




## Exploring Hope and Future Orientation in Adolescents from Low-Income Communities

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### ABSTRACT

**Objective:** This study aimed to explore how adolescents from low-income communities in Pakistan perceive and construct hope and future orientation.

**Methods and Materials:** The study employed a qualitative design using semi-structured interviews with 20 adolescents aged 14 to 18 years from low-income urban and semi-urban communities in Pakistan. Participants were selected through purposive sampling to ensure diversity in gender and educational status. Data were collected until theoretical saturation was reached. All interviews were conducted in Urdu, transcribed verbatim, and analyzed thematically using NVivo software. Thematic analysis followed Braun and Clarke's six-step approach, focusing on identifying patterns related to hope, aspirations, coping mechanisms, and environmental influences.

**Findings:** Thematic analysis revealed four major categories: hope as a psychological resource, barriers to future orientation, future goals and aspirations, and sources of hope and support. Subcategories within these themes included emotional resilience, self-efficacy, spiritual coping, family responsibilities, economic hardship, gender constraints, educational dreams, altruistic goals, and community-based support systems. Adolescents expressed strong internal motivation and aspirational thinking despite significant socio-economic barriers. Support from parents, peers, teachers, and religious beliefs played a key role in sustaining their hope. However, structural challenges such as poverty, school quality, and restrictive gender norms frequently disrupted their goal pursuit.

**Conclusion:** Despite living in disadvantaged conditions, adolescents from low-income communities in Pakistan demonstrate meaningful hope and future orientation. Strengthening psychosocial supports, enhancing educational resources, and addressing structural inequities are essential for nurturing their developmental potential.

**Keywords:** adolescents, future orientation, hope, low-income communities, qualitative research, Pakistan, resilience

## 1. Introduction

Adolescence is a formative period during which individuals develop cognitive, emotional, and motivational patterns that shape their identity, decision-making, and outlook on life. Among the critical developmental constructs in this stage is future orientation, which encompasses an adolescent's ability to anticipate, plan for, and emotionally invest in their future. This cognitive-motivational trait is closely associated with psychological well-being, academic persistence, and resilience against environmental stressors (Giollabhui et al., 2018; Voisin et al., 2018). For adolescents living in low-income contexts, the development of hope and future orientation becomes particularly vital, as these attributes often act as internal resources that buffer the negative effects of poverty, limited opportunities, and social marginalization (Andrean & Akmal, 2019; Ashdown-Franks et al., 2019).

Hope, conceptualized as a forward-looking emotion and belief in the possibility of positive outcomes, is deeply connected with motivation and goal-setting behavior. Research shows that adolescents with a strong sense of hope are more likely to engage in long-term educational planning, resist deviant peer influences, and demonstrate resilience in the face of adversity (Kim et al., 2019; Voisin et al., 2018). However, cultivating future orientation is not solely a function of personal traits—it is shaped by familial, community, and societal influences. In economically disadvantaged settings, where structural constraints are more pronounced, understanding how adolescents envision their futures and what supports or hinders their forward-thinking capacities is essential for developing meaningful interventions (Carey, 2021; Chen et al., 2021).

Low-income adolescents often encounter unique challenges that may impair their capacity to think optimistically about the future. These include economic insecurity, educational disruptions, family instability, and exposure to environmental risks such as violence or unsafe neighborhoods (Hong et al., 2023; Montoro & Ceballo, 2021). Such cumulative disadvantages can lead to hopelessness, early school dropout, and engagement in risk behaviors that further constrain life opportunities (Berge et al., 2017; Fehily & Schlösser, 2020). Yet, despite these challenges, many adolescents in these contexts continue to express aspirations for better lives, often drawing on psychological strengths and informal support systems such

as peer networks, religious beliefs, and community-based programs (Fajria et al., 2021; Gowdy et al., 2020).

