there is little sign of hygienic water/ sanitation facilities. Akhter Colony, Korangi, and Layari manifest Pakistan's most crippling problems (Mansoor, 2013).

Approximately 30% of Lahore city is covered by slums. Poor villagers, migrating in search of employment, are compelled to inhabit in slums. Slums are present particularly near posh areas like Defense Housing Authority, Johar Town, China Chowk, etc. These slums are clusters of filthy poor shanties with few or no basic facilities (Wahab et al, 2013). Berhpind is a big slum in Johar Town facing problems. They are beggars of water and pick garbage earning 2000-4000/- per month. Mostly 5-7 members reside together. Seven jhomparris (huts or shacks) are allotted in one canal area and people living in it pay Rs.300/- rent per month and some of them have also taken electricity connections from the nearby houses to use their electricity on an agreement to pay half of the electricity bills (Akram, 2009).

To understand why one billion slum dwellers worldwide (UN-Habitat, 2007) still put up with their hard lives, the concepts of resilience, subjective well-being and happiness are important to understand. Kimberly and Gordon (1998) stated that many people live in poverty and high stress environmental conditions that make them vulnerable to experience violence, abuse, hunger, death, and other adversities but, they overcome this adversity and lead competent lives. These people are resilient to living in poverty and stress and share many common characteristics and

protective experiences. Werner (1995) found some common characteristics in resilient people such as good social skills, autonomy, excellent reasoning abilities, an internal locus of control and an ability to elicit positive attention from others. On the other hand, the challenges faced by slum dwellers are worsened by natural hazards and climate change. At the household and community levels, slum dwellers are improving their resilience level by building stronger foundations, clearing drainage, planting trees, digging trenches and ditches (Walker, 2014). Resilience is the capacity to be vigorous or successful again after something bad happens (Merriam Webster dictionary, 2014). It is an ability to properly adapt to stress and adversities such as family/ relationship issues, health problems, or workplace/financial stressors. It is expressed when people can face difficulties and recover from them (Rutter, 2008).

Keck and Etzold (2013) conducted a study on, 'Risk and Resilience in Asian Megacities' to identify those capacities that strengthen people's social resilience in megacities of Dhaka (Bangladesh), Guangzhou (China), and Lahore (Pakistan). The study took place in Pakistan's largest Sufi shrine in the megacity of Lahore (Pakistan) after a terrorist attack and the study concluded that despite poor living conditions of the visitors and fear of terrorist attacks Sufi shrine plays a significant part for maintaining social resilience, as the sanctuary helped people to overcome their trauma and to dispel their fear.

In 2013, Oishi and Diener conducted a study, 'Residents of Poor Nations Have a Greater Sense of Meaning in Life Than Residents of Wealthy Nations', using Gallup World Poll data, and examined the role of societal wealth for meaning in life in 132 nations. It was found that while life satisfaction was considerably higher in rich nations than in poor nations, the meaning in life was higher in poor nations as compared to wealthy nations. Particularly, meaning in life was higher in poor nations because these were religious nations. The intervening role of religiosity stayed significant as the researchers controlled for potential other variables such as individuality, literacy, and fertility rate. Thus,

a review of these studies provides sufficient evidence of the research in this area. Slum dwellers face life threatening hardships with little or no support from government but, yet are seen living their lives. Thus, the purpose of the study was to find out how resilience is experienced by slum dwellers and to also find out how they consider their lives as meaningful based on the conclusions of our earlier study (in this study we were focusing on the reasons and forms of resilience found in slum dwellers, in the earlier part of the study it was proved that slum dwellers have significantly higher resilience than non-slum dwellers).

Research Questions

The following two research questions were framed:

- How do slum dwellers perceive meaning in life?
- How do slum dwellers experience resilience?

Method

This study was qualitative in nature and Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) was selected for data analysis (Smith & Eatough, 2006) because IPA draws upon phenomenology, hermeneutics, and idiography (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2012). IPA has a central concern for subjective conscious experiences and it acknowledges the limitation of accessing an individual's life directly. In order to investigate how events are experienced and perceived by the respondents requires an interpretative activity on the part of both, the respondents and the researcher. The researchers tried to make sense of the experiences of the respondents and the respondents were also making sense of their experiences. With this double hermeneutic process; this study tries to get an insight into the presence of the phenomena of resilience and meaning in life as experienced by the slum dwellers.

