Exiting Homelessness, The Perspectives of Those Experiencing Housing Instability

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Abstract

Background: For nearly thirty years homelessness has increased steadily in major cities around the globe, including Alberta Canada. Strategies adopted by the Canadian and Alberta governments to manage homelessness has yielded limited success. Signaling that Individuals experiencing homelessness are yet to be included adequately in search of solutions. Comprehension of homelessness phenomenon remains a challenge, as well as ending homelessness. The purpose of this phenomenological investigation study was to understand homelessness phenomenon from the experience of people who do not have homes and are experiencing housing instability.

Methods: A total of 15 respondents were recruited. We performed in-depth, open-ended interviews for data collection. Following hermeneutic and phenomenological principles, interview data was retrieved, transcribed, summarized, described, and explained.

Results: The prominent themes indicated a need to make housing, and utilities affordable, and rent and mortgage qualification criteria easy; a need for revising of credit bureau and criminal record policies; people at the shelters entitled to welfare or other benefits requires grace period of at least three months before withholding payment of their entitlements; vital skills training is necessary to secure a job, for financial management, for positive behaviour, and supervised spending. Shelter awareness is necessary, and making government support services efficient, and non-discriminatory. End all discriminations and provide 40hrs/week regular full-time jobs.

Conclusion: The homeless, public, public health, and homeless service providers would benefit from the findings. Findings could help to stir homelessness reduction strategies to keep people out of the street in Canada.

Introduction

Homelessness is not novel in Calgary and Canada and has risen steadily for over a quarter of a century (1, 2). The increase in the number of individuals experiencing homelessness can be traced back to the 1980s, when Canadian federal government withdrew its investment in low-cost housing (3). Previous authors have indicated a continuous increase in the population of people experiencing housing instability, as well as increase in housing demand in Calgary from the 1980s to date. (1). In 2010, housing demands increased from 8,500 to 20,000+ houses (4).

A total of 35,000 persons experienced homelessness per a night in 2016, and in a whole year 235, 000 persons were homeless in Canada (5, 6). From 2008 to 2012, there were 1,512 to 1,715 persons in emergency shelters, and in transitional housing, the population moved from 1,224 to 1260 (5, 6). Transitional housing is a short-term

housing that provides support to residents. And the jail and hospital population decreased from 296 in 2008 to 151 in 2012, which was a 49% reduction (5, 6). This indicating that as people get shelter accommodations and permanent homes, their exposure to danger or trouble, and diseases became less (5, 6). In that same period, there was a major decrease in the population of people sleeping on the street from 569 to 64, which was 88% reduction (5). As a result, shelter population and accommodation demand went up, which accounted for the limited success noticed in homeless reductions strategies (5).

Previous authors indicated that a homeless population count done in October 2014 showed that as many as 3,555 persons experienced homelessness in the city and in 2018, went down to only 2911, which was 644 reduction in a space of four years (7). The population that experienced housing instability involves children who are younger than 18 years old, and adults from 18-64 years old. Also, families, the First Nations, women, men, employed and unemployed constitute the population of people experiencing housing instability (5). The consequences of increased homelessness situation are multifaceted. Housing instability and homelessness is a threat to the health and safety of the persons directly affected and that of the larger population (7, 8). The cost of taking care of people experiencing housing instability was too high, costing the Canadian government as high as $53,144 per person per year (9). In March 2019, Calgary Homeless Foundation, reported that the sum of $62,824,475 was spent on funding homelessness in 2018 in the city of Calgary. Despite all these efforts, previous authors never ceased to suggest that there is yet, a steady increase in the population of people experiencing housing instability in the city and so, recommend for more research on homelessness phenomenon in the city (1, 2, 9, 10, 11). However, from recent report from Calgary Homeless Foundation, till date, there has been only a 32% success in

