



Social Work Interventions and The Right to Housing: Addressing Urban Homelessness Through Collaborative and Rights-Based Approaches

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Abstract

Homelessness is a complex social issue that continues to affect millions of people worldwide, particularly in rapidly urbanizing regions. It is influenced by multiple interconnected factors, including poverty, unemployment, inadequate housing, mental illness, substance abuse, domestic violence, and social exclusion. Individuals experiencing homelessness often face stigmatization, discrimination, health risks, insecurity, and limited access to essential services. Social workers play a critical role in addressing these challenges by providing direct services, advocacy, case management, crisis intervention, community mobilization, and policy support. This paper examines the role of social workers in addressing urban homelessness through collaborative, rights-based, and empowerment-oriented approaches. Drawing upon contemporary literature, policy frameworks, and social work practices, the study explores the causes and consequences of homelessness, the challenges encountered by social workers, and the importance of intersectoral collaboration in promoting sustainable housing solutions. The paper further highlights the significance of the right to housing as a fundamental human right and evaluates governmental initiatives aimed at reducing homelessness. The findings emphasize that effective homelessness interventions require integrated strategies combining affordable housing, healthcare, employment opportunities, social protection measures, and active participation of homeless individuals in decision-making processes. Strengthening social work practice, policy advocacy, and community engagement can significantly contribute to reducing homelessness and fostering social inclusion, dignity, and human well-being.

Keywords: Urban Homelessness, Social Work Practice, Housing Rights, Social Inclusion, Social Policy, Homeless Population, Community Development, Human Rights, Social Welfare, Housing First Approach

Introduction

Understanding and resolving one of the most critical social crises of our day requires findings on the function of social workers in relation to urban homeless individuals. Unemployment, drug misuse, mental illness, poverty, and inadequate housing affordability are all problems. Often interact in complicated ways, leading to homelessness in metropolitan settings. By offering vital assistance, advocacy, and intervention to families and individuals facing homelessness, social workers are crucial in tackling these issues. Research like this is necessary to determine how well social workers help people overcome structural obstacles, pool available resources, and become self-sufficient enough to end their homelessness. The need for social services, public health facilities, and shelters is growing in tandem with the pace of urbanization, thus new ideas and tactics that work in urban settings are required.

Finding service gaps and offering remedies supported by research to enhance the welfare of the homeless people may be achieved via this study that examines the practices, problems, and consequences of social work interventions. More fair and sustainable urban development will be achieved, and it will also help social workers become more equipped to deal with the specific dynamics of homelessness in cities.

Problem Statement

Issues related to the phenomena are highlighted in the issue statement. While some studies do help shed light on the issue at hand, others do not directly solve it (Wentz, 2018:2). The research problem statement might originate from theoretical frameworks or real-world contexts.

The homeless are the most marginalized and troubled group in South Africa, especially when compared to other people

who live in substandard or unstable housing that denies them a place to call home. Assault, harassment, rape, and sickness are among the worst situations that homeless individuals face on the street.

People who are homeless face social stigmatization due to the widespread belief that they have drug abuse issues; many are also labeled as dangerous to society, disgusting, mentally ill, irresponsible, and morally corrupt (Roche, 2015:230)^[9]. Those who are without a permanent residence, the stigmatization of being called homeless is what really challenges society (Roche, 2015:236)^[9]. Negative psychological consequences, such worry and psychological discomfort, might arise from generalizing and labeling all homeless persons as the same as cited in de Beer and Vally (2015):32 by van der Berg and Prinsloo.

According to Goldbach et al. (2015:4)^[5], stigmatization is a root cause of inequality., which is the opposite of what really happens. via systemic processes like social exclusion. The absence of compassion and ubuntu is reflected in society's stigmatization of those surviving without a home. As a result, living on the streets without a house is a clear indication of a deficiency of or insufficient ubuntu principles. African culture is deeply rooted in the notion of ubuntu. When compared to Western norms, which prioritize individualism over teamwork, Ubuntu's core principles are diametrically opposed. Ubuntu is a way of life that stresses the significance of people working together to achieve a common objective This is why the collaborative role is valuable.

In the context of the research, "ubuntu" means a community where people respect and care for one another. Central to the African concept of Ubuntu is the belief that a person's connectivity with all other people is the essence of their identity. Research on persons sleeping on the streets often divides attention between the social services provided to the homeless and their actual experiences on the streets. The Commonwealth of Australia (2008)^[3] asserts who are experiencing homelessness on the streets should be tackled collectively. A coordinated approach or action to address issues influencing the absence of a legislation requiring the government to address the unique needs of homeless individuals in South Africa is another factor contributing to the underrepresentation of street homelessness.