Participants

Since, IPA has an idiographic emphasis so it also affects the sample size that often ranges from one to thirty (Smith & Eatough, 2006),

thus, eight slum dwellers (four males and four females) were selected through purposive sampling technique from the slums of Johar Town, Lahore. Purposive sampling technique was employed because it recruits only those respondents who have relevance with the topic being investigated. Thus, the criterion for the respondents of this study was to be a slum dweller. These slum dwellers were referred to as, Fatima, Sakina, Farzana, Sidra, Basheer, Liaqat, Waseem and Abdullah. All respondents reside in a big slum in Johar Town. Fatima, Sakina and Sidra are house maids while Farzana is a tailor. Liaqat, Waseem and Abdullah are laborers while Basheer is a van driver. The age range of the respondents was 16 to 50 years. Fatima, Sakina, Sidra, Basheer, Liaqat and Waseem are married and live in a joint family system while Farzana and Abdullah are single. All married couples had children.

Data Collection

The researcher first went to the slum of Johar Town from where the respondents were to be recruited for the study. After visiting each shack, the researcher was able to recruit eight respondents for the study. The respondents were briefed about the purpose of the study and their informed consent was taken and they were assured of confidentiality. A self-constructed semi structured interview schedule was prepared. The questions were prepared to guide instead of dictating the process of interviews. The questions focused on asking the respondents about their life experiences and feelings while living in slums, how strong they perceive themselves while facing difficulties, from where they derive their hopes in hard times, how do they concentrate in terms of thinking, feeling and behaviour during hard times, how do they perceive their lives as meaningful, their reactions in pain and anger and the sources that help them recover from pain, agony and despair. The first researcher went to the shacks of the respondents for the interviews on the day agreed upon. During the course of the interviews, all the respondents were regarded as experiential experts. The respondents were given freedom to open up any new areas. All the interviews

were tape recorded. Data collection lasted approximately eight weeks. All interviews were transcribed into verbatim.

Criteria for Evaluation and Reflexivity

In this study, the interpretation of respondents' experiences and perceptions may be influenced by the researcher's own experiences as a non-slum dweller. However, in IPA the analysis is actually characterized by subjectivity acknowledging the researcher's own assumptions and explanations as a necessary precondition for making sense of participants' thoughts and feelings (Willig, 2001). Thus, the main task for them is to provide interpretations to the experiences of participants. Another factor could be that during interviews the respondents knew that the researcher is a non slum dweller so some of their responses may be influenced and this may be the reason behind highlighting the positive aspects of their lives to lessen the difference between the researcher and the respondents. Overall the study was a product of interactions between the respondents and the first researcher so these findings may be considered as confining to the respondents of this study only. However, in terms of subjectivity, the interpretations of the respondents' accounts were examined by and discussed with the second researcher, who checked that themes/subthemes and interpretations were grounded in the data.

Analysis

The analysis consisted of four basic stages; the first stage included transcribing the responses into verbatim, in which the tape recorded data were transcribed by the researcher and rechecked twice to ensure the exact verbatim. The second stage consisted of multiple readings of the verbatim/listening to the audio tapes and making notes, in which the researcher read each transcript thoroughly many times and heard audio tapes also in order to become as familiar as possible with respondents' accounts. This multiple reading of each transcript resulted in notes about the key phrases, preliminary interpretations, any connections or contradictions within each participant's accounts being made in the left hand margin. The third

stage included transformation of notes into emergent themes, in which the researcher noted the emergent themes on the right hand margin. Then the researcher used a separate sheet to enlist emergent themes to find any similarities or contradictions between them. The fourth stage included linking the emergent themes and clustering themes together, in which the researcher grouped together these emergent themes according to conceptual similarities, and provided each cluster with a descriptive label. A final list comprising of super-ordinate themes and subthemes was obtained with relevant short extracts from the transcript. Thus, the present study found seven major themes to emerge from the verbatim of the respondents:

1. Tendency towards religion
2. Social support and help seeking behavior
3. Belief in Self
4. Adaptation with adversity
5. Life Skills
6. Determination
7. Positive Emotions

1. Tendency towards religion

For all the respondents, religion was a primary source of resilience and meaning in their life in the slum. The subthemes that followed were; reliance on God, religious teachings, belief in fate, belief in Day of Judgment and prayer.

