Living in a Hostel in Pakistan: A Qualitative Study on Perspective of Young Women

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Abstract

Living in a hostel is an unavoidable situation for students who come from different cities in pursuit of higher education at their desired universities. It is generally assumed and often known that the facilities provided at the hostel will aid learning. However, in a country like Pakistan, due to prevalent economic disparities, living in a hostel facility often presents more challenges than comfort to the students. The aim of the study was to identify the problems encountered by students living in the hostels and, more importantly, to understand how these students cope with these difficulties. The study employed qualitative design with purposive sampling that consisted of 7 graduate and undergraduate students from a university in Pakistan, aged between 18 and 25 years. The students belonging to various backgrounds were included in the study to ensure diversity and richness of data. In-depth, semi-structured interviews were conducted, and thematic analysis was carried out. The results showed that the students faced issues such as difficulty in adjusting to new environments, encountering various attitudes, theft, making new acquaintances, and even homosexuality. However, the positive aspects of living in hostels included developing positive coping skills, self-reliance, and developing patience and tolerance in response to emerging issues. In conclusion, it is important to provide adequate support and facilitation for the students who left their homes for quality education, enabling them to live more comfortably, focus on their academic goals and have a satisfying life.

Keywords: hostel, thematic analysis, coping skills, self-reliance.

Introduction

In several nations, the term "hostel" specifically refers to lodging for tourists and students. Hostel wardens and other staff members oversee every hostel that is managed by schools, colleges, or universities. These hostels often accommodate hundreds of students, creating diverse backgrounds in terms of ethics, society, geography, and economics. Students who choose to pursue formal education away from home often stay at the hostels. However, the idea of a hostel is more than just a place to live (Iftikhar & Ajmal, 2015). A hostel serves as a centre for education, offering students more than just a place to live. During their time in the hostel, students gain as much knowledge from their lecturers as they do from their peers. By encouraging critical discourse among the students residing in the dorms, hostels enhance their comprehension of academic material and help them develop their character. In addition to learning the theoretical content,

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students in dorms also learn how to develop patience (Alam & Tahir, 2024). Students around the world pursue quality education, which depends on various factors such as human and material resources. (Grisay & Mahlck, 1991). The World Conference on Education for All, held in Thailand, emphasized that prioritizing the quality of education is necessary to ensure children's cognitive development (UNESCO, 1990). In search of quality education, students from various regions come to cities with colleges and universities that can provide them with a satisfactory education system catering to their academic needs.

Consequently, when students get admission to colleges and universities in different cities, they need a housing facility. The on-campus hostel is the most desired option for many students, especially girls, because of safety concerns. A hostel is not just a place to live, it is a complete social setting with plenty of opportunities and challenges. Under the supervision of a warden, the hostel provides an environment very different from home. It is a place where students from diverse backgrounds come to live together. This living experience comes with its hurdles as the students have to rely on themselves most of the time. There are a lot of compromises and adjustments that the student must make to ensure adjustment in the new environment (Iftikhar & Ajmal, 2015). Through critical conversation among students staying in the hostels, their comprehension of the curriculum is enhanced and it could also help in the development of their character. While living in the hostels, the students not only learn the academic content but also develop their personal skills and learn how to live independently (Mishra, 1994). While hostels are usually shared living spaces for students, providing them with a degree of autonomy, they also come with a few challenges (Ahmad et al., 2023). The findings of an empirical investigation indicate that the students are content with the hostel's safety services and room amenities. However, they are dissatisfied with the communication services provided by the hostels. The research also demonstrates that family support and communication services influence the convenience of students to study while residing in the dormitories. The hostel management and authorities should prioritize the communication tools in the dormitory, particularly a rapid internet connection that can be accessed via Wi-Fi to facilitate students' academic needs. Furthermore, the study highlights that hostel life plays a significant role in the academic lives of students who choose to live away from home to pursue their education (Khan et al., 2020). It is to be noted that challenges faced by female students differ from males as females face issues regarding safety and security, and have specifically asked for better security systems that should be provided by the administration (Hasan et al., 2017).