In contrast to the widespread belief that Poverty is the root cause of homelessness., South Africans see it as a housing issue that can be mitigated by implementing preventative measures such as the DSD's social assistance grants program and the DHS's national housing delivery program The source is Cross et al. (2010)^[4], specifically on page 6. The authors Cross and Seager also note (2010:143) that whereas South Africa's attempts to combat street homelessness have failed, its efforts to relocate inhabitants from informal settlements to official settlements were successful.

Because homeless individuals are often seen as helpless and in need of rescue rather than as partners in their own struggle, official initiatives to end homelessness have not succeeded in ending street homelessness. Although social work services are provided by government agencies, faith-based organizations, community-based organizations, and nonprofits, it may appear that social workers do not possess the skills needed to address the unique needs of individuals

experiencing or at risk of homelessness and living on the streets come by. Because homeless individuals are frequently undervalued while being primary contributors in the fight against street homelessness, it is critical that Homeless individuals and social professionals collaborate to discover answers. Despite the amount of information about homelessness and resources, there little said about social workers' and homeless persons collaborate to end street homelessness provided to those experiencing homelessness. This is the problem that this study aimed to address.

Rationale for the study

It was determined that two major issues were interesting. The researcher was aware of a number of social service initiatives that aim to help those experiencing homelessness alleviate street homelessness, but these services did not seem to be helpful. This information gave rise to the justification for doing this study. There was an increase in homelessness and the subsequent increase in the need for social work services persons experiencing homelessness rose in the CoT due to factors such as migration, unemployment, domestic abuse, drug use, and domestic violence (Pretoria News, 2014:10).

Secondly, it was noted that while there is a wealth of data about the societal issues surrounding There is a lack of information on the joint initiatives of social workers and those suffering homelessness in South Africa, which affects both the homeless and the services provided by social workers to those in need. A significant conclusion of the study is that social workers who assist the homeless often see their clients as very vulnerable and in need. People experiencing homelessness possess an incredible amount of resilience and resourcefulness (Green & Baldry, 2008:399)^[6]. The Xitsonga phrase akanani, meaning "let's build each other," provides a possible inspiration for the study's premise: a partnership between those experiencing homelessness and social professionals in an effort to reduce street homelessness.

Because of a dearth of qualitative literature on the topic, it was crucial to investigate as shown by qualitative research within the field of social work, the collaborative endeavors of social workers and those experiencing homelessness to eradicate street homelessness. For social work therapies to have an impact and last, more research on how homeless people may actively participate in analyzing and understanding their homelessness is needed (Roets et al.). (2016:625). required. Studies on street homelessness, interventions, and actors (both homeless persons and social workers) tend to be conceptually distinct. So, it was crucial to do qualitative study on ways in which people experiencing homelessness and social professionals may collaborate to end homelessness on the streets.

Literature Review

Sadauskas (2024)^[10] In the European Union, almost 4.1 million individuals were without a house. Among EU homeless populations, individuals in their twenties and thirties make for 20-30%. Politicians and the general public alike are worried about homelessness. Most of the recent writings on social workers' interactions with the homeless have concentrated on the larger homeless community rather than teenage homelessness. The reason for doing this

qualitative study was to look at what causes youth homelessness, what social workers face when dealing with homeless teenagers, what skills are necessary to help homeless youth, and what drives social workers to help these youth. The study's participants were five social professionals from one Finnish city who deal with homeless kids. The information gathered from the Content analysis was used to examine the semi-structured interviews. The study's findings include the following: what motivates social workers to help homeless adolescents, what skills are necessary to provide social work services to homeless youth, and what factors and effects lead to juvenile homelessness youth children.