1.1. Reliance on God: Many respondents said that they have strong faith in the presence of Allah and His supreme power over their lives. For instance, Abdullah said that he believes that Allah is present everywhere to help him, as he said:

Allah is omnipresent. Allah is there for me. I ask Allah for help. I believe in Allah and His Prophet and peace be upon him.
(Abdullah)

Farzana was also of similar views. She said whenever she is faced with shortage of food at home; she feels near to God and relies on Him:

I do not panic and rely on Allah. I feel Allah is near me. Everything is in Allah's hands

even a doctor cannot treat a disease without His will. Man is nothing without God. (*Farzana*)

They seem to have faith in God's presence so they do not become overwhelmed with harshness of their circumstances. Another respondent Sidra also said sometimes her family has to sleep hungry and this is normal for them now. Sidra said she relies on God and this gives her a feeling of strength. She said:

I feel strong even in extreme hunger. Sometimes it's really difficult. God gives me strength. Allah is with me always, He never leaves us alone no matter what. (*Sidra*)

All the respondents confidently said that they still feel strong and this feeling of strength comes from their belief in God. They said that they believe that Allah has all the knowledge and they rely on His mercy in their life in the slum. As said by many of the respondents:

Allah knows. All the decisions are in Allah's hands. Allah solves all the problems. I rely on Allah. He will do whatever He wants. Whatever Allah does, is for my own betterment. Allah will solve all the issues. Man only sees Allah in such times, if we have meal for one day we rely on Allah for meal for another day. (*Liaqat*)

Allah is the source. Allah gives strength. Allah gives hope who can give hope except Him in bad times? Man only seeks hope from God. (*Basheer*)

1.2. Religious teachings: Many of the respondents said that they learn from teachings of Islam about how to live with hardships with patience and tolerance that comes through prayer and remembering Allah. As said by the respondents:

Allah says in Quran, Allah does not burden a soul more than it can bear. Bad time is a test from Allah. He keeps on testing His men. God commands us to ask His help and mercy. These teachings give me strength, when I am upset. (*Sidra*)

God has taught us to bear up hard times with patience. (*Sakina*)

Islam has taught us brotherhood. (*Liaqat*)

God has taught us not to be disappointed. (*Fatima*)

Thus, as reported by them, religion teaches them to build skills and resources in times of adversities.

1.3. Belief in fate: Sakina became overwhelmed while giving her opinion about living in a slum and said:

Like your fate was not in your hands so was mine. This is just ridiculous if it's not understood. (*Sakina*)

Others said:

We will get whatever is written in our fate. If daal roti (pulses and loaves) (cheap form of food) was written in my fate, will I not eat those? We accept whatever Allah has written. If a bad time comes upon a man and it was written in his/her fate, Can he/she run away from it? No, it is not possible; man has to face the situation. We are getting how much Allah has written in our fate we will only get this and not more as no one can alter the fate. (*Abdullah*)

Difficulties are written in fate. Every difficulty is a test predetermined in fate so I always take it as written in my fate and nothing can be done about it. (*Sidra*)

I think it was written in my destination. Life and difficulties go hand in hand, so I live with these difficulties as a part of my life. (*Waseem*)

All respondents patently said that they believe in predetermination of fate and regard atrocities as a test from God. Almost all the respondents seemed convinced with 'living in slums' was predetermined in their fate.

1.4. Belief in the Day of Judgment: Many respondents confidently reported that they have faith in temporary nature of this world and that on the Day of Judgment they will be rewarded. As they said:

We are not going to stay here forever.
(*Fatima*)

This world is temporary so it is useless to give up after difficulty, which is also temporary. (*Farzana*)

Thus, drawing on the temporary nature of the world they felt relieved on the idea of temporary nature of the hard times too. One of the interesting views came from Waseem who was of the opinion that they will not be questioned by God on the Day of Judgment because they had no money and thus they have not done anything bad because money brings lavish desires. As quoted below:

Man is so vain he considers he will live forever but, he does not admit that he will die one day. Both rich and poor will die but, poor will not be questioned due to poverty. Allah will ask the rich how they spent their money on earth and whom had they helped with their money during the course of their lives? Rich have desires but not the poor. (Waseem)

1.6. Prayers: According to most of the respondents prayers are a source of strength for helping them in understanding the meaning in life. As said by the respondents:

Prayers add meaning to my life. (*Farzana*)

I pray to Allah, I ask for His help. I say my prayer and ask Allah and His Prophet peace be upon him for help in bad times as we offer prayer to seek help. (*Abdullah*)