There are various problems encountered by the students such as sickness, loneliness, politics, drugs, homosexuality etc. To address these challenges, students apply various problem-solving strategies which psychologists have described as a cyclic process involving the recognition or identification of problems, defining the problem mentally, developing a solution, organizing the knowledge about the problem, allocating resources to solve the problem, monitoring progress towards goal and evaluating the solution (Davison & Sternbery, 2003). During their hostel stay, students learn to live with people from various backgrounds which helps them in developing patience. It also equips the students to face actual issues in life. Individual differences are quite

typical among hostel housemates, and the majority of students in the male dormitory suffer severe consequences due to drug usage. The study's findings can contribute to improving the quality of hostel services in Pakistan, which in turn would increase the satisfaction of students with their hostel life (Iftikhar & Ajmal, 2015). Students in different cities encounter different issues, such as in Jamshoro, where students do not have access to basic necessities such as clean water, transportation, electricity and internet facilities. (Brohi et al., 2020). Numerous additional issues that might arise for the hostel residents are related to the quality of mess food, restrooms, electricity, and internet access, etc. The purpose of the research was to determine the satisfaction of students with the hostel amenities, investigate problems related to living in a dorm at a private medical and dentistry school, and make recommendations for changes in the hostel facilities (Nadeem et al., 2020).

As mentioned above, the identification of problems and finding their solution leads to coping. Coping refers to cognitive and behavioral efforts to manage, reduce, minimize, tolerate and master the internal and external demands of the environment. There are two major types of coping styles, i.e. problem-focused coping is the one in which the person deals with a problem that causes distress, and emotional-focus coping regulates emotions by seeking emotional support. Coping involves intra-personal processes such as self-control, positive appraisal, distancing and escape-avoidance (Folkman et al., 1986). When encountered with stress, the students in hostels turn to social support instead of externalizing behaviors like swearing, yelling, and shouting (Shrestha et al., 2023). Coping mechanisms such as asking for assistance, problem-solving, relaxing, exercising, cognitive restructuring, and feeling secure are helpful for stress management (Donaldson et al., 2000).

It is a known fact that while living in a hostel, students rely on themselves most of the time. Hence, self-reliance is one way of dealing with their day-to-day activities, and managing their time and responsibilities (Priyangini, 2024). Self-reliance is described as an independent action, a reliance on one's ability and resources to solve the issues rather than depending on others. The concept of self-reliance emerges from the belief that one is capable of self-guidance and self-determination (O'Dwyer, 2012). Self-reliance involves trusting one's ability to make decisions on their own. The various challenges presented by the environment require a person to independently structure the problem and specify a course of action, considering the outcome and prevailing circumstances. As individuals encounter these difficulties, feedback from the implementation of their decision allows them to evaluate the effectiveness of their approach for future reference (Ajzen, 1996). A student who is surrounded by a supportive environment, both in familial and educational settings, and possesses healthy coping strategies and decision-making abilities will be better at handling the trials and tribulations of life and will be more well-adjusted than others (Edward, 2003). Finally, adjustment is a continuous process that brings harmony to a satisfying life. Humans are social beings and to adjust in a new environment, a person needs to comply with the rules, regulations and norms of that environment. The ability to deal with a new situation successfully makes a person emotionally well-adjusted i.e., showing emotions at the right time and under the right circumstances is also an important factor in adjustment (Sharma & Gautam, 2013).

The purpose of this study was to evaluate the students' perspectives on their experiences in hostels, as well as the effects that hostel life has on students. Studies on this topic, particularly those that focused on this particular region, are still quite uncommon in Pakistan. The research not only assists students in overcoming challenges that they encounter while staying in hostels, but it also assists professors and parents in understanding the significance of hostel life and its relation to academic success. The findings of the study will contribute to the enhancement of hostel services in Pakistan.