homeless population reduction, which is a 68% short of bring homelessness under control (12). This study was necessary because, Canadians from various cultural, ethnic and racial backgrounds cutting across North and south America, Europeans, Asians, and African backgrounds formed the participants (10, 11). People experiencing housing instability show a high prevalence of needs for healthcare (8); namely, allied health, mental illness, social health needs, addictions and that make the living condition of the effected difficult (8). The social health need components of those involved that affect health are income, social support, and housing (13). Previous authors suggested and invited for more innovative solutions that may involve the affected groups from various backgrounds could be inevitable to address the advocacy, healthcare and other needs adequately (18). Homelessness being a condition that affects the economic, social, mental, psychological, physiological, and physical well-being of an individual; it is clear that homelessness is a major public health, population, and community health concern in the city (9, 10, 11, 12, 14).

The strategies adopted to manage homelessness have not been as effective and successful as anticipated, maybe because, more lessons through innovative research are critical to guide effective efforts (1, 15), which could be gained through qualitative studies to gain knowledge from the experience of people wearing the shoes of homelessness. Plus lack and inadequate use of research and knowledge to develop homelessness strategies and policies is a critical issue to be addressed (1). The Canadian Observatory on Homelessness, a non-partisan program that is committed to promoting the use of research and knowledge in homelessness policy and strategy development, and implementation was established in 2012, by Canadian Homeless Research Network as working group. Canadian Observatory on

Homelessness is committed to conduct further research on Homelessness to gain more knowledge, and evidence to support policy and practice (1, 16). The focus of Canadian Observatory on Homelessness initiative is to link academic research and expertise to find a solution that will prevent the youth from experiencing homelessness and to transform strategies, change policy and practice from old approach of providing ad hoc emergency services, and support for a short period of time that have been ineffective. Gaetz (1, 16) expressed that the former approaches to dealing with the phenomenon of homelessness increases the vulnerability of people who are homeless, expose them to trauma, crime, and raise their health risks. Such strategies also result in social and economic exclusion of persons experiencing homelessness. Gaetz insisted that it is no longer acceptable to see as many as 35,000-40,000 young people aged 13 to 24 in homeless situation for five consecutive years (1, 16). According to Gaetz it is necessary for all homelessness stakeholders to understand "what works, why it works, for whom and in what context", and that it requires inter-sectoral collaboration of stakeholders with those experiencing homelessness in search for a matching-solution.

There were many quantitative and some qualitative investigations that supported a development of effective homelessness strategy and management (19). Examples are the Housing First and Homelessness Partnering Strategy interventions (17, 18). While Homelessness Partnering Strategy focuses on providing long-term housing solutions to people in need of homes; Housing First intervention was adapted from Sam Tsemberis Pathway to housing developed in New York in 1990, and another similar intervention developed in Toronto called House Link. House Link focused on firstly, moving people in homeless situation immediately to permanent independent homes; then, into recovery programs that involve all kinds of supports to the affected persons based upon

the needs of a person.
A 10-year intervention strategy sponsored by the government of Alberta and launched from 2008-2018 by Calgary homeless Committee to control Homelessness that focused on ensuring that people of Calgary do not sleep on the street and that people on emergency shelters move to homes within 7 days that they arrived at the shelters (16, 17, 18). This strategy originated from the USA, and was adapted in Canada, using the principle of housing first; focused on ending chronic homelessness in Calgary, and having shelters focus on temporary emergency sheltering only. Despite these efforts, researchers yet suggested that evidence are not sufficient to back up adequate homeless policy decision and its program implementation (15, 17, 16). Gaining a deeper knowledge and understanding of homelessness could stir in the direction of matching solutions and effective response to ending homelessness (19). Engaging in international research collaboration on youth homelessness research could aid in using research to understand youth homelessness from various cultural contexts and connect it with youth homelessness at home to find a solution for homelessness (14).
In this study, we explored the recommendations of those in homeless situations based upon their experiences and collected their suggestions about what could be done to assist those experiencing homelessness to reconnect with the community. Since homelessness is a crucial social problem that is creating major public health issues, generating an innovative matching solution towards ending homelessness will also make a significance advancement in Public Health in the City (14) as well as in social and behavioural sciences. Our study derives its foundation from the symbolic interactionism, reciprocal determinism, and social cognitive theories that support a belief that environment influences an individual and a person in turn influences the environment. The people in homeless situation, homeless