Sowa (2023) ^[11] In this work, we consider how digital product development could benefit from a multidisciplinary strategy that makes use of method triangulation. One such example is the Ohm-led study "Smart Inclusivity for homeless people" (SIWo). This project aimed to create individualized digital solutions to aid the daily lives of homeless people by combining a human-centered design approach with research methodologies from the qualitative social sciences, such as group discussions and interviews. Homeless people's (digital) requirements were defined in the Social Sciences Research subproject. These findings defined the product's context of usage in a human-centered design approach. The project's digital outputs included housing and peer support app prototypes that need information with works like "Stromer Max" and "Schlaue Lise," more. Also, in Nuremberg, you may find a charging station and public Wi-Fi. Particularly when tackling societal problems like homelessness, the human-centered design approach may benefit greatly from the incorporation of qualitative social research methodologies into product development. Compared to more simplistic Design Thinking techniques, these methodologies provide a more sophisticated understanding of consumer wants and requirements. But there are obstacles to overcome, such as lengthy reviews and problems connecting social research with technological product development. Interdisciplinary cooperation in product creation has the ability to bring about social shifts, according to the research.

Zufferey, Carole. (2017) ^[14]. Research, policy, and practice around homelessness and social work are diverse and complicated, as seen in Homelessness and Social Work, which draws on intersectional theory. Thinkers, doers, politicians, and would-be doers in the social work field are all encouraged to reevaluate the topic by looking at the ways in which uneven power relations shape both homelessness and social work. Individualist theories about homelessness' origins are popular, but they fail to take into account the ways in which social workers conceptualize and address systemic issues like homelessness, which are influenced by larger political and overlapping socioeconomic disparities. Incorporating the stories of individuals experiencing homelessness, this work aims to build an innovative method for investigating homelessness, social work, and intersectionality. A critical examination of social work strategies for homelessness takes into account a wide range of factors, including indigeneity, gender, race/ethnicity, socioeconomic position, age, sexual orientation, and ability. In addition, it challenges the way homelessness is currently

portrayed in social work policy, practice, and literature. Those pursuing degrees in sociology, public administration, social work, or a related discipline, homelessness, and intersectionality will benefit greatly from reading this book.

Bose (2023) This brief analysis delves into the first-person narratives of those facing homelessness in Siliguri, India, illuminating what research has shown about the social impacts of homelessness in metropolitan areas. The Constructivist Grounded Theory (CGT) method informed our choice of qualitative approach in an attempt to comprehend homelessness from the viewpoint of those actually dealing with it. Marginalization, maladaptive behaviors, demographic vulnerability, and the unfulfilled right to housing are all interconnected social and mental health issues that lead to someone being without a home, as shown by the findings. to city life. The research highlights the urgent need for a societal reevaluation, targeted assistance programs, and legislative measures to combat the profound marginalization and segregation endured by this susceptible group. Affordable housing, community-based shelters, drug and mental health treatment programs, economic empowerment initiatives, and identification cards that grant access to government services and democratic rights are all highlighted. A holistic strategy based on community cooperation is proposed in the report as a means to end homelessness and create cities where Everyone is entitled to the "right to the city."

Yani (2024) South Sulawesi's metropolitan areas are particularly rife with complex social concerns, including as street children, you have an inherent "right to the city." beggars, the provincial administration of South Sulawesi and local governments in metropolitan areas have enacted legislation. Nevertheless, the issue in South Sulawesi's metropolitan centres remains unaddressed, and these measures have failed to be well implemented. Addressing this social issue is challenging for the province & South Sulawesi's municipal and district governments due to four factors: family dysfunction, program restrictions, low institutional competency, and community engagement. To combat the plight of homeless people, beggars, and children living on the streets, South Sulawesi's province and district/city administrations in urban areas coordinate efforts across regions and put into action programs that help those in need.

Research Methodology

Research Approach

This study used a qualitative research approach. Because the researcher is able to get into the deeper significance of certain human experiences while using this technique, the results are theoretically richer. Since qualitative research may adapt to new material and new observations, it is a very adaptable method. A participant's narrative of experience, perception, and meaning might be prompted by a qualitative research technique. This method was chosen since the main objective of the research was to get a deeper comprehension of the challenges social workers have while aiding those who are homeless. The researcher ensured that the subjects detailed the challenges they encounter in the course of a typical day while helping adult homeless people by using this method.

Research Design

Descriptive and exploratory research methods were used for this investigation. strategy. When a researcher is looking to make a significant contribution to an established area, an exploratory design is essential. By using this approach, fresh understanding of the study issue was made possible. The study procedure also conducted research using a descriptive design in addition to the exploratory design. A descriptive research design focuses on collecting information on a specific subject in order to provide a detailed account of it.

Sampling Methods

This study's researchers used a snowball sampling strategy. technique. Since the researcher had no idea where to find social professionals who helped the homeless adults, this sample strategy was considered suitable. In order to take this sample, the researcher got in touch with the head of a homeless group in the Western Cape.