Several studies highlight the critical role of family in shaping adolescents' hope and future orientation. Parental involvement, encouragement, and emotional availability have been found to reinforce adolescents' self-belief and motivation toward goal-directed behaviors (Ahmadiansah et al., 2023; Carey, 2021). In many low-income households, even when material support is scarce, affective forms of support—such as words of encouragement or expressions of pride in academic success—can nurture a sense of direction and personal agency in adolescents (Chen & Liu, 2021). At the same time, family-related stressors, such as financial hardship or parental absence, may increase adolescents' responsibilities at home, thereby diverting their attention from personal goals (Ashraf & Khan, 2016; Kim et al., 2019). This duality underscores the importance of understanding the complex and sometimes contradictory influence of family dynamics on future-oriented thinking.

Community context also plays a pivotal role in shaping how adolescents perceive their futures. Positive exposure to mentors, teachers, or community role models has been shown to enhance motivation and help adolescents envision realistic pathways to their goals (Tester et al., 2017; West et al., 2022). Conversely, a lack of accessible role models or visible success stories in one's immediate environment may lead to fatalism or resignation about one's potential to succeed. This is particularly relevant in settings where educational attainment does not always translate into employment or social mobility, thereby reducing the perceived value of long-term planning (Bempechat et al., 2016; Prince et al., 2016).

Another important dimension in understanding future orientation is its interaction with adolescents' mental and emotional health. Studies have shown that future-oriented thinking serves as a protective factor against anxiety, depression, and suicidal ideation (Hong et al., 2023; Xiao & Lu, 2019). Adolescents with the capacity to imagine better futures are more likely to withstand psychological stress and exhibit adaptive coping mechanisms. Conversely, chronic exposure to social adversity without adequate psychological buffers can result in a decline in hope and an increase in externalizing or internalizing behaviors (Dighe, 2023; Giollabhui et al., 2018). Notably, these effects may be intensified in adolescents who belong to socially

marginalized or stigmatized groups (Luk et al., 2018; Marotta & Voisin, 2017a).

Future orientation also plays a mediating role in behavioral and academic outcomes. Adolescents who can articulate clear life goals and understand the steps needed to achieve them are more likely to engage in constructive activities, such as studying, volunteering, or pursuing vocational training (Marotta & Voisin, 2017b; Matsuyama & Fujiwara, 2021). In contrast, the absence of clear goals has been linked to increased susceptibility to peer pressure, substance use, and disengagement from school (Marotta & Voisin, 2017a; Voisin et al., 2018). Gendered social norms may further complicate this landscape, particularly in cultural contexts where girls are discouraged from pursuing education or careers outside the home (Ashraf & Khan, 2016; Fajria et al., 2021). As such, analyzing how boys and girls differently experience and express hope is critical for understanding the full picture of adolescent development in low-income settings.

From a developmental standpoint, adolescence is also a time when cognitive capacities such as abstract reasoning and hypothetical thinking mature, allowing young people to imagine alternative futures and set long-term goals (Oshri et al., 2018). However, the full realization of this cognitive potential often requires environmental scaffolding in the form of educational support, role modeling, and psychosocial stability (Bempechat et al., 2016; Chen et al., 2021). In resource-scarce environments, these supports may be uneven or absent, resulting in a fragmented or incoherent future orientation. Moreover, digital divides and differential access to educational technology can further widen the gap in how adolescents from different socioeconomic backgrounds plan for their futures (Chen et al., 2021; Cook et al., 2016).

While numerous quantitative studies have examined correlates of future orientation, few have qualitatively explored how adolescents in low-income communities actively construct meaning around their aspirations, challenges, and supports. In recent years, there has been increasing recognition of the need to center adolescents' voices in research, particularly when designing policies or interventions aimed at reducing poverty-related disparities (Gowdy et al., 2020; Montoro & Ceballo, 2021). Qualitative inquiry allows for a deeper understanding of the subjective experiences and coping mechanisms that young people use to sustain hope despite structural disadvantage. Furthermore, it highlights the cultural and contextual specificities that

shape future orientation in diverse settings (Deng et al., 2023; Fehily & Schlösser, 2020).