and public health service providers, researchers and policy makers could tap from the social change benefit this study. The result is an addition to homelessness literature, which translates to more knowledge to all stakeholders. More knowledge will lead to a better understanding of homelessness and additional matching support to its reduction strategies and more lessons gained could support appropriate policy development (14, 20).

Through the research questions, we learned the recommendation of participants on what should be done for them to successfully exit homelessness. They based their recommendations on the questions about how people at the shelter became homeless, the difficulties that they underwent and their survival strategies. Our questions investigated what they were happy about and what they were not in shelter experience, how their experiences impacted on their lives and the lessons that they gained from their experiences. From their diverse perspectives, they recommended things that are required to effectively and sustainably keep them in dignifying homes.

Methods

We used a phenomenological method to conduct this study. For a reason that we sought an understanding of homelessness from the experiences of people in homeless situation, and the meaning of homelessness to them, we used phenomenological approach to conduct this investigation (21, 23). The participants shared how they experienced homelessness, and the phenomenological design provided us an opportunity to understand their lived experiences (11, 21, 22, 23).

Institutional Review Board approval (# 01-20-17-0194616) was obtained prior to beginning the process of contacting homeless shelter personnel or interviews with any of the participants. We scheduled for a visit, and during in-person visitation, we presented an overview of our study, which also contains goal of our investigation. The partnering homeless agency representative, agreed to and welcomed our proposal, and in return assisted us to post our flyers at strategic positions and gave us access to a secure, volunteer room for meetings with participants during interviews.

The 15 participants (9 males) and 6 women ranged in age from 21-64. They varied in ethnicity with 5 White, 4 Black, 3 First Nation, and 3 Asian. Only 4 were employed. From participant-12 upwards, data started repeating itself and became redundant, which prompted us to end data collection with participant 15.

Our data was collected in person using only in-depth interviews. We collected data only from the participants at the shelter because, at the shelter they were protected by shelter authorities but, alone on the street, they were not (24, 25, 26). Our interview questions were aimed at understanding the life events that led these individuals to their current homelessness situations and what recommendations they make on how best to assist them exit the homelessness situation. We used triangulation or crosschecking as well as different data collection methods namely, voice recording, taking notes and member checking to verify data prior to data analysis (27).

Our methods of interpreting the respondents' perspective experiences involved the hermeneutics principles and theory of retrieving and analyzing data because that helped us to see homelessness from the eyes of the participants, their personal experiences (28). All data was hand coded, sorted, grouped, and categorized prior to the creation of themes and concepts. The data analyzed involved only significant statements of the participants, and we generated meaning from them (27, 29).

Result

From the research question that sought respondents' recommendations on how best they can be helped to depart homelessness, we developed and assembled many themes.

The figure 1 constitutes a summary of the themes generated from a question that sought to know the life events or variables that lead people into homelessness. The key themes were, no money, support, home, and privacy; all types of discrimination, addiction and mental illnesses, and the urgency of reviewing a range of government policies essentially to address property tax, and mortgage and rent qualification criteria. Additionally, participants strongly suggested a need to create government support and service system solely on preventing people from entering and retaining homelessness. From our investigation, we learned that homelessness is generic and moves in a particular generic cycle, once an individual has no job, or money, or support from family, community, and/or government a sure destination is homelessness. This is simple summary and an interpretation of the figure below.

How a Person in Homeless Situation Can Depart Homelessness, as Recommended by Homeless Participants
Themes' description and Explanation
The results of this investigation indicated many themes, the two central themes were money problems and discrimination and all other themes revealed links to no money and discrimination.

