

# The Causes of Child Labour: A Sample of Children Working on the Streets in Turkey



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# AIM

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The aim of this study was to identify the causes for children working on the street through individual in-depth interviews with such children and their mothers.

# Type of Research



This was a descriptive study using a qualitative data collection method.

# Research Time and Place

- The research was conducted between May 7 and September 27, 2011 in Kocaeli.
- According to the records of the Kocaeli 80th Anniversary Children and Youth Center, Topçular Neighborhood was the area where children working on the streets were most concentrated.
- The study comprised seven children and nine mothers.



# Topçular Neighborhood



# Data Collection

- All participants (Nine mothers and seven children) were informed both orally and in writing about the aim and design of the study.
- Data was collected with a tape-recorder at the home of the participants.

# Data Collection

- The interviews were conducted using a qualitative approach together with in-depth individual interviews. The interviews lasted between half-an-hour and forty-five minutes.



# Data Evaluation

- The recorded interviews were transcribed into a written text.
- Data were evaluated using thematic content analysis.

## Finding and Discussion

### General characteristics of the interviewed mothers

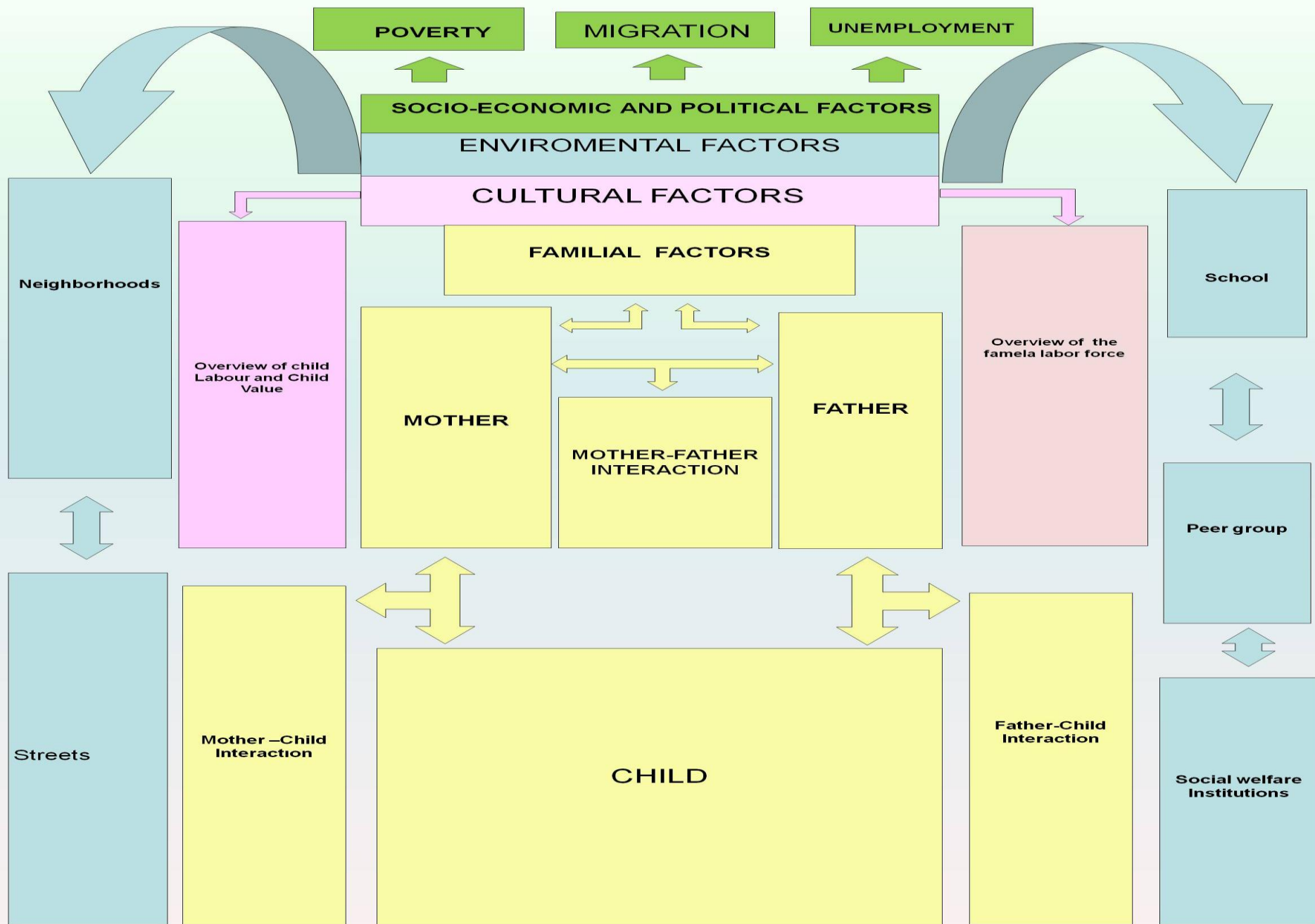
- All of the mothers ( 9 mothers) were housewives
- Four mothers were illiterate, five mothers were primary school graduates.
- All of the mothers had at least three children.