This study responds to this research gap by exploring how adolescents from low-income communities in Pakistan experience, interpret, and sustain hope and future orientation. Pakistan represents a context where economic disparities, educational challenges, and social constraints intersect to shape youth development in complex ways. Despite efforts to improve access to education and mental health resources, adolescents in underserved communities often face multiple barriers to future planning, including gender inequality, poverty, and familial expectations. These challenges make it imperative to examine how youth in such settings articulate their dreams, navigate obstacles, and draw on available resources.

Using a qualitative approach grounded in semi-structured interviews, this study aims to answer the following questions: How do adolescents from low-income communities in Pakistan conceptualize hope and the future? What are the key barriers and supports influencing their future orientation? What internal and external resources do they rely on to maintain optimism and motivation?

## 2. Methods and Materials

### 2.1. Study Design and Participants

This study employed a qualitative research design to explore the concepts of hope and future orientation among adolescents from low-income communities in Pakistan. The research aimed to gain an in-depth understanding of how these adolescents conceptualize and experience hope and their perceptions of the future within the socio-economic constraints of their environment. A purposive sampling strategy was used to recruit twenty participants between the ages of 14 and 18 years from urban and semi-urban low-income neighborhoods in Pakistan. All participants were enrolled in local secondary schools or community educational programs. Efforts were made to ensure diversity in terms of gender, schooling status, and family background to capture a wide range of perspectives. Informed consent was obtained from all participants and their guardians prior to data collection.

### 2.2. Data Collection

Data were collected through semi-structured interviews conducted in Urdu, the native language of the participants, to ensure comfort and clarity in expression. An interview

guide was developed based on key themes identified in the literature related to hope, goal-setting, future aspirations, and perceived barriers. Interviews were conducted face-to-face in a private and secure setting, lasting between 30 to 60 minutes each. All interviews were audio-recorded with the participants' permission and later transcribed verbatim. Data collection continued until theoretical saturation was achieved, where no new themes or insights emerged from additional interviews.

### 2.3. Data Analysis

The data analysis was conducted using thematic analysis, following Braun and Clarke's approach to identify recurring patterns and meanings within the data. NVivo software was utilized to assist in organizing, coding, and retrieving data segments systematically. Initial codes were generated from the transcripts, followed by the development of broader themes that captured the essence of the participants' narratives. Credibility and trustworthiness of the findings were ensured through peer debriefing, member checks with selected participants, and maintaining an audit trail of the analysis process. The final themes reflect the complex

interplay of psychological resilience, socio-economic challenges, and future-oriented thinking among adolescents from low-income communities in Pakistan.

### 3. Findings and Results

A total of 20 adolescents from low-income communities in Pakistan participated in this study. The participants included 11 females and 9 males, ranging in age from 14 to 18 years, with a mean age of 16.1 years. Fourteen participants were currently enrolled in government secondary schools, while six were attending community-based educational programs or informal schooling initiatives. In terms of family background, 15 participants reported living in households where at least one parent was unemployed or engaged in irregular daily-wage labor, and 12 indicated that they shared responsibilities for household chores or caregiving. Eight participants came from families with five or more siblings, and 6 adolescents reported having experienced school dropout at least once due to financial hardship. All participants identified as practicing Muslims, and 13 reported regular involvement in religious or spiritual practices.