Whenever I feel low I always turn to prayers and this provides me with the hope for a better life. (*Fatima*)

Thus, it seems that they seek support and a sense of reconciliation in their tendency towards religion. These findings are supported by the findings of Oishi and Diener (2013) that although satisfaction is higher in richer countries but, the poor find their lives more meaningful than the rich due to greater religiosity. Another study by Steffler, Murdoch, and Gosselin (2014) found that faith heightens the meaning in life. Beyers (2014) also found three functions that religion plays in the lives of poor; firstly, religion can

readdress human thinking to spirituality such as focusing on spiritual poverty instead of material concerns. Secondly, it can provide the moral fibers needed in society. Thirdly, religion can be a part of the system actively encouraging and participating in alleviating poverty.

2. Social support and help seeking behaviour

The second major theme to emerge was the social support and help seeking behaviour and the subthemes to emerge under it were the sense of support from the family and the community.

2.1. Seeking support from families: Respondents said that they rely on strong relationships among one another such as they said:

My poor husband does not have any business. His joints are damaged; we have 10-12 goats so I graze the cattle and earn livelihood from it. My husband is so nice. He loves me so much. My husband says you have always consoled me, how can you give up your strength, he consoles me so I gradually gain strength again. My husband controls me when I am angry. My husband listens to me, I tell him everything. (*Fatima*)

My spouse listens to me which lightens me. (*Sakina*)

I am very happy in my home, I have no issue, I have worked in houses my whole life but, my husband has never asked me about the money I earn, he has never forbidden me for anything, he loves me so much, he has never abused me even if I had said something bad in anger. (*Fatima*)

My children make my life meaningful. (*Sidra*)

All married female respondents said that they get love, care, and consolation from their husbands and that adds meaning to their lives. They also get strength from their children because the sole purpose of their lives is hope for a better future for their children for which they are working harder.

While Waseem and Farzana said that they get strength from the teachings of parents.

My parents and teachers used to say that if you give up due to poverty, you will be disgraceful to your God for all other countless blessings. If my parents are there for me, I can recover from any problem. (*Farzana*)

It was also interesting to note that Farzana said that she had been a patient of major depression as a result of domestic violence.

My parents taught me never to give up. My parents have always given me strength. Whatever they had decided for me was right for me. (*Waseem*)

Basheer said he gets strength from his children, while Liaqat takes help from relatives:

My children console me whenever I feel low, I look at my children and that exhilarates me again. (*Basheer*)

I take help from relatives. (*Liaqat*)

Thus, the respondents were taught by their parents and teachers never to give up so they turn to these valuable teachings. This support and help seeking behavior proves to be a valuable contributor in building their resilient lives. In an earlier study, Southwick and Charney (2012) said that an important aspect of resilience is the presence of social support. Family and society both play substantial role in fostering resilience in slum dwellers. According to an article, *The Road to Resilience* (2014), several factors can change the negative perception of adverse life situations but, the most significant and primary factors include those relationships that provide support, care, love, encouragement, and trust both within and outside the family.

2.2. Support from community: Some of the respondents said that they get support from their communities such as if someone needs water or if government officials try to remove their shacks they unite and protest. Living together also enables them to be aware of one another's issues that are fading in recent modern times among people living in urban houses. As they said:

Our community lives together and we share one another's happiness and

sorrows, living together is a source of strength for facing up and recovering from hardships. As we live close to one another so everyone knows what is going on in other shacks so it makes us very much aware of one another's circumstances, thus unlike bricked houses we don't have such barriers and distances that keep neighbors from sharing one another's sorrows. (*Sakina*)

My friends help me in difficulty. (*Sidra*)

I take help from neighbors. (*Liaqat*)

My teachers taught me never to give up. (*Sidra*)

We are brothers and sisters as Muslims, so we should live united and share one another's difficulties. So as believers we must be sharing one another's sorrows. (*Waseem*)

My teachers taught me never to give up. One of my teachers used to listen to my problems when I was in studying in Madarasa and she always used to give me courage. (*Sakina*)

They get support from their families, friends, neighbors and community who help them in recovering from any pain and hard time by suggesting solutions and not leaving them alone. As found earlier, Werner (1995) in his article regarded, social support systems such as strong bonds in family and community by receiving help from peers and personal strengths such as positive self concepts, as external sources of fostering resilience. The teachings of parents and teachers cast a long lasting impression on their minds as they also reported that their parents and teachers taught them never to give up. Such teachings are a treasure for facing adversities in future. According to Doob (2013), poor children growing up in resilient families have received significant support for doing well as they enter the social world—starting in daycare programs and then in schooling. The study of Sandler et al. (2015) also supported parents' role in developing resilience. In another research study by Southwick and Charney

