

ORIGINAL ARTICLE

Experience of Street Children Living in Pantu Asuhan Aneuk Nanggroe Aceh Province Indonesia

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: Studies in Indonesia suggested that the main reasons for children to live on the streets include escapism from a broken family, other family issues, and poverty. Living on the street exposed these children to immense negative social and moral issues that would affect their future. One of the steps taken by the government to handle the situation was placing them in an orphanage house (Panti Asuhan) until they reached early adulthood. However, many of these children returned to the street doing random jobs after staying at Panti Asuhan for several years. The reason for their decision is unclear. This study explored the experience of these children while living in Panti Asuhan. **Methods:** This study employed exploratory qualitative design by utilizing in-depth individual interviews with the street children living in a Panti Asuhan in Aceh, Indonesia. The interview data were audio recorded and transcribed verbatim. The data was analyzed thematically with the assistance of N-Vivo 12 software. **Findings:** fifteen street children with a mean age of 15-19 years participated in the study. Participants reported overall experiences during their living in the Panti Asuhan. Furthermore, this study also found that insufficient support was provided by the government for these children after living in Panti Asuhan to help them live a decent life. **Conclusion:** Support for street children should not end at Panti Asuhan, and it needs to be extended according to the needs of these children so they will not be going back to the street to make ends meet

Malaysian Journal of Medicine and Health Sciences (2025) 21(SUPP6):112-115. doi:10.47836/mjmhsc.21.s6.19

Keywords: Experience, Panti Asuhan, Street children, Support, Aceh province.

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INTRODUCTION

Globally, street children are among the most marginalized people, experiencing violations of their rights, and are often neglected (1). The United Nations of Human Rights has noted that the number of street children in the world is increasing, stating that the number of street children has reached 150 million people worldwide (2). Even though world institutions are looking for a way to resolve this problem for the street children's welfare, several factors have caused this incident to recur, such as family conflicts, including violence, drugs, alcohol abuse, death of parents, family conflict, war, natural disasters, or socio-economic problems (3). Although

various efforts have been made, interventions for street children's welfare have not been successful globally or locally. Street children need support and protection from the government, which is considered very important. So that, they can have a better life. Therefore, the research aims to explore the experience of these children while living in Panti Asuhan.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Data collection

This research has used an exploratory qualitative case study design employing in-depth individual interviews with the street children living in Panti Asuhan in Aceh Province. Panti Asuhan is an orphanage that takes care of abandoned children to care for them and gives them related support. Thus, purposive sampling was used to recruit the participants in this study. The interviews were voice-recorded and transcribed verbatim. The

duration of sessions was one hour for each participant. Meanwhile, children under 18 are given consent from the caregiver or parents. The inclusion participants are children who have experience with welfare programs from the government and non-government institutions in Aceh Province, stay in Pantti Asuhan, have experiences in life and working on the streets speak Indonesian or Acehness, aged 7-16 years old and above, willing to participate in this study meanwhile, for exclusion criteria of children who are uncooperative when interviewed, street children aged <7 and >16 years, speak another local language. The routine activities at the Pantti Asuhan and interactions between the children and the staff were observed. The field notes were used to record the observational data. To complement the data, documents related to the support provided to these street children, including the guidelines from the government regulations. Furthermore, three data have been analyzed using the thematic analysis technique. Firstly, the data through the code involved reading carefully line by line to identify the underlying meanings that could form in each participant's transcript. Once the initial codes were identified, axial coding was undertaken to identify several main themes. Furthermore, they integrated main themes to form the concepts that could answer research aims. The themes were revised several times to represent the experiences of the study participants. To present the findings, we use a fictitious name when referring to the individual participants to ensure their anonymity and triangulation data sources with data interviews, observations, and document analysis conducted to obtain a holistic understanding of the experiences of these children who live in Pantti Asuhan.

Ethical considerations

This study was approved by the Kulliyah of Nursing Postgraduate and Research Committee and has sought ethical approval from the IIUM Research Ethical Committee (IREC) with the number (IIUM/504/14/11/2/IREC 2022-126). Furthermore, ethical research was obtained from the Indonesian government, Litbangkespol Service number (070/DPMPTSP/541/2023).

FINDING

The fifteen street children who have participated in this study are within the age range of 15 to 19 years old. This research provides an in-depth understanding of their overall experiences at the Pantti Asuhan Aneuk Nanggroe. The data that are generated from the interviews, observations, and document analysis, to the management and support of the children have revealed several themes that explain the experiences of these children while they are living in Pantti Asuhan, as well as the support to prepare them to become independent as they reach early adulthood.

The themes are as follows:

- Theme 1: Experiences of living in Pantti Asuhan
- Theme 2: The support received in Pantti Asuhan

The themes that are related to the findings based on the themes above will be discussed below:

Theme1: Experiences living in Pantti Asuhan

The life of the street children in Pantti Asuhan exposes them to various experiences, both positive and negative. These themes discuss experiences and reasons for staying in the Pantti Asuhan, with relevant quotes from the interviews. The struggle to achieve self-development targets is visible in these children, as the participants have shown deep concern for future hopes, to receive love, and to feel changes for the better.

“No longer. Insya Allah, I do not want to go back to the streets. Quite happy here because every day there are activities and the teachers here are kind and friendly” (Participant 1, 19 years old).