**Table 1**

*Themes, Subcategories, and Concepts*

Category	Subcategory	Concepts (Open Codes)
Hope as a Psychological Resource	Emotional Resilience	Positive self-talk, Staying calm under stress, Reframing negative thoughts, Belief in better days, Avoidance of despair
	Self-Efficacy	Confidence in abilities, Trying despite failure, Learning from mistakes, Sense of control
	Spiritual Coping	Praying, Trust in divine help, Seeking meaning in faith
	Optimism	Expecting good outcomes, Looking for silver linings, Hopeful future thinking, Visualizing success
	Motivation to Persevere	Not giving up, Setting small goals, Pushing through obstacles
Barriers to Future Orientation	Economic Hardship	Lack of money, Inability to afford education, Family financial stress, Prioritizing work over school
	Family Responsibilities	Taking care of siblings, Household chores, Parental absence, Early responsibilities
	Educational Challenges	Poor school quality, Lack of guidance, Overcrowded classrooms
	Gender Constraints	Restrictions on girls, Cultural expectations, Safety concerns
	Community Violence	Exposure to crime, Unsafe neighborhoods, Fear of going out, Witnessing trauma
Future Goals and Aspirations	Lack of Role Models	No successful people nearby, Few educated adults, Limited exposure to professionals
	Career Aspirations	Becoming a doctor, Starting a business, Joining police force, Being a teacher, Having a stable job, Helping family financially
	Educational Dreams	Going to college, Finishing high school, Studying abroad, Getting a scholarship
	Desire for Independence	Owning a house, Supporting family, Living without fear
	Altruistic Goals	Helping others, Giving back to community, Becoming a role model
Sources of Hope and Support	Migration Aspirations	Moving to a safer city, Going abroad, Seeking better opportunities
	Parental Encouragement	Parents pushing for education, Emotional support from family, Praising achievements
	Peer Support	Friends sharing goals, Motivating each other, Listening without judgment, Avoiding negative peers

Teacher Influence	Teachers believing in us, Advice from teachers, Encouragement to study
Community Programs	Youth clubs, Educational NGOs, Mentoring sessions, Free tutoring
Religious Faith	Belief in God, Mosque involvement, Spiritual inspiration

Thematic analysis resulted in four overarching categories: *Hope as a Psychological Resource*, *Barriers to Future Orientation*, *Future Goals and Aspirations*, and *Sources of Hope and Support*. Each category included several subcategories that illuminate the lived experiences of adolescents from low-income communities in Pakistan.

Under the theme *Hope as a Psychological Resource*, one subcategory that emerged was *Emotional Resilience*. Adolescents frequently described their ability to maintain emotional stability during hardship by engaging in positive self-talk, reframing negative thoughts, and believing in the possibility of change. One participant noted, “*Even when things are hard at home, I keep telling myself this is just a phase—I won’t always be stuck here.*” Such narratives reflected strategies of internal emotional management aimed at preserving hope in the face of adversity.

The subcategory *Self-Efficacy* encompassed participants’ belief in their personal abilities and their willingness to persist despite failures. Many expressed confidence in their capacity to improve life conditions through education or effort. As one adolescent stated, “*I know if I study hard, I can become something—even if we have nothing now, I believe in myself.*” This belief was closely tied to the sense of control over one’s future.

In the subcategory *Spiritual Coping*, participants shared how religious practices and faith provided emotional strength. Several adolescents described turning to prayer and divine trust during times of uncertainty. One remarked, “*When I feel like giving up, I pray. It gives me peace and strength to keep going.*” For many, spiritual faith was not only a coping mechanism but also a foundation for hope.

The subcategory *Optimism* was expressed through the ability to envision positive outcomes despite current hardship. Adolescents spoke of expecting good things in the future and seeking meaning in daily struggles. One participant shared, “*I try to look at what can go right, not just what’s wrong now.*” This forward-looking perspective often served as motivation.

*Motivation to Persevere* was another key psychological mechanism. Adolescents described setting short-term goals and pushing through obstacles to stay focused on long-term aims. As one explained, “*I don’t want to be like people around me who gave up. Even small steps matter—I keep*

*going.*” This perseverance was rooted in an intrinsic drive to change their circumstances.

The second theme, *Barriers to Future Orientation*, captured the systemic and personal challenges adolescents face. The subcategory *Economic Hardship* was pervasive, with participants reporting the inability to afford educational materials or transportation, leading to interruptions in schooling. One participant reflected, “*Sometimes I skip school because we don’t have money for books or the bus fare.*”

*Family Responsibilities* emerged as another significant barrier. Several adolescents had to take care of younger siblings or manage household tasks due to parental absence or illness. One noted, “*When my mother goes to work, I stay home to look after my brother. I want to study, but this is my duty now.*” These responsibilities often conflicted with academic aspirations.