(2012), showed a very strong association between how extensive and supportive one's social network is with one's ability to manage stress and trauma. When faced with a stressful situation in the presence of trusted friends, they seek their advice and support. Southwick said stress is not necessarily bad — someone who is able to adapt to stressful situations is able to increase his or her resilience. Society surrounds an individual and being a unit of the society when the individuals connect with it, they get strength. This strength helps them to face all the hardships and this social support in form of friends, teachers, neighbors or community help them in recovering from almost any hardship. Some of the participants said that they also get support from their community as they live together in slums where they are so close to one another that they can share almost anything with one another, they get support from their neighbors and thus, their community helps them to recover from pain and hardships. Bernard (2004) found that communities play a huge role in fostering resilience. These findings are also supported by the previous studies of Mullin and Acre (2008) that confirmed the strong role of social support including internal family support, relationships and the role of communities in developing resilience.

3. Belief in Self

The third theme that emerged was the belief in self while the subthemes were self reliance/ self control, positive self image and internal locus of control.

3.1. Self reliance: Waseem said he was suffering from fever for last ten days. He went to work with his illness when all his savings had ended. He said:

When I was lying on the cot, I felt I had to get up or else I will become more sick. I had to trust myself that I am strong enough to go to work. I had to stop feeling helpless and rely on myself. This feeling gave me strength. (Waseem)

Like Waseem, some other respondents also said that they are self reliant and have perseverance that enables them to be resilient.

3.2. Self control: Basheer said that sometimes his maters do not pay him for work and this enrages him. He wants to take revenge but, then he is able to control himself. As he said:

Sometimes, when they don't pay me, I become mad with anger. I can destroy their property. I can take revenge. But, then I realize this will only bring remorse. I feel like a strong person. Strength comes from inside of a person; it does not come from anywhere else, if a man is able to control his anger nobody can be braver than a man. Anger is the enemy of mind, man can do anything in anger even he can commit murder and later regret it when the time has passed so it is better that we control it. (Basheer)

He tries to encourage himself that he has to be perseverant in his life and not lose his temper even in face of injustice. All respondents said that self control is imperative in their laborious lives. They keep their head in place because they have firm faith in themselves. This reflects an important building block of resilience in the form of self control.

3.3. Positive self image: Sakina said they have to frequently relocate, and this does not frustrate her because she thinks she has the ability to manage it. She said:

I am able to recover after any hard time. I trust myself I consider myself a strong person. I rely on my abilities. We have no permanent residence, today we are here, tomorrow there. It is not easy but, I think I am blessed with the ability to manage stress. Even in this state of insecurity, I keep on smiling; I never have had any feeling of guilt. What I feel like is that after every difficulty I am a better person. (Sakina)

3.4 Internal locus of control: Some respondents also said that they believe that everything is in their own hands so they don't blame anyone. They have control over their lives. As one of the respondents said:

Strength comes from inside of the person. Everything is in control of the person. We

can tolerate anything. Everything is in man's hands. (*Sidra*)

However, it was interesting to note that some respondents said that their life conditions are not in their hands as these were written in their fate and are controlled by God (external locus of control) while some respondents also seemed to believe that everything is controlled by them (internal locus of control). However, both of these seem to help them and encourage them to move forward. Campbell (2014) also found a positive correlation between self control and resilience. Another study found a positive correlation between self control and life satisfaction (Moffitt et al, 2011). Werner (1995) found some common characteristics in resilient people such as good social skills, autonomous, excellent reasoning abilities, and an internal locus of control and can elicit positive attention from others.

4. Adaptation to adversity

The fourth major theme that emerged was adaptation to adversity and the subtheme was acceptance of condition.

4.1. Acceptance: Sidra said that they have an extreme shortage of water, they only get water in the evening from a public tap for one or two hours and the whole slum community waits in long queues with water containers in their hands. They pay water bills too. Sometimes there is no water for many days. She has to walk a long distance for getting water for her children. However, she said:

My children remain thirsty the whole day.
It is usual now. (*Sidra*)

She said it is usual, this reflects that they have accepted their life conditions. Similarly, Sakina also said that there are many deprivations such as water, electricity, shelter, clothes, and education.