## General characteristics of the interviewed children

All the children had been selling handkerchiefs and weighing people on the street.

- (Child 1); age 9
- (Child 2); age 14
- (Child 3); age 12
- (Child 4); age 14
- (Child 5); age 14
- (Child 6); age 14
- (Child 7); age 12

All of the children were enrolled in primary school.



# 1. Socio-economic and Political Factors

## 1.1. Poverty

“...The biggest problem is poverty, believe me, we're not buying anything, we don't go anywhere, we don't do anything at all ... (Mother 1; age 35)”

“...My daughter works in a restaurant and they said to her, ‘Let's give you this stale bread, go feed it to the chickens in your neighborhood,’ so I said to her, ‘You should have told them that your siblings are much worse off than the chickens. She brings the bread home and I wet it to freshen it and give it to the children.’ (Mother 2; age 36)”

“...God help me, sometimes there's only dry bread on our dinner table...Mother 5; age 48)”.

All the families were poor.

## 1.1. Poverty

The main reason behind child labor is poverty (İlik ve Türkmen, 1994a, Atauz 1997, Altıntaş 2003, Omokhodion ve ark. 2006, Yıldız 2007, Ovalı 2007, Bilgin 2009, Çakır 2009, Acar 2010, Gün 2010, Kızmaz ve Bilgin 2010, Alptekin 2011).

## 1.2.Unemployment

- Four of the nine mothers interviewed had husbands who were unemployed, three were street vendors and two worked on construction sites.
- The fathers were unqualified and worked at low-paid and temporary jobs.
- The unemployment status of the fathers varied between 24% and 57.5%, fathers' employment in temporary jobs of fathers varied between 28% to 67% (Atauz 1997, Polat 1999, Bal Yılmaz ve Dülgerler 2011).

## 1.3.Migration

- Most of the studies in the field show that children working on the street come from families who have migrated from the Eastern and Southeastern regions (Atauz, 1990, Atatuz 1997, Bilgin 2009, Karatay, 1999a, Karatay 1999b, Ural 2000, Altıntaş 2003, Yeşil 2009).
- Many studies conducted in Turkey emphasize that one of the main causes of children working is migration (Atauz, 1998, Zeytinoğlu 2001, Çakır 2009, Acar 2010, Alptekin 2011, Kocadaş ve Özgür 2011).



## 2. Enviromental Factors

### 2.1. Neighborhood



- **Lack of places where children can pass the time**
- **Lack of support from neighbors**
- **Having multiple models of children working on the street in the neighborhood**
- **Accepting that children working on the neighborhood street is an ordinary occurrence**

## 2.2. STREETS

- Easy access to the streets

Access to the streets, a 25-minute walk.

- Streets are fun for children



Streets in Kocaeli

## 2.3.SCHOOL

- **Violence at school**

Two children said that they had been exposed to violence by their teachers at school.

School violence is defined as one of the factors inciting children to work on the streets (Erbay 2008).

- **Indifference towards school**



## 2.4. PEER GROUP

- **Peer group study on the street**
- **Peer Group Adaptation**

“...I went there with my friend. When I saw what my friend was doing, I said I can do this, so I tried it and I started doing it...(Child 6; age 14)”

Peer pressure or encouragement is instrumental in children's starting to work on the streets (Alptekin, 2011)

## 2.5.Social Welfare Institutions

- **Social Welfare Institutions are unable to help regularly**

All of the families were receiving social security benefits, but these were insufficient and irregular. Social Welfare Institutions may be nonfunctional in the prevention of poverty (Altıntaş 2003).

