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## Defining Multidimensional Self-Perceived Freedom: FGD Evidence from Marginalized Pakistani Youth

Muhammad Saleem<sup>a\*</sup>, Dr. Rozmi Bin Ismail<sup>b</sup>, Dr. Ezarina Zakaria<sup>c</sup> & Dr. Arena Che  
Kasim<sup>d</sup>

<sup>a,b,c,d</sup> School of Psychology and Human Development, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM), Selangor, 43600, Malaysia

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### Abstract

The current study sets out to operationalize ‘multidimensional self-perceived freedom’ through three homogenous focus group discussions (FGD) conducted with 20 volunteer marginalized Pakistani youths. The youths (15-24 years) were recruited from three sub-districts (Bahawalpur, Fort Abbas, Jalalpur Peerwala) of Punjab, Pakistan through multi-stage random sampling. Audio and video data are transcribed by a veteran panel of field experts. For prudent findings, assertions content analysis is employed; findings are counter checked by the judges. Conclusively, a newfangled definition is devised “*perception of a youth/s about all possible and preferred domains of life in which one wants to see (become) oneself free*”.

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**Keywords:** assertions content analysis; exploratory study; FGD; marginalized youth; multidimensional self-perceived freedom; Pakistan

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### 1. Introduction

All over the world, freedom is the core concern of modern youth; this phenomenon has been dealt with different connotations in existing literature such as liberty, autonomy, personal freedom, social freedom, and agency and so on. This is not important what the label for this marvel is, but the matter of concern is the perceptual difference of freedom between youth and their parents or caregivers that causes disjointedness. Usually modern youths are considered as an agent of incoherence because there is reported discrepancy between their personal experiences and their affiliation

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\* Corresponding author. Tel.: +6-0105177519  
E-mail address: [chsaleem\\_1@hotmail.com](mailto:chsaleem_1@hotmail.com)

with institutions (Karvonen, Young, West & Rahkonen, 2012). This transformation may lead to cause confusion in role, value and identity orientation. A plenty of research (Giddens, 1991; Inglehart, 1997; Bauman, 2000; Hofstede, Hofstede & Minkov, 2010), indicates the modern value orientation originate from rejection of traditional family roles, political systems, and even national values. Resultantly, this may cause disintegration of identity among youths. Our aim is not to prove the perceptual difference in freedom as an original sin in disintegration between youth and parents, but, it might be one of the core factors that need to be defined well to gauge the gap. Historically, the youth belongs to the subcontinent (India, Pakistan, & Bangladesh) always be nourished under its old and strong traditional value system (Khorana, 1991) where this kind of disintegration has not been reported. But, with the passage of time, under the stance of modernization, the situation is vice versa now. The Pakistani youth, especially living in precarious locations has not been studied yet in terms of freedom, autonomy, and subjective well-being (Saleem, Rozmi, Ezarina, Arena & Zaffar, 2015). But, according to Idrees and Manzoor (2012) a large bulge of youth left homes (truants) to avoid their parents – they reported “our parents did not allow a certain level of freedom to live comfortably”. On the other hand, parents justify their parenting style as a matter of care and concern for their children. The potential difference would prevail in perceptual give and take on freedom.

### *1.1. Background of the term ‘perceived freedom’*

In-depth considerations about the nature of freedom dates back to Greek philosophers, but the scope of this paper is limited to modern time research. Very first time in history of modern research Heider (1958) coined this term and reported the significance of perceived freedom for control of human behavior. The trend setter, Neulinger (1974) developed a theory of leisure and perceived freedom in terms of leisure became popular among antecedents. Similarly, Kane, Joseph, and Tedeschi (1977) linked perceived freedom with responsibility and intension. Recently, Brulé and Veenhoven (2014) used ‘perceived freedom’ as a parameter to judge global assessment of happiness among nations.

### *1.2. Rationale of the current study*

Different veterans used ‘perceived freedom’ in different contexts, but perceived freedom in terms of personal preferred domains of life has not been addressed till the date. Current study would operationalize the definition of multidimensional self-perceived freedom of youth in terms of preferred domains of life.

## **2. Method**

### *2.1. Sample and recruitment*

To select a sample of youth from marginalized (poor quality of life) zones existed in Punjab, Pakistan multistage random sampling technique is used, the famous study by Haq, Ahmed, Shafique, and Malik (2010) considered as the sampling frame. In the light of this study, one larger zone of Punjab is selected (Stage-1), further, two districts (Multan & Bahawalpur) are selected randomly (Stage-2), likewise, three sub-districts (Tehsils) of Punjab (Bahawalpur, Bahawalnagar, & Jalalpur Peerwala) with the least quality of life, have been selected randomly (Stage-3). Regardless of gender and educational level, twenty (20) eligible respondents were recruited for Focus Group Discussion (Stage-4). All the youths belong to 15-24 years of age. Three homogenous focus groups were made from three sub-districts; ratio of participants remained 8:6:6.

### *2.2. Procedure and FGD protocol*

All the steps in design and protocol of focus groups are followed according to the guidelines of Stewart and Shamdasani (2015). The problem was ‘*what do you understand by perceived freedom?*’ First, a sampling frame was established, later, the veteran moderator and observer with ten years research experience were selected to conduct the sessions. The persons selected for participation were contacted and informed to participate in a group at 09 am to 02pm at government colleges for boys in respective three sub-districts. As an incentive, the meal has been served to them after the session. The necessary arrangement has been made one day before the sessions conducted. All the

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