In the subcategory *Educational Challenges*, participants mentioned poor school infrastructure, overcrowded classrooms, and limited access to academic guidance. One adolescent commented, “*Our teachers don’t care if we understand. There’s no one to guide us about what to do after school.*” These structural issues undermined the motivational foundation for future planning.

*Gender Constraints* were particularly evident in the experiences of female participants. Social norms and family expectations restricted mobility, education, and personal choice. A female adolescent shared, “*My brother can go out and study, but I’m told to stay home and help with chores.*” These constraints shaped perceptions of what was realistically achievable.

*Community Violence* also affected future outlooks. Several participants described unsafe neighborhoods and exposure to crime, which fostered fear and psychological distress. One said, “*People get into fights or worse here. Sometimes I feel scared just walking to school.*” This constant insecurity disrupted both focus and motivation.

Finally, *Lack of Role Models* was a recurring concern. Many adolescents stated they had no professionals or successful individuals in their immediate environment. One remarked, “*I don’t see anyone around me who studied and made it big. So it’s hard to imagine it for myself.*” This absence of exemplars limited their ability to visualize a better future.



The third major theme, *Future Goals and Aspirations*, revealed a diverse range of hopes despite the constraints. In the subcategory *Career Aspirations*, participants dreamed of professions such as doctors, teachers, business owners, and police officers. One enthusiastically stated, “*I want to be a doctor so I can help people in my community and also earn respect.*”

*Educational Dreams* were closely linked, with many hoping to finish high school, attend university, or even study abroad. Some had specific goals: “*If I can get a scholarship, I want to go to college and study computer science,*” said one participant. These dreams often stood in contrast to the limited resources available.

The subcategory *Desire for Independence* reflected adolescents’ yearning for personal and financial autonomy. Several expressed the wish to own a home, support their families, and live without dependence. One participant noted, “*I want to be the one who takes care of my parents—not the other way around.*”

*Altruistic Goals* also surfaced, with participants aspiring to become change agents in their communities. One stated, “*If I succeed, I want to come back and help other kids like me.*” Such goals underscored the communal orientation and empathy within many of their narratives.

Lastly, in *Migration Aspirations*, some adolescents envisioned moving to larger cities or abroad in search of better educational and professional opportunities. One explained, “*There is nothing here. If I go to another place, maybe I can study and work without so many problems.*”

The final theme, *Sources of Hope and Support*, highlighted key social and spiritual resources. In *Parental Encouragement*, participants described emotional and motivational support from parents, even amid financial hardship. One adolescent said, “*My father always tells me, don’t stop studying no matter what. That keeps me going.*”

*Peer Support* was also vital. Adolescents shared that having friends with similar goals provided a sense of companionship and mutual encouragement. One remarked, “*Me and my best friend talk about our dreams. We remind each other to keep trying.*”

*Teacher Influence* emerged as another source of hope. Teachers who took an interest in students’ well-being or encouraged their academic potential had lasting impacts. One participant said, “*When my teacher said I could be great if I worked hard, I started believing it.*”

*Community Programs* such as youth clubs and NGOs were mentioned as helpful spaces for mentoring, tutoring, and emotional support. As one adolescent put it, “*The local*

*center gives free classes and talks about goals. It made me think bigger.*”

Lastly, *Religious Faith* provided a powerful source of strength. Many adolescents mentioned mosque participation and personal prayer as means of coping and envisioning a better future. One participant shared, “*When I pray, I feel less alone. I know someone is listening.*”

#### 4. Discussion and Conclusion

This study sought to explore how adolescents from low-income communities in Pakistan conceptualize and sustain hope and future orientation in the face of structural, economic, and social adversity. Through thematic analysis of semi-structured interviews with 20 participants, four major themes emerged: hope as a psychological resource, barriers to future orientation, future goals and aspirations, and sources of hope and support. These findings reflect a complex interplay between individual resilience and environmental constraints, highlighting both the challenges and capacities that shape adolescents’ future-oriented thinking in marginalized settings.