- **Detection and Tracking System of Welfare Institutions**

Accessing Social Welfare Institutions in our country is made possible through application. Only those who apply can benefit from these institutions. (Sallan Gül and Gül, 2006).

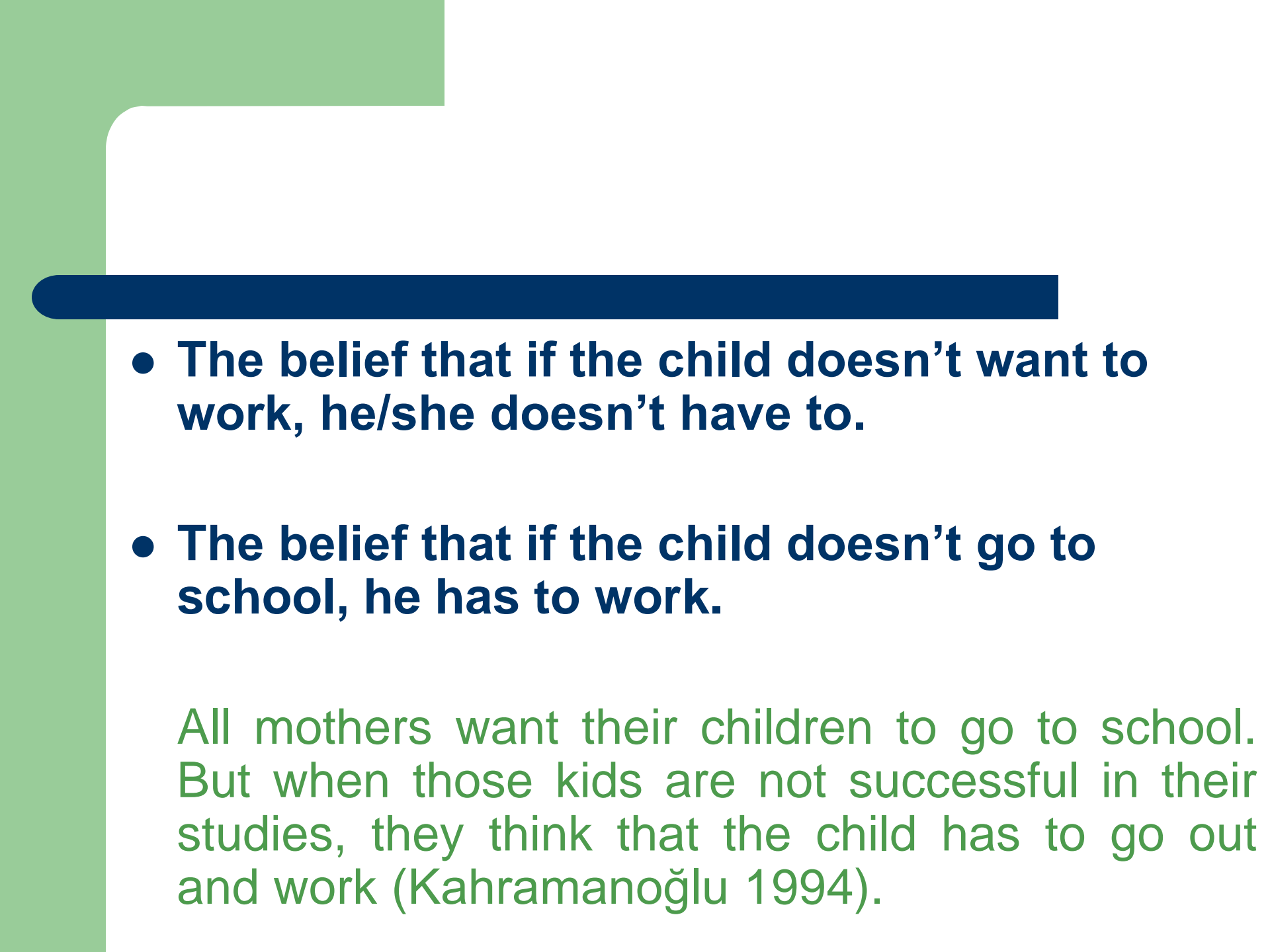
## 3. Cultural Factors

### 3.1. Overview of Child Labor and How Children are Valued

- The belief that the child will develop a sense of responsibility
- To make a child work so that he/she learns about life
- To protect children from bad friends

- **Being male**

Looking at the gender of children working on the streets, it can be seen that there are more boys than girls (Black 1993, İlik and Türkmen 1994b, Küntay 1998, Polat 2002, Altıntaş 2003, Öztürk 2007, Ovalı 2007, Gün 2010, Çatak and Bozkurt 2010, Bal Yılmaz and Dülgerler 2011).