Living in a hostel away from home brings with it a unique experience. It provides an opportunity for a student to live independently, interact with peers, and develop adjustment skills. Factors including room size, separate rooms, hostel population, transport facilities and safety contribute to the adjustment of a student. However, it is not always easy to adjust to life in a hostel. It becomes challenging for students to discover a sense of community in the initial years and to make new acquaintances. Understanding how living in a hostel setting affects students' academic achievements can help in developing measures to improve their academic performance. Despite the challenges present, hostels offer a distinctive social setting. The effects of this environment on students' relationships, social skills, and general social development can be better understood via research. Several issues, including social dynamics, homesickness, and academic pressure, can make hostel living unpleasant. Research can also pinpoint prevalent mental health issues and provide relevant guidance for the creation of support networks. Analyzing hostel life may help in creating a more controlled and comfortable living environment by highlighting behavioral trends among students and the efficacy of disciplinary actions. Hostels frequently have an impact on students' dietary habits, physical activity, and sleep patterns. Students from various backgrounds are frequently brought together in hostels, and it provides opportunities for inclusivity, tolerance, and cultural integration which can be further studied through research. Students who live away from home must learn responsibility and independence. Research can assess how well the hostels facilitate various facets of human growth. With the help of these insights, educational institutions may allocate resources more efficiently, guaranteeing better amenities and support systems to the students. Thorough study can help legislators create or amend rules that will enhance dorm life and solve particular problems encountered by the students. Living in a hostel is frequently a prelude to living in an adult setting. Research can shed light on how effectively this experience prepares the pupils for independent life and future responsibilities. The study aims to explore the lived experience of students in the hostel, the problems they encounter and what are the factors that lead to them being satisfied with their life at the hostel and what more can be done for improvement.

Objectives of the Study
- To identify the problems encountered by the hostilities.
- To identify various factors that lead to adjustment.
- To explore the impact of living in a hostel on the psychological well-being of students.

Research Questions
1. What are the problems encountered by the students living in hostels?
2. What kind of strategies and coping styles are applied by the students to solve their problems?
3. What is the impact of living in a hostel on the adjustment of students?

Method

Research Design

The qualitative research design was used to explore the perception of the students living in hostels, what problems they have encountered and how they deal with those problems. Focus group was conducted with the theoretical framework of social constructivism. The rationale is that social constructivism is a theory in sociology and education that highlights how social interactions and cultural norms shape reality and knowledge. It contends that knowledge is something that people acquire by group cooperation rather than being individually or objectively found (Cresswell, 2013).

Sample and Sampling Strategy

The participants were selected through a purposive sampling strategy, with an age range from 18-26 years from various cities of Pakistan, studying in a private university and living in campus hostels.

Inclusion Criteria.
- Only female university students were selected to participate in the study.
- Only those students were selected who had been living in the hostel for more than a year.

Exclusion Criteria.
- Foreign students were excluded from the study.

Table 1

Participant's Demographic Information

Sr. No.	Education Level	Age in Years	City
1	Master of Science	24	Islamabad
2	Master of Science	25	Peshawar
3	Master of Science	23	Rawalpindi
4	Undergraduate	19	Islamabad
5	Undergraduate	18	Gujranwala
6	Undergraduate	18	Karachi
7	Undergraduate	18	Islamabad

Data Collection Method

A focus group was conducted to gather the data. Focus group is a planned discussion with a small number of participants. In a focus group, participants share their views, perceptions, experiences and reactions. Group dynamics and group setting are integral parts of focus group

discussion. The data was gathered using semi-structured, open-ended questions from the participants (Guest et al., 2013). Multiple views are generated in the focus group which gives a wide range of opinions that is rich in information.