One of the most prominent findings was the significance of hope as a psychological resource. Participants described emotional resilience, self-efficacy, and spiritual coping as central to their ability to maintain a positive outlook despite difficult life circumstances. Adolescents demonstrated strong internal motivation to persevere through adversity, often engaging in positive self-talk and goal-setting behaviors. These findings align with prior research suggesting that self-efficacy and resilience are critical mediators in the relationship between family stress and youth mental health outcomes (Kim et al., 2019). Similarly, the use of spiritual practices to foster psychological stability has been well-documented in low-income and culturally diverse adolescent populations (Montoro & Ceballo, 2021). This study adds to existing evidence by illustrating how psychological hope operates not merely as a trait but as an active coping strategy in settings where external resources are scarce.

However, adolescents’ psychological strengths were continually challenged by numerous barriers to future orientation. Economic hardship, family responsibilities, inadequate schooling, gender-based restrictions, and unsafe neighborhoods were reported as major impediments to planning or visualizing a better future. These barriers mirror patterns identified in previous studies from other low-income and middle-income contexts. For example,

economic strain and interrupted education have been found to significantly undermine adolescents' ability to invest cognitively and emotionally in future-oriented behaviors (Carey, 2021; Fehily & Schlösser, 2020). In particular, gender-based constraints on girls' mobility and access to education reflect entrenched social norms that limit their opportunities and aspirations (Ashraf & Khan, 2016; Fajria et al., 2021). This study reinforces the need to consider the intersectionality of economic and gender factors in shaping the developmental trajectories of marginalized adolescents.

Another key theme in this research was the rich diversity of future goals and aspirations expressed by the participants. Despite their socioeconomic limitations, adolescents articulated a wide range of personal ambitions, including professional careers, educational advancement, and altruistic aims such as helping others or giving back to their communities. These findings are consistent with literature suggesting that even in the most disadvantaged contexts, youth retain strong aspirational identities and dream of upward mobility (Andrean & Akmal, 2019; Prince et al., 2016). The articulation of migration aspirations in this study—participants' desire to relocate to better urban or international environments—further reflects the perception that structural barriers may be insurmountable without geographic escape, a sentiment echoed in global youth research (Giollabhui et al., 2018).

At the same time, the sources of hope and support identified by participants underscore the social scaffolding that facilitates the development of future orientation. Parental encouragement, peer support, positive teacher influence, religious faith, and engagement in community-based programs were cited as essential for maintaining motivation and emotional security. Prior research has emphasized the critical role of family involvement in fostering future educational orientation, particularly in resource-limited settings (Ahmadiansah et al., 2023). Peer relationships also emerged as an important source of motivational dialogue and emotional reinforcement, consistent with findings that highlight the protective nature of supportive social networks during adolescence (Carey, 2021; Montoro & Ceballo, 2021). Additionally, participants' mention of teachers and community mentors resonates with studies showing that even brief positive interactions with adults in educational or community spaces can bolster adolescents' academic engagement and hopefulness (Tester et al., 2017; West et al., 2022).

Crucially, this study illustrates the dual nature of adolescents' psychosocial development in low-income

communities—while many demonstrate remarkable resilience and future-oriented thought, they do so in constant negotiation with the environmental adversities they face. This mirrors the “future orientation–hopelessness” dynamic noted in longitudinal research, where increases in goal-directed thinking often coexist with heightened awareness of systemic barriers (Giollabhui et al., 2018; Oshri et al., 2018). Adolescents' experiences in this study reflect what some scholars describe as “aspirational dissonance”—a psychological tension between internal motivation and external limitations (Chen & Liu, 2021; Voisin et al., 2018).