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- **The belief that if the child doesn't want to work, he/she doesn't have to.**
  - **The belief that if the child doesn't go to school, he has to work.**

All mothers want their children to go to school. But when those kids are not successful in their studies, they think that the child has to go out and work (Kahramanoğlu 1994).



## 3.2. Overview of The Female Labor Force

All mothers except one were housewives.

- Their husbands don't let them work.
- Their husbands believe that if a woman works, it's a sign that her husband is unable to look after his house and family.
- Husbands believe that if their wives work outside the house, they will not be able to take care of their housework.

## 4.Familial Factors

### 4.1. Mother-Father Interaction

- **Poor communication**

Mothers are exposed to violence by their husbands.

“My husband was pulling out my hair and I had bruises all over ... We were out of butter, for example, and he got mad at me asking me why we were out of butter ...Mother 2; 36 age)”.

“...I would always cry in bed about why there was always a quarrel every single day (Child 2; age14)”.

## 4.2. Child-Mother Interaction

- **All children give their money to their mothers.**

“...They don't touch the money they make on the streets; they bring it all to me...(Mother 3, 46 age)”.

Most mothers are sorry their children have to work on the streets, but they're happy when they get the money.

- **Authoritarian Mother Models**

- **Violent behavior of mothers toward their children**

“...and in the end I explode and yell until my voice gives out.. (Mother 4; 52 age)

- **Mothers force their children to go out into the street**

“...my friend's mother beats him before sending him out on the street, but he doesn't tell anybody, he just tells us (Child 2;14 age)

- **Over-Compliant Passive Mother Model**

- **Mother-Child Communication Disability**



### 4.3. CHILD- FATHER INTERACTIONS

- **Communication is limited to the time spent together**

Most fathers, whether they work or not, come home late and have limited contact with their children.

- **Anger felt towards fathers**

Some children blame their fathers for the problems they face at home and for this reason feel anger toward their fathers.

“...If I was grown up, I know how I would make him suffer...(Child 2; 14 age)”.



### 4.3. CHILD- FATHER INTERACTIONS

- **Rejecting the father**
- **Violent behavior of fathers toward children**

“My husband is always on my kids’ case—he yells, screams, so they keep their distance from him (Mother 3; 46 age)”

## 4.4. Mother-related Factors

- Mothers want to have better living conditions
- They do not want to be in need of others' help
- They feel forced to
- Sense of helplessness
- Mothers experience burn-out

## 4.4. Mother-related Factors

- Not being aware of the impact on children of working on the street
- Passing the responsibility of looking after the family on the child

“Whenever I ask for something, my mother says, their fathers work, your father doesn’ t...(Child 2; age 14)”.





## 4.5. Father-related Factors

- **Lack of adequate and regular income**
- **Indifference toward the family**
- **Deficiencies in the role of parent**
- **Aggressive personality**
- **Egocentric personality**

## 4.6. Child-related Factors

### 4.6.1. Characteristics of the child making the decision to work on the street

- Troubled, rebellious child
- Poor school performance
- Wanting to earn money
- Tending to follow a peer group
- Wondering what it's like to work on the streets
- Low perception of threat
- Wanting to meet his/her own needs
- Looking for love
- Wanting to make friends

## 4.6.2. Characteristics of the child sent on the streets by the mother

- Wanting to help the family financially
- Self-sacrificing type of personality
- Sense of responsibility toward the family
- Calm and compatible personality
- High achiever in school
- Not wanting to be a burden on the family
- Taking on the responsibilities of the father
- Wanted to be valued in the family

# Results and Sugestions

- Poverty, unemployment, migration, environmental, cultural and familial factors can be factors that cause children to work out on the streets.
- Because the reasons that children work out on the streets are multi-dimensional, there is a need for qualitative studies not only with mothers and children, but also with fathers and siblings.

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# THANK YOU