1. **Make Housing and utilities affordable and rent and mortgage qualification criteria as well as house taxes easy and achievable**: respondents stated that people were homeless because the cost of renting a house and utilities is too expensive for people. Additionally, they expressed that qualification criteria to obtain rent and mortgage is not within reach for many, and that increases in property taxes and other taxes prevent people from getting homes. They added that it is cheaper to own a home than to rent a home but, the conditions block people from getting own homes. Also, renting homes from government sponsored properties is cheaper but, the qualification criteria prevent many from

getting homes from these cheaper sources. From participants' experience, reviewing housing policies downwards and making housing and utilities affordable is necessary to prevent homelessness and assist people exit homelessness. Additionally, rather than increases in taxes, it is easier and cheaper for government to provide full time employment to people experiencing homelessness and avoid wasting taxpayers' money on employable adults who are available for work but, discrimination prevented them from working.

2. **Government to review its policies on credit bureau, criminal records:** Respondents expressed that credit bureau, criminal record, and child support has brought many and retained them in homelessness because, credit bureau and criminal record prevent people from getting employment, getting rent or mortgage, which is the only way to exit homelessness. Experience informed participants that it is an excessive use of government machinery to punish to poor and people in situation and keep them in perpetual cycle of poverty. Additionally, while people with criminal record are not suitable to work in vulnerable sector, and high security needed sector, there are yet other sectors where they could and should work. After all, many err but, only those documented are crowned criminals. Some of the crimes started as social and economic problems that the society contributed to that degenerate to mental problem and crime. Refusing to give them a second chance would be as good as keeping them yet in jail, even after they were deemed fit to live in the community. Also, some people are treated as if they are criminals by haters, they use information communication technology namely phone, web, and emails to interfere with, spy, intimidate, and stalk their victims' private communications, to hinder them from private transactions and getting employment. Respondents recommended that the government should review policies on credit bureau, criminal record, as well as increase in information communication
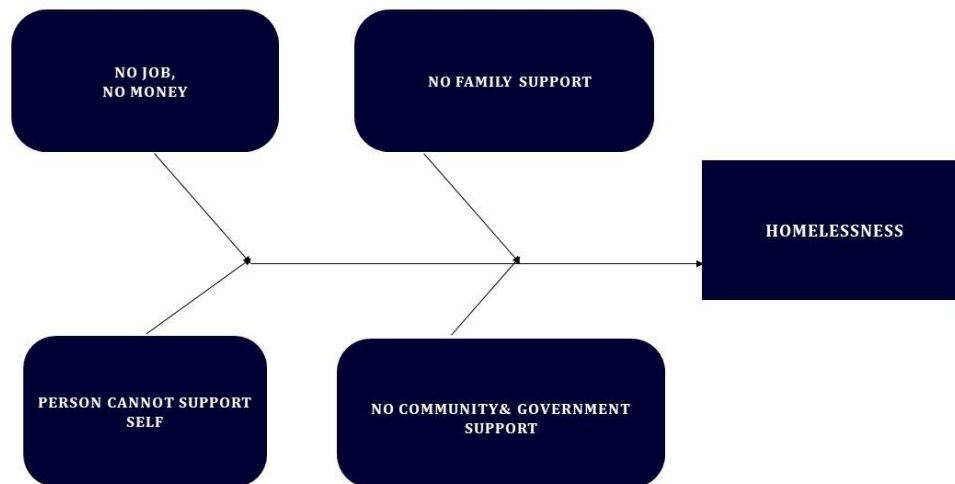
Figure 1. The generic Cycle of Homelessness.

technology security for ordinary people to enable people depart homelessness.