“At the Pantti Asuhan, I feel happy. I have friends (smiles). At first, I felt shy. But a few weeks later, I felt close to my friend. Now, I focus on my future goals. Moreover, the friends here are kind, the love from the teacher, Ustaz, (smiles) here I do not feel afraid, the people here are kind” (Participant 2, 16 years old).

“Yes, I am grateful to live here and feel free, not depressed. I get love from here” (Participant 11, 16 years old).

Further findings concerned the negative experiences of the participants, who felt uncomfortable, missed parental attention, and felt anxious because of the verbal violence perpetrated by groups of children who were older than them. According to the participant:

“I need love from mother and father. I do not feel like I belong here. Parents come very rarely. I miss my parents” (Participant 1, 19 years old);

“Uncomfortable because I am often bullied” (Participant 7, 15 years old);

“I feel uncomfortable. Even though I get all the facilities. At home there are deficiencies. But what is less comfortable is because no parents here” (Participant 9, 16 years old);

“There are no other brothers. The brother who sat here is really in a bad mood. This time, he is good because of food, and bad because there is no food” (Participant 11, 16 years old).

Theme 2: The support received in Pantu Asuhan

This theme discusses the types of support provided to the street children living in Pantu Asuhan. Generally, the support such as food, education, and spiritual training assistance from the Pantu Asuhan caregivers are invaluable. Below are interviews that are related to the support provided to them.

One of the problems faced by street children is malnutrition due to irregular eating activities, and food consumption less than the required amount. An alternative solution to overcome these situations is to have sufficient food while in Pantu Asuhan. According to the participants:

“Do not know where else to go. I always eat here regularly, morning, afternoon and evening. After that, there is dessert” (Participant 4, 17 years old);

“Thank God, I had enough to eat. For example, breakfast in the morning, lunch in the afternoon, the menu is always complete” (Participant 5, 18 years old);

“Complete with vegetables and fish. More than enough for a house, and yes, our facilities are comfortable and complete” (Participant 6, 15 years old);

To reach children who generally lack access to public school services due to poverty, Pantu Asuhan is the perfect place for children to continue their education that has been interrupted due to working on the streets for so long. Below is the discussion:

“Reciting the Qur’an alone. After reciting the Qur’an and doing homework in the room. There are also schedules for reciting the Qur’an. Wednesday night, Friday night, Saturday night, Sunday” (Participant 1, 19 years old);

“There is also prayer equipment apart from reciting the Qur’an, praying, and reading books” (Participant 2, 16 years old).

DISCUSSION

Millions of children around the world have to live and work on the streets to survive. This exposes them to dangerous environments making them vulnerable to violence, exploitation, hunger, and disease. To deal with the problem, the Indonesian government through a law regarding fulfilling the rights of street children contained in Law Number 35 of 2014, addresses child protection (4,5). Based on these facts, the government providing support for street children is very important because street children are one of the most vulnerable groups who need attention and protection in low-income countries, Kenya’s street children are a top priority for health. Another country India provides basic needs such as food, and shelter (6). The Philippines have provided

skills training to help their lives in the future, supporting food, shelter, and health and education programs (7). In addition, research in Africa shows that street children experience survival through personal and emotional strength, cultural values, religious beliefs, supportive peer relationships, and participation in sports activities. These protective and resilience resources strengthened health promotion interventions by focusing on mental health, violence prevention, substance use, and daily physical activities that appear to provide meaning and hope (8). Meanwhile, in Surakarta, Indonesia, support is provided for homeless people with resilience given formal education, spirituality, personal hygiene, food, health, and counseling, for example, on drugs and sexual transmission disease (9).

Correspondingly, this research found that Aceh Province has a similar program where the government provides basic education, food, and protection with the hope that the street children’s needs are met. The positive experiences of the children living in Pantu Asuhan reveal that the conditions are good there. Positive support results in positive feedback that focuses on how they are developing their work and social skills and feelings of pride in providing for their family. The need to prevent child street labor includes financial support- so that families can send their children back to school, and programs offering social skills and vocational training are essential. However, there are also problems faced by street children who are considered unpleasant, such as missing their parents. This discussion has illustrated that it supports the finding that the street children’s experience in Pantu Asuhan is the right choice for a better future. The goal of fostering the street children in Pantu Asuhan is to obtain results concerning the changes in their mindsets and independence. So that they need not continuously depend on Pantu Asuhan and instead secure a better life afterward. Furthermore, based on the findings, Pantu Asuhan is considered a place of protection from all forms of violence, sexual harassment, economic and other forms of abuse that occur on the streets and in the family environment. Correspondingly, the solution that is offered by Pantu Asuhan is providing job fairs, education, skills courses, and other forms of assistance that aim for the children’s independence.”

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this study identifies experiences. The life of the street children in Pantu Asuhan exposes them to various positive and negative experiences. Positive experiences related to the support provided to the street children living in Pantu Asuhan are generally basic support such as food, education, and spiritual training assistance from Pantu Asuhan caregivers. However, further findings concerned the negative experiences of the participants who felt uncomfortable and missed parental attention. However, they have progressed to growth and adaptations in the new environment in

Panti Asuhan. Support for street children should not stop at Panti Asuhan. Notably, it needs to be expanded according to the needs of these children so that they do not return to the streets to fulfill their daily needs.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The author would like to express sincere gratitude to all parties who have provided support in the preparation of this journal. In particular, the author extends appreciation to supervisor for the valuable guidance, feedback, and encouragement throughout the research process.

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