

Self-Representation of Female Street Children in Makassar City

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Abstract. The phenomenon of female street children is growing in several regions of Indonesia, including Makassar City. That prompted this study to take the case of female street children in Makassar City, especially those related to self-representation. This study uses a qualitative approach with data from interviews and observations. This study shows that the openness of female street children regarding their identity and activities is quite open. The openness of identity with their activities helps this study to conduct an assessment related to the self-representation of female street children. The self-representation of female street children is categorized into *front stage* and *backstage*. Categorization based on the *front stage* shows that the representation of female street children is identified with selling activities, dressed neatly and cleanly, dominant friendship relations come from their community, and routines are generally carried out late into the night to sell. In the *backstage* categorization, street girls are considered to be close to their parents, self-representation of female street children is not based on the work of their parents who work on the streets, self-representation of female street children in terms of income will be returned to be deposited or given to their parents, self-representation of children the street to work is based on self-awareness, and they have goals. The tendency of these findings indicates that female street children have a different self-representation from the general public's views. The contribution of this research is possible to reconstruct street children's self-representation in the social environment.

Keywords: Street children; Self-representation; Self-disclosure; Interaction

1 Introduction

The phenomenon of street children is growing in several regions, including Indonesia [1]. The spread of street children in Indonesia is a complex social problem [2]. Several research results have categorized groups that include street children. Street children are defined and differentiated from working children and refugees [3]. The number of street children tends to be identified in big cities [4]. Street children are constructed as fragile individuals who have lost their childhood [5]. The category of street children is children who spend most of their time doing daily activities on the streets [6]. It is done for a living [7].

Street children sometimes make a living based on their own willingness and awareness. Several other cases show that many children are forced to work on the street by the people around them [8]. Generally, it is based on economic problems [9]. Of the many street children, some of them are female. They also work as beggars, buskers, shoe shiners, and so on [10]. The current phenomenon of street children causes the loss of time to play and study because they

also think about the workload and family income [11]. This tendency can affect their interaction style and appearance [12], [13].

Much research has been done on street children. However, studies focusing on taking the perspective of female street children's self-representation still need to be completed, especially in studying cases in Makassar City. However, there is still some other literature that is still considered relevant to support this research. *First*, a prolonged economic crisis has made the poor increasingly marginalized and squeezed. Ultimately, they are looking for solutions to improve the family economy by allowing their children to work on the streets [14]. *Second*, street children need to be protected by the government and allowed to improve themselves [15]. *Third*, self-representation refers to narrative construction to place children in a social context [16]. *Fourth*, those who live on the streets represent themselves by being freely involved with others, establishing friendships, feeling ashamed of living on the streets, and experiencing health problems [17].

This research aims to determine the self-representation of female street children in Makassar City. Makassar was chosen because, in 2021, the Makassar City government found around 78 street children [18]. This indicates the high number of street children in Makassar City. That encourages this study to take a case in the city of Makassar. There are research questions that can be mapped. (a) Are street girls open to their identities and daily activities outside their work environment? (b) How is self-representation produced in observing female street children in Makassar City? These questions made it possible to determine the self-representation of female street children in Makassar City.

2 Method

This study uses qualitative methods and descriptive analysis. Data collection was done by interview and observation. In this study, seven female street children were taken as informants. Researchers focused on female street children who busked, sold, or begged to get information about activities and experiences in their daily work environment. The trend of the data obtained was then analyzed to answer research questions.

3 Results and Discussion

3.1 Female street children: Self-disclosure on identity and activities

This study directly observes female street children about self-disclosure. The self-disclosure of female street children on identity and activities is described as follows:

Table 1. Self-disclosure of female street children regarding their identity and activities

Informant	Age	Activity	Category
PR	8 years old	Drinking water seller	Open
IN	8 years old	Tissue seller	Open
AI	9 years old	Baked meatball seller	Closed
NA	10 years old	Tissue seller	Open
RN	8 years old	Tissue seller	Open

TA	16 years old	Tissue seller	Open
SI	9 years old	Sticker seller	Open

Table 1 is a description of the respondents regarding whether they are open or closed about their identities and activities outside their work environment. From the results of these interviews, most female street children have begun to open up to their daily activities in helping their family's economy by working on the streets. However, some are still closed because they are ashamed and afraid of being ridiculed by their friends. This indicates that street children considered closed in their activities must be corrected. This study shows that female street children are dominantly more open.