3. **Welfare and other benefit payers to allow a grace period for those receiving benefits and entitlement before withholding payment:** Some people experiencing homelessness live on entitlement and benefits, the government policy is to discontinue payment to people who are homeless. From the experience of the respondents, it takes up to three months' pay for one to make a deposit of extra one month rent before someone can rent a house. Participants recommend allowing a grace period of three months to the homeless before withholding benefits is essential to enable people depart homelessness

4. **Making government support systems efficient, devoid of discriminatory services, and letting people know about shelters and other support systems is an important factor to ending homelessness**: Respondents suggested that government support systems were not efficient and stressed that discrimination impacts negatively on service provision and discrimination stand in the way. Also, many have no idea that shelter exists and do not know the kind of services that government

social support service providers offer to people in need of help or support. Hence, many were not aware of them before they needed support and home thus, many slept and literally lived in their cars, and some slept on the street for up to one year before someone or cops came at their mercies and took them to the shelter. Making shelter and other social services efficient is decisive and awareness creation of them is critical to assist people avoid and depart homelessness.

5. **Provide sufficient supportive and people oriented professionally trained staff at the shelter and include motivational speakers and support to staff team:** People at shelters have lost all hopes, fallen and fears no fall. Respondents stated that the manner in, which people are treated could make or mar. Get them assessed and have a case worker place them right away into appropriate recovery line of support package and they will cooperate and work hard to exit homelessness. Some need job and home only to exit, some need more support than others namely, counselling, rehabilitation and treatment, job skills and vital skills training (10, 11) before they can exit homelessness. Thus, each case should be treated as unique as it

is. Participants recommend that staff be truly humanitarian, and people oriented and professionally trained, so, that their effort should support people to depart and not to retain homelessness.

From experience, respondents recommend that considering the total brokenness, hopelessness, helplessness, dejectedness, and loneliness of people in homeless situation, to assist them pick their pieces and stand to continue the struggle, they believe that creating motivational support staff and motivational speakers positions at the shelter is an inevitable service to enable people depart homelessness

6. **To End Homelessness, all kinds of discriminations need to end:** Participants clearly expressed that discrimination was a key point in all issues surrounding homelessness. Many with tears in their eyes, some with deep sighs, emphatically stressed that discrimination prevented them from obtaining a home, securing employment, and interfered with service provision and receipts including at the shelter. Respondents lamented that the issue of discrimination can never be over-expressed because it is a painful reality of our world that prompts and keeps people in homelessness. Respondents clearly stressed that there is no short cut to ending homelessness. Discrimination must end if homelessness must end. In other words, homelessness is a fruit or evidence of discrimination.

7. **Provide vital skills training to people in homeless situation**: Providing Vital Skills Training for job, financial management, behaviour, social as well as anger management skills, and guidance on spending is necessary at the Shelter because people at the shelter have no reason other than lack of vital skills training. Some were homeless simply because they do not have the right skills, they need to secure employment, some were not able to manage their income, they spend it on irrelevant things, and ran short of enough to pay for expensive rent or mortgage and expensive utilities. Some do not have homes because,

they were unable to behave appropriately at homes and at work and could not control their anger, they had problem with their spouses, and broke away. Since, they cannot afford a separate house without their spouses, they became homeless. Participants recommend that providing vital skills training is essential for people to overcome homelessness.

8. **Provide job, money, and support to people and more funding to service providers**: All 15 respondents were direct in their statements in responding to research question about money, job, support and home. They were clear in their emphatic statements that no money, job, and support was the major reason why people were homeless, some paused in attempts to hold their tears back, some with tears running down their cheeks, and some sighed deeply before gathering them together to speak how preventable things like these could reduce them to nothing (homeless). People need money and they cannot have money if they do not have full-time employment (40hrs/week), and $18 per hour minimum wage is a minimum required to rent a place for a dignifying living. Twelve dollar per hour and casual/part time jobs will make and keep people homeless. Also, respondents stated that more money is needed at the shelter to enable shelter to meet the needs of the people at the shelter.

Participants stated categorically that no money was a key reason why people were homeless. In a simple language, for there to be a solution that can end homelessness and keep people out of the street, discrimination, money and money related issues namely, support, job, house, and entitlements need to be addressed. Failure to do so, is a way of endorsing or promoting homelessness.