Don't you see there is nothing? Mosquitoes bite us, flies hover over my hungry kids, they are dirty and nude, no doubt it is the most painful sight for any parent but, I can't help them or deny living my life. I have accepted everything, nothing really

feels now. What can I do now? So, I have accepted the reality of my life. (*Sakina*)

While for Farzana, she prefers living in a slum over living in a house because she suffers from claustrophobic feelings if she would live in a house and she also thinks it is cheaper and simpler to live in a slum as it saves her money. She said:

We have accepted that we are still living in primitive times when there was nothing but, people were still living their lives. Life is passing anyway. I like this lifestyle in slums. We do not have to get our shack plastered nor do we have to spend on sanitation. Now if I have to live in a house, it would feel like I am locked in a narrow place and this feel suffocates me. I can breathe well in open air. As long as we are getting food to eat, it does not matter if it is pulses and loaf (daal, roti), everything is just fine, and I don't complain if I have to eat loaf with water, sometimes we have to sleep hungry too, like last night. (*Farzana*)

Although, Fatima hinted during her conversation that sometimes she feels helpless and this makes her deeply sad particularly the sight of her hungry children as she said 'kills' her, majority of respondents claimed that they have accepted their impecunious lives in an agreeable demeanor toward lack of resources. Thus, the acceptance of lack of resources and acknowledgement of every shortage has really backed them in building resilience and seeing their lives as meaningful. They also said that they think they are still living in the primitive living conditions when earlier mankind had nothing but, yet it survived. Mayo Foundation for Medical Education and Research also listed adapting to adversity necessary to build resilience. Nunes (2016) also asserted that resilience is needed for advancing knowledge on how to improve human adaptation.

5. Life skills

The fifth major theme that emerged was life skills and the subthemes were equanimity/ mindfulness, patience and tolerance.

5.1. *Equanimity/Mindfulness*: Basheer said that when he is not paid for his work it makes him very angry as he needs to pay the rent for his shack. He said:

I feel really angry, my body trembles with anger. Then the sight of my family comes to my mind that calms me down after all there is no anger in a poor man. My mind feels relaxed and I am able to forgive. We keep calm. If a bad time comes we cannot shriek out loud or cry, or become uncontrollable as this cannot be done, we have to keep calm and sit quietly to bear it with tolerance and patience. I keep calm. I do not panic. (*Basheer*)

According to him, his anger is controlled by his ability to keep his head cool. He also said that he had seen poverty and injustice since his childhood that helped him in developing and strengthening equanimity.

5.3. *Patience*: While narrating his feelings about having a house, Liaqat (his shack faces big bungalows) sounded helpless but, then he looked to reconcile his feelings with patience. As he said:

Just look at those beautiful big houses. I too, want to have one like those even though I can't afford it. But, it is alright. Not every wish comes true. We are so patient. We have to be patient. I have always been patient throughout my life. (*Liaqat*)

All the respondents kept repeating that they bear everything with patience. This reflects that patience helps them to build their resilience.

5.4. *Tolerance*: Sidra said she was widowed twice before marrying her third husband. She had five children. She said she has been living in slums for more than eighteen years now. Talking about her experience she said:

When I was young, I would think why did it happen to me? Why I could not buy a house for my children. This would make me sad and helpless. Death of my two husbands left me shaken with shock then with the passage of time I accepted everything. When a bad time comes to a

person, he/she initially shakes but, then gradually we have to tolerate. I have always endured with patience, man has to tolerate everything. (*Sidra*)

One of the most important ways out of an unwanted situation was to tolerate it. These findings are in support to those of Wagnild (2012), who found that resilience is composed of five components-meaningful life, perseverance, patience, self reliance, equanimity and coming home to you.

6. Determination

The sixth theme was determination and the subthemes that emerged were strong determination and mental and physical strength.

6.1. *Strong determination*: Abdullah and Liaqat said that they do not give up. They said:

Last weekend, it rained like cats and dogs, our shack was destroyed and our belongings floated away in the rain water but, we did not give up and look we have reorganized everything like before, if we will give up who will come to help us? (*Abdullah*)

While Liaqat said:

I try again and again. If it does not work, I retry it then again if I fail I again retry it until I succeed. I have never given up in my whole life. If someone is determined any problem can be solved. (*Liaqat*)

Like Abdullah and Liaqat, Sakina also said that they are not born to give up. This attitude of 'not giving up' indicates strong determination among slum dwellers.

