Homelessness in the Valley

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Abstract

- In today's society, there is a common belief that homeless people are the problem and that they have services at their disposal to end their homelessness. Yet, there is little consideration given to how society has influenced this population.
- Homelessness is a serious problem nationwide and is also a challenge to resolve once you have found yourself within the homeless community. It is important not to judge each homeless individual's situation the same.
- The demographics of the homeless population is just as diverse as the factors that led to their homelessness.
- This paper examined the available literature on the contributing factors of homelessness in Las Vegas, specifically subpopulations such as veterans, victims of domestic violence, and LGBTQ youth.
- The research conferred here shows that there is very little research conducted on the homeless population in Las Vegas.

Methods

- Given that homelessness is prevalent in Las Vegas, more research is needed to address the issue in the Valley. A systematic literature review was conducted in order to examine the contributing factors and consequences of homelessness by focusing on three specific subpopulations: a) veterans, b) victims of domestic violence, and c) LGBTQ youth.
- There were two publications, ten peer reviewed journals, and two online sources used throughout the paper. The following search engines were examined for the study: SOC Index, Academic Search Premier, Sage Collection, and Science Direct.

Findings 1: Contributing Factors

- While social stigma continues to grow, it is the key component that perpetuates homelessness in America.
- Homelessness can be understood when we look at the individual's circumstance and the social conditions in which they live.
- Job loss is the main contributing factors in Las Vegas.
- Shay and Rossi (1992) found that extreme situation of homelessness could be based on a variety of factors, including housing market dynamics, housing and welfare policy, economic restructuring, labor market, and personal disabilities.
- Additionally, there were a few more contributing factors provided by Shlay, and Rossi (1992) and Borchard (2005), were release from confinement, and loss of family networks (see Table 1).

Table 1: Personal Vulnerabilities

Personal Vulnerabilities	Mean (Standard Deviation)	Range	Number of Studies
% Ever in psychiatric hospital	24% (16)	10-100%	40
% Ever with detox experience	29% (15)	4-47%	22
% Ever with prison experience (felon)	18% (13)	11-82%	20
% Ever with jail or prison or both	41% (18)	8-82%	18
% Disabled	25% (18)	3-63%	26
% In bad health	38% (11)	19-66%	20
% Current mental health	33% (23)	4-100%	22
% With alcohol addiction	27% (15)	3-71%	27
% With no friends	36% (22)	2-87%	14
% With no family	31% (9)	12-50%	18

Findings 2: Subpopulations Affected by Homelessness

Veterans
- Homelessness among US veterans has been the focus of research for over three decades.
- Studies show that homelessness among substantial numbers of veterans was first documented after the Civil War, but it was not until early 1980's, a period characterized by high inflation and two economic recessions, that veteran homelessness began to be recognized as an important public health problem.
- The strongest risk identified that affects all homeless people is extreme poverty, but psychotic disorders such as schizophrenia and bipolar disorder have the greatest impact on the homeless veteran population.

Victims of Domestic Violence
- Domestic violence (DV) or Intimate partner violence (IPV) is a significant risk factor among women, and homeless IPV victims usually escape by using domestic violence and homeless shelters.
- There are shelters and services that are funded to help victims of domestic violence escape their current circumstances.
- In fact, there was an on-going federal commitment in the form of financial support to prevent homelessness among people who experience DV or IPV.
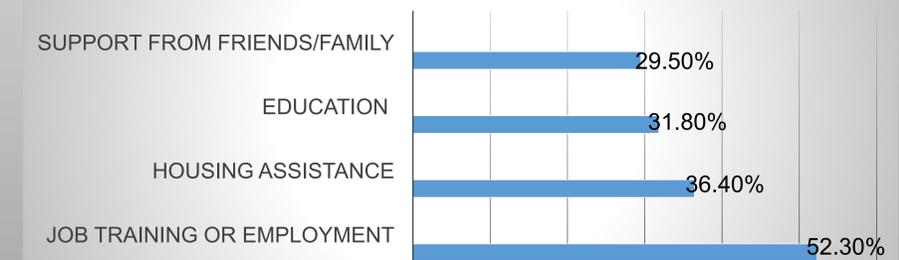
LGBTQ Community
- LGBTQ youth are being put out of their homes by their parents or legal guardians due to their sexual orientation.
- Gay and bisexual male youth appear to be at an increased risk for both homelessness and suicide.
- Research suggests the psychological distress and damage that young people can experience growing up gay in this society should not be underestimated.

Conclusion

- Homelessness can be understood when we look at the individual's circumstance and the social conditions in which they live in. There was only one specific contributing factor of homelessness unique to Las Vegas: job loss.
- The main consequences in the literature shows health implications, criminalization, and victimization were caused because of the conditions of being homeless.
- Most importantly, Figure 1 below provided by the Southern Nevada Homeless Census and Survey is significant to my research because findings show that homeless people feel if there were more job training or employment opportunities, housing assistance, better education, and support from family members and friends it would be easier to end their homelessness.

Figure 1: Assistance identified as Helpful to Prevent Homelessness

SUPPORT FROM FRIENDS/FAMILY	29.50%
EDUCATION	31.80%
HOUSING ASSISTANCE	36.40%
JOB TRAINING OR EMPLOYMENT	52.30%

Implications

Implications for Research
- More research should be done in order to gather specific information about the homeless community in Las Vegas.

Implications for Practice
- Although there is a lot of information provided about homelessness, the information alone will not be enough to end an individual's homeless status.
- A deeper qualitative approach, such as in-depth interviews and participant observations should be conducted in-order to understand each individual's situation so they can be appropriately serviced.

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