9. **Sports, recreation and wellness programs are essential at the shelter:** Respondents recommend that having sporting and recreation programs namely, walk, volleyball, wellness classes and gardening will be beneficial to people at the shelter. The respondents know that there is

a world soccer and sports for male and female with addictions, and expressed that such should be promoted, and encouraged at the shelter. If participants were left with a choice, they will choose to go and play, and do wellness activities than to go and do drug. Respondents made it clear that doing drug is simply a signal that someone has lost all hopes of surviving and so, bothers not about life and health. It is also, a sign of addiction. Participants stated that they prefer to go and play games and do wellness activities more than to go and do drug. The respondents' statement about including sporting, wellness and recreational activities in shelter service provision is a necessity at the shelter and that can make huge impact in despairing people at the shelter, revive, re-invigorate, and boast people's morale, and above all make them willing to receive support, and make the necessary personal effort to overcome homelessness. Participants opined that promoting sports, wellness, and recreation at the shelter is necessary to exit homelessness.

10. **Conduct more research on homelessness:** Participants felt special, respected, and relieved to get a chance to share their experiences. They believe that people know nothing about homelessness Thus, participants suggested that more studies should be conducted on homelessness to teach people about homelessness because people who were homeless today never new that they could be counted among homeless population, and that it could happen to anyone.

11. **How to survive homelessness:** To survive homelessness, some strategies are critical. It is beneficial to avoid staying idle or dwelling on thinking about the situation, rather to keep busy as much as possible when in homeless situation. Reading books including homelessness publications, religious books namely, Holy bible, Koran, and holding on to your memories, phones, tablets and laptops, faith, was recommended by participants. Holding unto past memories such as pictures with family and friends, tablets, computers, and watch movies helps with emotional and psychological challenges. Additionally, picking up recycling bottles and cans from blue bins and elsewhere, doing temporary jobs can help someone get small amount of money. It is beneficial to do away with negative feelings, and rather maintain positive thought and attitude. Helping new or other people at the shelter with their problems, socializing and making new friends, though with caution, will help people to find confidence to deal with homelessness. People at the shelter need to know that self alone, and no other person can do the bulk work of departing homelessness. Counselling is an essential service at the shelter so, more counsellors are needed at the shelter and after in-take, the right starting point for a person at the shelter is the counsellor's office. Talk to a counsellor to deal with your emotions, determine the right resources for you and where to find them. Visit the information office for more information and make personal effort to pursue other resources and support services that you need to exit homelessness. Next, is a brief discussion and conclusion of study.

Discussion

There were two prominent themes that every participant pointed at during interview meetings; they were no money and discrimination, and other emergent themes were connected to them. All other emergent themes were about getting money to depart homelessness and how discrimination opposes the efforts. Though, the themes have abstract characteristics, we used axial coding procedure to develop the themes. The transcription of interview data gave rise to the resultant themes' characterization. Data was analyzed to eliminate redundant data, coded to form nodes and nodes that gave rise to categories, which formed the unit themes. The unit themes were further analyzed, and redundant ones removed, and the remaining ones merged to form larger themes. There

were overlapping themes, and we clustered them. In all interviews discrimination and no money persisted. Some overlapping themes were similar and unique in content, and some themes did not overlap. The non-overlapping themes were independent in nature.