6.2. *Mental and physical strength*: Basheer is suffering from high blood pressure. He said he was getting ready for work but, his wife did not want him to leave for work until he feels fully well, as he said:

I have an issue of high blood pressure and my joints have weakened due to heavy physical work but, I have never given up. If a person gives up and becomes overwhelmingly concerned he/she will fall ill and the illness if given over

consideration would enable a person to earn livelihood so I never gave up even after being ill and I feel better now. (Basheer)

Like Basheer, Waseem, who was also ill but, still went to work said:

How can I give up? If I'll become overwhelmed with illness I won't be able to earn my livelihood. (Waseem)

Most of the male respondents reported that they are aware of the fact that giving up their strength will mean no food for their children so they never give up their determination even when they are not feeling well. Determination gives them physical and mental strength in illness. Determination contributes towards high resilience among respondents of this study. Researching the theme of resilience, Weston (1997) stated that God made human beings intrinsically resilient and has given them the amazing, protective mechanisms that help them to absorb and recover from the immense physical and emotional pain and suffering. Although, we might have suffered great losses but, we must resist the temptations to sit back and settle for less: resilient faith helps us to bounce back again.

7. Positive Emotions

The seventh theme that emerged was positive emotions and the subthemes were hopefulness and optimism and good faith and gratitude.

7.1. Hopefulness and optimism: All the respondents were hopeful for a better tomorrow. They said that they are very hopeful and optimistic about their betterment and welfare. This also reflects hope enables slum dwellers to bear their adversities.

Inshallah, Allah will have mercy on us, too. Our good time will also come. Allah helps those who have good faith. He will also listen to us one day. Whatever Allah will do, will be better for us, hope keeps us alive, in the coming years our conditions will change, only Allah knows. When bad time comes, man turns to God and asks

for His help with a hope that He will solve all the problems. (Waseem)

The purpose of my life is the hope to give my children education and prosperity. (Sidra)

Look! Even now I am saying Allah will bring our time too, if we will be given money then we will also live our lives like those living in houses. (Basheer)

7.3. Gratitude: Many respondents kept on saying, 'Thank God'. They said they thank Allah for everything in all situations such as Sidra said:

We say to Allah that we are grateful to Him a thousand times for His blessings. I consider my life worthy. I consider my life circumstances good because we earn our livelihood by pure means. Thanks to Allah. I am not unthankful to Allah so why should I complain to Allah about people? We must be thankful to Allah so that He remains happy. I am thankful to Allah. I thank Allah that we are at least getting food to live. My children have grown up so I thank Allah. (Sidra)

One of the respondents, Liaquat also said that he would prosper because of his good faith. These positive emotions that include hope, optimism and gratitude are very important components of resilience. Tugade and Fredrickson (2004) also found that resilient individuals use positive emotions to bounce back from negative emotional experiences. Thus, slum dwellers have religion, social support, belief in self, adaptation, life skills, determination, and positive emotions as a source of resilience and meaningful lives that help them in effective problem solving and also in recovering from pain, agony and despair.

Conclusion and Limitations

In a nut shell, resilience is the ability to bounce back in the face of hardships, and it is one such determinant, which increases the likelihood of embracing hardships in life. Many factors contribute in increasing resilience but, the most prominent are religion and social support, which provide an impetus for a contented,

resilient life especially for respondents of our research. These findings are especially helpful for therapists and psychiatrists but, it should be dealt with caution that contentment may not be considered equal to laziness and an inactive approach.

The limitations of this study are as follows:

- The study was conducted in the city of Lahore and can be expanded to other parts of Pakistan.
- Though there was a significant difference in resilience of slum dwellers and non-slum dwellers found earlier in a quantitative study by the researcher, yet future research can be conducted to qualitatively explore resilience in non-slum dwellers.

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Appendix A

Interview Schedule

- Please comment about your life in slums.
- How do you feel about living in a slum?
- Do you think you face any difficulty?
- What makes you hopeful in hard times?
- How are you able to concentrate in hard times?
- Do you think your life is meaningful?
- How do you react in pain?
- How do you recover from pain, grief and agony?
- How do you usually react in anger?
- How do you overcome despair?
- Do you think you are a strong person? If yes, then why?
- What is the source of strength for facing pain, anger and despair?