Procedure

After seeking approval from the ethics committee and taking necessary preliminary steps in the research, such as identifying the students who fit the inclusion criteria and then obtaining their consent to participate in the research, the study proceeded. It was important for the study to approach only those participants who were willing to share their experiences as accurately as possible. Time and schedule were decided according to the availability of all the participants at the same time. A venue was selected, and the participants were informed accordingly. Reminders were provided to the participants personally by one of the researchers. On the day of the focus group, the participants were provided with a consent form so that they could read it and ask any additional queries. The participants were assured about the privacy of the venue and the answers provided by them. The focus group lasted for approximately 40-45 minutes. A moderator asked semi-structured, open-ended questions that were predetermined, while the other researchers took notes simultaneously. The data was audiotaped with the participants' consent and was further facilitated by the notes that were taken during the focus group. The audiotaped data was then transcribed into Urdu and further translated into English for analysis.

Data Analysis

The data was analyzed using inductive thematic analysis. The rationale for using this approach was that it is the process of constantly reading textual data, identifying themes in the data, coding those themes and then interpreting the structure and content of the themes. (Guest et al., 2013). Although there was homogeneity in the focus group, multiple answers were generated from the same question. Consequently, it is important to identify common themes in the data and unite them under one global theme. The data was analyzed line by line and initial codes were generated. Those codes were then combined under initial themes. The initial themes, that were frequently generated, were then united under the umbrella of emerging themes. The emerging themes that had the same meaning were clustered together and global themes were formed.

Results

The following section explains the themes emerged with the help of thematic analysis in hostel students.

Table 2

Themes Identified Through Thematic Analysis

Problems Encountered by the Students	Overcoming Problems
Adapting to new environment	Increase in self-reliance
Encountering various attitudes	Positive coping strategies
Theft	Increased adjustment
Homosexuality, bad company and politics	

Problems Encountered by Students in the Hostel

The students encountered various problems from the moment they began living in the hostels. They all had to leave the comfort of their home environment and take up accommodation in an unfamiliar environment.

Difficulty Adapting to a New Environment due to Lack of Facilities

The major problems that posed a hurdle in the adjustment were facilities, strictness, and dealing with medical problems on their own. In terms of their first impression of the hostel, the participants agreed on the same thing. They reported their experience in sentences such as "*not as amazing*", "*bad impression*", "*jail*", "*restrictions*", and "*upset*".

One respondent said: "*I had never been in a situation like this.*" Another respondent shared her experience and said: "*I did not like my hostel building and the gate. It appeared as if I have been put in jail, with restrictions imposed and the warden being very strict, giving us lots of instructions about what to do and what not to do. Consequently, it was a bad impression.*"

The students had to deal with medical illnesses by themselves, since before their parents took care of them. It was one of the factors that made it difficult for them to adjust to hostel life in the beginning. When they were unable to do the tasks independently, they became overwhelmed and had to rely on the advice of their parents.

"We bring medicine from our home beforehand, because if we get sick no one will help us. We call our mothers and ask about the medicine, and then she has to consult a doctor and tell us what medicine we can take as we are not allowed to go out of the hostel without getting permission, and all of this causes fatigue and extra work. We must make requests to our hostel mates, and it depends on them if they want to go the extra mile to help a fellow person; it depends on whether they are willing to help or not. This puts our self-esteem in jeopardy. It seems as though we cannot do anything on our own."

The inadequacy of facilities in the hostel, such as poor food and lack of appliances, also present a problem for the students. Access to facilities is important for the students as they need to save time and concentrate on their studies when exams are approaching.

As one participant said, "*We live upstairs and there is no kitchen on the first floor, and if we need to make something then we have to bring everything downstairs, from the most basic item such as salt to saucepan and even, matches. It gets very difficult and after that, you have to wash all the utensils and bring them back to our rooms. This all adds up to extra work.*" Also, there were issues related to the availability of food as well as its quality. One response was, "*the food is alright but if we don't like it, we bring it from home.*"

The students also said that when they didn't like the food, they had to order it from outside. The appliances that are required by the students have to be brought from home, for which they have to pay extra money due to limited electricity allowance. The issue of cleanliness was also a sub-theme is adjustment, as the cleaning facilities are not available frequently in the hostels and students have to clean their own rooms.