The data gathered about lived experiences of participants described what homelessness means to them. They described homelessness as a helpless situation of rejection, isolation, having no money, family, and support at ones' side and a situation of danger and abuse. No single factor causes and keeps people in homeless situations. Each person's experience varies in a unique way. Structural dispensations which include a lack of funds, discrimination, policies, and other environmental factors lead and keep people in homelessness. The structural and environmental factors, and domestic factors was suggested by Gaetz et al (16, 17) and economic and societal variables that prompts the environment to refuse persons to obtain economic freedom, social autonomy and stability critical to exit homelessness was suggested by Bloom, Finfgeld-Connett and Johnson (30). The respondents recommended that a review of a range of government policies namely, employment, housing, credit bureau, and criminal, is pivotal to assisting people to overcome homelessness. Graham and Schiff (31) and Gaetz et al (17) indicated it as lack of affordable housing, whereas Ahajumobi and Anderson (11), strict rent and mortgage qualification criteria and high property tax as causing homelessness. A situation whereby everyone is welcomed to obtain loan to purchase vehicle with or with no or bad credit records. But to qualify for rent or mortgage, no credit or bad credit history disqualifies. Also, the participants stated that it will be beneficial for people experiencing homelessness if welfare and other benefit payers can pay people experiencing homelessness up until three months after they came to the shelter because it helps for saving up initial down payment and for rent.

Furthermore, participants recommended providing of vital skills training to people in homeless situation such as, job skills acquisition training, financial management, behaviour, and social skills as well as anger controlling skills and spending guidance. It was the respondents believe that when government support services become more efficient and all kinds of discrimination actually removed, desired value would be added to success in ending homelessness and placing people into dignifying homes-home with basic home infrastructure, privacy, regular utilities. This lesson was implicated in Gaetz et al (17) study as ineffective and insufficient support systems, and Hulchanski (32) suggested it as a poor or limited access to essential supports necessary to depart homelessness, these findings pointing at similar variables. Respondents expressed that shelter should not be privatized, as done in Ontario and inclusion policy should be implemented at the shelter in Alberta. This is another new finding not reported by past authors; however, there could be other underlining variables that are peculiar with Alberta. For example, when Registry was operating under direct government services, the cost went up and it became less effective and accessible. People will wait for road driving test for as long as six months to 10 months before getting a scheduled slot, and the car registration and driving test registration fees were higher. But, when it was run by private Albertans, the program experienced a remarkable increase in registry effectiveness, accessibility, and affordability. Registration fees were less, and people could get scheduled for road driving test within one to two weeks. This could be a factor why Shelter is privatized in Alberta, to increase effectiveness and accessibility.

Participants stated that a positive outcome of shelter experience will increase if, staff are supportive and professionally trained ranging from Motivational speakers and support staff, security staff, case workers,

and counsellors. This theme was a new finding not reported previously be researchers. Respondents clearly expressed that if discrimination is eliminated from our society, homelessness may soon vanish from the city, and those left would either be unable to work or disabled, who may need to depend on government support services. Additionally, recreational and wellness programs, shelter awareness, conducting more research, and reading up how to survive in homeless situation can assist people to depart homelessness. Being a new finding, recreational and wellness program, shelter awareness and conducting more research suggested by participants were not reported by previous authors.

The environment as well as behaviour and character of someone contributed to a person's homelessness; however, homeless experiences teach people lessons necessary to alter unhealthy behaviors. The information generated by this study is educational, especially as some of its findings are in concurrence with previous research findings, and new lessons learned could be beneficial to the homeless policy makers, public health and homeless service providers, researchers, public and persons in homeless situation, and could hopefully influence homelessness and public health strategies as well as policy decisions; homelessness being a major public health concern in Calgary. Plus, this investigation is an addition to homeless literature in Calgary, Alberta, and Canada.

Limitations and Trustworthiness

Our analysis focused on describing and explaining in-depth interview data as obtained subjectively from the respondents who were experiencing homelessness. We acknowledged that it is possible that some experience sharing may have been out of focus of conversation, overstated or understated; so, we used triangulation to make it up (10, 11, 29, 33). This investigation cannot be generalized because, it is a qualitative study, and the sample size is small. Its use would depend on the purpose and context to be satisfied,

if it is similar to the context as used in this study. It is necessary to note that phenomenology was given interpretations by different authors, (25, 34, 33) the nature of our questions and responses as generated by the respondents may not have addressed all descriptions. We selected the subjects purposefully (33), on a criterion that samples were Canadians from various racial and ethnic descent staying at the shelter at the time of data collection.