One particularly notable dimension of the findings is the link between future orientation and mental health. Several participants described using future goals and religious belief systems as ways to manage anxiety, fear, and insecurity. This aligns with prior studies that identify future-oriented thinking as a protective factor against depression and suicidal ideation among adolescents facing chronic stress (Hong et al., 2023; Xiao & Lu, 2019). In this regard, interventions that support adolescents' capacity to visualize and work toward their goals may offer not only educational or occupational benefits but also emotional resilience. Furthermore, the integration of cultural and spiritual coping mechanisms may enhance the relevance and effectiveness of such interventions in contexts like Pakistan.

The findings also contribute to the broader literature on ecological and cultural models of adolescent development. According to socioecological perspectives, adolescent development is shaped by the dynamic interaction of individual, relational, institutional, and societal systems (Bempechat et al., 2016; Voisin et al., 2018). This study reinforces the idea that adolescents' future orientation is not developed in isolation but is deeply embedded in their daily interactions with family members, peers, educators, and the broader community. Moreover, the importance of cultural and religious values in shaping adolescents' hopefulness and moral reasoning reflects the relevance of culturally situated frameworks for understanding youth development in non-Western societies (Ashdown-Franks et al., 2019; Matsuyama & Fujiwara, 2021).

Importantly, these insights are grounded in adolescents' own voices. While quantitative studies have identified statistical relationships among variables such as socioeconomic status, educational achievement, and future expectations (Deng et al., 2023; Gangrade et al., 2021), qualitative narratives provide a deeper understanding of how these processes unfold experientially. The personal stories shared by participants in this study bring to life the internal

negotiations, external constraints, and social meanings that inform how young people imagine and strive toward their futures. In doing so, this research affirms calls for youth-centered approaches in designing education, mental health, and community development policies (Cook et al., 2016; Gowdy et al., 2020).

## 5. Limitations & Suggestions

While this study provides valuable insights into the experiences of adolescents in low-income communities, several limitations must be acknowledged. First, the sample size was relatively small and limited to one national context—Pakistan—which may affect the generalizability of the findings. Additionally, all data were self-reported, which may have introduced biases related to social desirability or memory recall. Language and cultural translation during transcription may also have influenced the interpretation of participants' meanings. The use of semi-structured interviews, while rich in depth, may have limited the exploration of some relevant dimensions that did not emerge spontaneously during conversations. Lastly, the cross-sectional nature of the study prevents us from capturing developmental changes or long-term outcomes related to hope and future orientation.

Future studies could expand on these findings by employing longitudinal designs to examine how hope and future orientation evolve over time, particularly in response to changing family, educational, or societal conditions. Comparative studies across different socioeconomic, regional, or cultural groups would also be beneficial in identifying universal versus context-specific patterns. In addition, mixed-methods research that combines qualitative interviews with quantitative measures of psychological well-being, academic performance, or resilience could provide a more holistic understanding of the mechanisms at play. Further exploration into gender differences and the role of digital technology in shaping youth aspirations in low-income settings would be especially timely and relevant.

Programs and policies aimed at supporting adolescents from low-income backgrounds should prioritize fostering psychological resilience, goal-setting, and future-oriented thinking. Educational institutions can play a pivotal role by integrating mentorship, career guidance, and motivational supports into the school environment. Community-based initiatives should focus on expanding access to positive role models and culturally grounded counseling services. Parents and caregivers should be engaged in awareness-building

efforts that reinforce the importance of emotional encouragement, even in the absence of material resources. Most importantly, all efforts must be inclusive, equitable, and attuned to the lived realities of the adolescents they aim to serve.

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## Declaration of Interest

The authors of this article declared no conflict of interest.

## Ethical Considerations

The study protocol adhered to the principles outlined in the Helsinki Declaration, which provides guidelines for ethical research involving human participants.

## Transparency of Data

In accordance with the principles of transparency and open research, we declare that all data and materials used in this study are available upon request.

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## Authors' Contributions

All authors equally contributed to this article.

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