"There is an issue of cleanliness as house cleaning is only on weekends, usually on Sundays, and if it is very hot, we arrange the coolers and air conditioners by ourselves."

Encountering Various Attitudes

One of the main themes that frequently emerged from the data was that the students had to deal with various attitudes of their fellow hostel residents. Students from various backgrounds come to live in the same environment in the hostels, and while they all must rely on each other, they have to tolerate each other's behavior. One respondent shared, *"When you are home, of course, we are comfortable. But here, everyone has their own temperaments, likes and dislikes. If we point something out in someone and if that person gets irritated or offended by what we have said, then surely someday they might repeat it to you as well. And when such an incident happens, we will have to deal with it as well. And then it is a fact that if someone is moodier than you, then you must deal with it and you cannot show your mood to them as well. One must be very tolerant."*

On the contrary, another response was *"Everyone has their own nature and if someone has a harsh behavior with you. You also must behave in the same way."* One of the respondents said in the same context, *"People meet you from various backgrounds and mentality and we have to deal with them; we have to work with them; we do not have the intention, but the other person is in some other state of mind; and there were misunderstandings, and there had been some issues and problems."* One of the students also said, *"Because you have to live with a different person, and everyone has a different mood, sometimes you cannot adjust, and things do go out of control."*

Theft

One of the major problems in hostels is theft. The students said that they must deal with the problem every now and then as there is no solution to it. One respondent said, *"Sometimes we go back to our homes in our spring break, we leave our things in the room as it's a short period only. In summer vacation, we take all our belongings with us. But sometimes when we come back, things are stolen. Even when the room was locked, it was forcefully opened, and things were stolen."*

Homosexuality, Bad Company and Politics

Homosexuality was a concern for many hostel residents. Also, they highlighted that they had to deal with politics in the hostel, and with the girls who would use them to their advantage.

One of the responses was, *"You must be very vigilant. Theft is one aspect that you have to deal with, but it's materialistic. There are fights and girls also become political. They would judge and scrutinize each other, and isolate other girls whom they do not like. They can ruin the reputations of other girls. Some girls can get de-tracked and get into bad habits when they do not abide by the requests of an influential girl who might be into drugs or homosexuality. One needs to be vigilant and have good social support from peers to deal with such situations"*

Another respondent said regarding this, *"The negative issue is bad company; one can make friends who can de-track you in other ways as they can pressure you into taking drugs, smoking or indulging in homosexuality. They will brainwash you and threaten you as well."*

Overcoming Problems

There are various ways in which the hostel residents deal with the problems they encounter. The data was thoroughly analyzed to find how students, who live away from home, deal with problems.

Self-Reliance

The students usually rely on themselves when it comes to solving their problems and issues. The students use problem-solving strategies, including actively relying on their skills to solve day-to-day problems. It was seen that the students were self-motivating themselves as they solved their everyday problems. The responses of students are mostly laden with such words including, "*take care of it yourself*", "*deal with it yourself*", "*get medicine for me*", "*take care of yourself*", and "*reheat food for yourself*". One of the respondents said as follows, "*Independence is there. You must travel alone.*"

Another participant said, "*You gain confidence when you can do things yourself, and then you get independent. The other thing is that the family has sent you with trust and there is a pressure of maintaining that confidence, you become stronger.*" The same respondent also said, "*You get to be independent; everything must be done by ourselves. Now if I ever get worried, I don't call home and do not tell anyone what issues I am facing. I deal with them myself.*" One of the responses was*, "My parents are happy about the fact that I have become more independent."*

Coping Style

Coping styles are mostly applied in various situations by the students living in the hostel to deal with stressors such as education, emotions and adjustment. This is done by maintaining social and emotional support, which they often find by making friends and having a strong social circle. The students living in the hostel had the support of their peers with whom they were living and often solved problems with the help of each other.