We held information sessions and only those in attendance who read our poster and consented to participate as volunteers. To increase the accuracy of the data, interview data was cross-checked, member-checked, voice-recorded and notes taken. Some words were not clear, and we researched it further to get the right understanding of their meaning.

This investigation is a phenomenological one so, bias was not ruled out of its data collection, analysis, and interpretation because that cannot be avoided, in this kind of study. We were aware that respondent's homelessness experience sharing could have been overstated, understated, or forgotten because, some experiences happened in the past and present. Also, we adopted in-depth data collection and reflexively interpreted data in result analysis (10, 22, 24, 26, 33). To ensure that it is credible, we were consistent in measuring variables as specified and factoring in an ability of another researcher to replicate it (11, 33). Also, our information was detailed, and discrepant information included to keep our study validity high. (27). The use of outcome of this study should be discretional if, its is relevant to users and contexts similar as used in this study; then, using it becomes appropriate (27, 33).

Study implications

The result of this investigation is largely educational and informative. Some of the findings are in agreement with previous research findings, and some lessons are new that could be beneficial to many disciplines including policy making, public

health and homeless service provision, academic research, general public and people in homeless situation. It is our hope that the lessons learned could hopefully influence, policy decisions, public health and homelessness strategies and their implementation. It is an established fact that homelessness is a major concern in public, population and community health, hence, when successfully and fully addressed, it will be a major milestone accomplished in Population health. This investigation is therefore, an addition to homeless literature in the city of Calgary, Alberta and Canada in general.

Conclusion

Someone who is experiencing homelessness is often a rejected, helpless, and isolated and vulnerable person who is subject to abuse, has no support or money to live a safe and healthy life. Factors indicated that lead to and keep people in homelessness are many and unique to an individual from the perspective experiences of participants. Centrally, discrimination and money issues were two main factors. These two were implicated in the systemic, or environmental, or structural problems that cause and keep people in homeless situations. Others are housing policies, environmental or structural, and domestic situations. The respondents recommended that a review of a range of government policies, namely, employment, housing, criminal records, and credit bureau policies are critical to people to overcome homelessness. Also, welfare and other benefit payers who usually quit paying benefits once someone is homeless should continue to pay benefits to people experiencing homelessness up until three months after they came to the shelter because it helps for saving up for initial down payment and for first month rent. Additionally, vital skills training should be provided to people in homeless situation namely, job skills acquisition training, financial management and spending guidance, behaviour, social, and anger

management skills training to enable people overcome homelessness. Government support services should be more efficient and ending discriminatory services will add value to assisting people departing homelessness. Respondents expressed that shelter should not be privatized, as done in Ontario and inclusion policies should be implemented at the shelter. However, a peculiar Alberta variable could be an underlining reason for shelter privatization in Alberta. Participants stated that a positive outcome of shelter experience will aid if, staff are supportive and professionally trained. Professionalism and special training is required for positions such as Motivational speaker staff and support staff, security, case worker, and counselling. Respondents clearly expressed that if discrimination is eliminated from our society, homelessness may soon vanish from the city, and those left to be supported by government support services would either be unable to work or disabled. Additionally, recreational and wellness programs, shelter awareness, conducting more research, and reading up on how to survive in homeless situation can assist people to depart homelessness. The environment as well as behaviour and character of someone contributed to a person's homelessness; however, homeless experiences teach people lessons necessary to alter unhealthy behaviors. The findings of this study are educational, essentially, as some are in agreement with previous research findings, and new lessons learned could be beneficial to policy decision makers, public health and homeless service providers, academic researchers, general public and someone in homeless situation. It is our hope that the outcome of this study can influence various policy decisions, development and implementation of appropriate homeless and public health strategies to significantly, and successfully address homelessness as a major Community, population, and Public Health problem in the city of Calgary.

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