3.2 Self-representation of female street children

This study directly observes the self-representation of female street children in Makassar City. Self-representation is a picture of life. It is also a parable of one's life. Situations in everyday life can be likened to stage performances performed by humans. There are two general categories: *front stage* and *backstage* [19]. The self-representation of female street children from the categorization is described as follows:

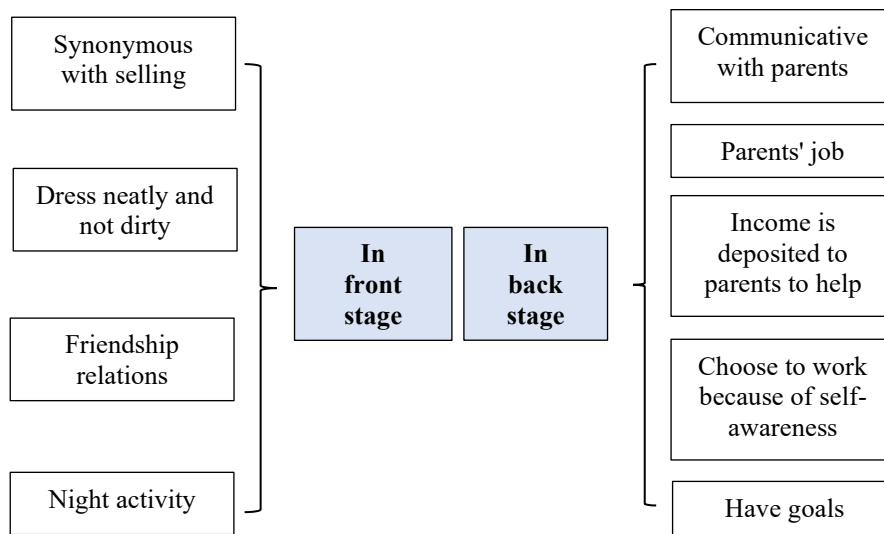


Fig. 1. Self-representation of female street children.

Figure 1 shows that the self-representation of female street children from the *front and backstage* categorization shows several tendencies. The trend based on the *front stage* is mapped as follows. *First*, the self-representation of female street children is identified with selling activities. Generally, they sell stickers, drinks, and tissues. *Second*, the self-representation of female street children is assessed as dressed neatly and cleanly. This finding differs from the basic assumption that street children have a dirty and shabby outer appearance. There is no difference in the appearance of the clothes they use between the work and home environments.

Third, the self-representation of female street children is assessed regarding their friendly relations. Dominant friendship relations come from their community, namely fellow street children. *Fourth*, the self-representation of female street children tends to continue their nighttime selling routine.

The trend based on the *backstage* is mapped as follows. *First*, the self-representation of female street children is considered close to their parents, which means that they have good communication with their parents. That is because street children spend time helping their parents by selling together. *Second*, the self-representation of female street children is not based on the work of their parents who work on the streets. *Third*, the self-representation of female street children in income will be re-deposited or given to their parents. Most of the income earned is used to finance his family's needs—some help to pay off their parent's debts. The notion so far that street children are looking for money to finance their personal lives is considered not always accurate. *Fourth*, street children's self-representation related to their work is based on their awareness. They consciously want to make money, even if they work on the streets. This indicates that the activities of street children are not entirely influenced by their parents' work, who also depend on living on the streets. *Fifth*, further self-representation shows that female street children have goals. The dominant dream of street children is to become a doctor. It shows that street children who share their time on the streets still think about their future.

4 Conclusion

This study shows that the self-disclosure of female street children regarding their identity and activities is considered to be quite open. The openness of identity with their activities helps this study to conduct an assessment related to the self-representation of female street children. The self-representation of female street children is categorized into two categories: *front stage* and *backstage*. Categorization based on the *front stage* shows that the representation of female street children is identified with selling activities, dressed neatly and cleanly, dominant friendship relations come from their community, and routines are generally carried out late into the night to sell. In the *backstage* categorization, street girls are considered to be close to their parents, self-representation of female street children is not based on the work of their parents who work on the streets, self-representation of female street children in terms of income will be returned to be deposited or given to their parents, Street children's self-representation to work is based on self-awareness, and they have goals. The tendency of these findings indicates that female street children have a different self-representation from the general public's views. The contribution of this research is possible to reconstruct street children's self-representation in the social environment.

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