One of the respondents said, "*When I first came here, I could not adjust. I went back home every week and cried in front of my parents. But slowly I made friends, they helped me when I could not do things on my own, especially some of the seniors who had been living in the hostel. I still approach them when I have a problem and slowly, I adjust. Now my goal is to help other students who are facing similar situations as I am.*" Another respondent said, *"I was disappointed from time to time, I am thankful to Allah that I now have friends here, who are very nice, and with them, and I can have a very good time.". Also, one respondent said that "I go and get the medicine myself or ask a friend because you cannot leave the room, so a friend brings food from the mess."*

Distancing and avoidance are coping strategies that were employed when they encountered negative issues, such as drugs, politics and homosexuality.

One of the respondents said, "*If a girl is smoking, she is not going to force anyone else to do it. The coordinators know who is doing what, but inside your room, you can do anything. It's your personal life and if someone forces someone else, then we have a very strict policy about that in the hostel. But some girls do brush past them. As for me, I avoid such girls and I do not go into their rooms. We mostly rely on our friends that we have already made.*"

The students learn the fact that they all are living in the hostel as one big family, and rely on social support while dealing with issues, and avoid situations that are problematic. One of the respondents said, "*You have to tell yourself how you are supposed to live; tell yourself the positive aspects.*"

As far as dealing with homosexuality, the participants were reluctant to discuss it. However, they accepted the fact that the problem exists and avoiding it was the only thing that they could do.

"Personally no, I have never encountered such an issue, and no one has ever made an advancement towards me with such intent. One thing is that even though this is Pakistan, people are very open and accepting of such people."

"If you bring religious or ethical aspects to it, then everyone has their own opinions. But whoever is practicing such things, we have never pointed those girls out."

Increase in Adjustment

Dealing with various problems has significantly increased the students' ability to adjust, enhancing their tolerance and patience. They are more emotionally stable and more socialized than before.

"We know that Allah is with us, and yes people exist with different motivations, this world is a vast place. We have become more confident and bolder; you are not supposed to be afraid of anyone. Being independent has taught us a lot, some days are good, and some are not. We navigate and learn from our mistakes and face people. I think this has increased our understanding of how to deal with situations on our own."

Another participant said, *"I did not have much tolerance or patience in me before. However, with time I now know that these are the qualities one must possess to survive in this world, otherwise, you will just fight and no one will be on our side."*

One of the respondents said, *"...you become stronger...now if I ever get worried, I do not call home and do not tell anyone what issues I am having...we learn to face difficulties on our own."*

Discussion

The present study aimed to explore the perception of students living in the hostels. Hostel living can be an exciting and educational experience for the students. It can provide its own set of difficulties, but it also frequently fosters a feeling of community and shared experiences. Phenomenological research conducted by Aslam and Tahir (2024) investigated how female university students' psychological well-being was affected by living in dorms. The sample comprised female university students between the ages of eighteen and twenty-five who resided in various private hostels. A questionnaire with open-ended questions was designed for in-depth interviews. The findings showed that living in a dorm may be highly beneficial for students travelling from faraway places for school. It provides a quiet and peaceful study atmosphere, which helps students perform better academically. It was also pointed out that students who live in dorms experience many obstacles and hardships as well as unfavorable and bad aspects of dorm life. Students gain experience living with a variety of people while staying in dorms, and their patience also grows there. The study emphasized how living in a dorm has an impact on students' psychological health since they must deal with psychological discomfort.

Another study was aimed at examining the connection between adjustment issues and university students living in hostels (Akmal et al., 2023). The emphasis was to understand if there is a connection between living in a hostel and quality of life. A cross-sectional research design was used, and the findings showed that in comparison to female students, male students had greater overall adjustment levels than female students did. Female hostel students' quality of life was poor, and there was a relationship between adjustment issues and life satisfaction. Women were more likely to experience adjustment problems during transitional circumstances. Furthermore, the study recommended addressing the issues linked to low quality of life and poor adjustment among students to enhance their general adjustment in hostel settings, as living in a dorm imposes numerous duties on their lives. In Nigeria, Bichi et al. (2018) investigated the assessment of the standard and state of the student residence at Kano University of Science and Technology. The Kano University of Science and Technology in Wudil's student residence halls were evaluated for both quality and condition. The results showed that young adults between the ages of 15 and 25 who were moving from their parents' houses to campus made up more than two-thirds of the respondents. Additionally, it was discovered that because of squatters, over two-thirds of the respondents lived in cramped quarters with up to six individuals living in them. Their living circumstances are impacted as a result of the mounting strain on the facilities that are now provided. According to data analysis, the majority of the amenities in the student dorm, such as the water and power supplies, the effective waste disposal system, the backup generator, the security system, the gate, the restrooms and bathrooms, the firefighting equipment, and the sleeping quarters, are in good condition. However, information and communication technology (ICT) facilities were deemed to be in acceptable shape, other amenities like the galley, entertainment area, drainage, laundry, privacy, and workstations were discovered to be in bad condition.

A study conducted by Bhatta and Bhatt (2023), showed that female students were facing issues like homesickness, lack of assistance as well as absence a of safe and supportive environment and consequently, leading to stress, anxiety and depression. Students in the early days of the hostel faced adjustment issues and were homesick. A study conducted by Sami et al. (2023) showed that homesickness and adjustment issues impacted self-esteem and positive emotions. If these are overlooked, students can fall victim to poor mental health. Keeping in view the results of the study, the findings imply that hostels are usually conveniently positioned for the everyday activities of students. The Common spaces at hostels include kitchens, living rooms, and study areas. This lowers expenses and promotes communication among residents. They are perfect for budget-conscious students. However, the study shows that hostels do not have much privacy since their rooms are shared with someone. Strict guidelines are imposed for going outside, in general. Even, in emergencies, students have to go to great lengths to seek permission, hence avoiding this activity altogether. Although some may find this confining, they aid in keeping everything in order. It has been concluded from research that disputes can arise from a variety of issues due to people coming together from different backgrounds. Issues of theft and cultural differences including those related to noise, space, and hygiene have been observed.

Conclusion

The study revealed that students often encounter a range of experiences, difficulties, and advantages related to living in dorms. Although it could be challenging at first, living in a dorm allows students to socialize with people from other backgrounds, which can enhance their social skills and cultural knowledge. Additionally, hostel students, especially if they experience homesickness can find it difficult to adjust to their new surroundings. On the other hand, as students handle their schedules, finances, and everyday activities without direct parental direction, living away from home creates a sense of independence. In conclusion, the effects of living in a dorm typically rely on personal coping strategies, the standard of the dorm environment, and the availability of support networks. The study's findings may contribute to raising the standard of hostel services in Pakistan and raising students' happiness.

Limitation of the Study

The interview was held at the institution, as students had to obtain permission from the warden. They were somewhat reluctant to share personal information about their experiences in a hostel setting. Even after being assured confidentiality, they were concerned about leaking information that could securitize them in their hostels. If it had been easier for them to get permission, they would have discussed issues more openly. Data was collected from only female students hence generalizability is not possible for male students. Results may only apply to specific private institutions' hostels, the perspective lacked government education institutes' hostels. Some bias may have occurred as the students were mostly inclined towards giving positive answers to questions and avoided explaining negative experiences.

Implications

Although there is a plethora of literature on hostel living yet gaps exist in terms of understanding the day-to-day struggles of living in a hostel. Highlighting areas of need might lead to targeted funding or subsidies for underfunded hostel facilities. Also, students in higher education can make informed decisions regarding how to go about daily activities, hence the research sheds light on allowing them to become more independent. The research will promote the inclusivity of students coming from different cultural backgrounds, equity and inclusivity should be a high priority of the institution's policies, so that students do not suffer mentally from being scrutinised. To sum up, the mental health of students living in hostels does not depend only on the satisfaction that they are studying in a quality institution. It depends on the provision of facilities, independence in decision-making, and a flourishing environment with healthy social support.

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