Tools for Data Collection

In order to fill in the blanks and advance the subject, the thesis includes one example. Now it matters for that particular field. The most significant step taken by law enforcement to enhance the country's orderly situation. Three well-known Bangladeshi groups working on this subject petitioned the High Court Division bench in a writ, as described in the thesis, requesting evicted slum dwellers be allowed to return to their homes.

Data Analysis

Through the transcription of all 18 interviews, the empirical investigation's qualitative data was coded and analyzed to reveal certain underlying patterns. In what follows, we'll talk about these trends in the findings. During each interview, the researcher took notes on the schedule and also videotaped the whole interview so that they could transcribe it later. This made it possible for the researcher to refer to the notes and recordings while coding and evaluating all of the information. Data analysis consists of three steps according to some: data preparation and organization, data reading, and data coding.

Critical Analysis**South African Approach on The Right to Housing**

Since the right to housing's status remains unclear after the Constitutional Court's decision, the proposal has drawn strong criticism normative substance, which is a clear lack. Some have speculated that the court is being cautious about getting into a power struggle with the government and that it is trying to maintain its own institutional credibility by not doing what the other branches have done. The right to housing in South African law has resulted in several in its short twenty years, paving the way for its practical application. In addition, the South African Constitution has made it quite apparent that they would be taking a more nuanced approach to future cases, which will significantly affect the global debate over the right to housing. South Africa's court is clearly going its own way, unaffiliated with the CESC or any regional institution.

Indian Approach on the Implied Right to Housing Within Right to Life

Regional and global experiences have shown that the implied right to housing may, at times have a major impact on the development of housing standards and on people's satisfaction with their homes. Even though it is not explicitly mentioned in the Indian Constitution, the right to housing is considered by the Supreme Court to exist alongside the right to life protected by Article 21 of the Indian Constitution. This is the case in India. The Indian legal system is strong yet flimsy when it comes to preserving people's right to housing, especially in informal settlements. Furthermore, even though the highest court in India has relied heavily on principles recognized worldwide, its case law pertaining to human rights is fundamentally distinct from the guidelines provided by international human rights treaties. The contemporary idea of the right to housing was born out of the Supreme Court's broad interpretation of Article 21's right to life. Yes, it is which seems to be a political and civil right with a classical formulation, simply says: The only way to take away someone's life or personal freedom is to obey the law.

In the 1970s, the highest court in India finally started to a more liberal reading of the Constitution, bolstered by a dedication to social justice and judicial activism, departing from its literalist roots. In order to fulfill the constitution's objective by delving into its spirit and genuine philosophy, the Apex Court has acknowledged innovative litigation forms like PIL. Fundamental rights are the sole means by which the Constitution's socioeconomic aims may be realized, according to the Supreme Court. Along with clever lawsuits comes equally imaginative solutions. Consequently, non-conventional and non-traditional methods were used to hold the state and its officials accountable for taking constructive action. Regardless, there were some skeptics who believed the cures weren't as effective as claimed. So, this new kind of litigation and remedies is clearly on display in housing right jurisprudence. Many different types of rights, both individual and societal, for different qualities, are considered to be pregnant within as outlined in Article 21 by the highest court in India. The right to exist includes, among other rights that are pertinent to the matter, the right to be healthy, the right to privacy, the right to work, etc. Human rights legislation on a global scale recognizes that this broad meaning leaves room for other interpretations. "Adequately widespread of all human rights, both existing and developing," was how the Indian legal luminaries regarded Article 21. Because of this broad expansion, Article 21 today protects the right to housing in India. The Indian Supreme Court has been widely praised for its fearless activism, and the Court's strong position serves as a prime illustration of judicial activism on a worldwide scale.

ARTICLE 21 and the Right to Housing

Instead of cases regarding socioeconomic rights, the rights of prisoners served as the foundation for broadening the scope of Article 21. In the landmark case of *Maneka Gandhi v. Union of India*, the court reined in the article and

started its enormous expansion beyond the plain language of the provision. The courts pondered the "right to life" after the Maneka Gandhi case by adding the phrases "human dignity" and "making life meaningful," thereby making the constitution applicable to the oppressed and vulnerable. Before this, the constitution did not apply to them. So, the legislation in this domain is now more robust. Federal Territory of Delhi Administrator Francis Coralie Mullin v. Francis Coralie Mullin, 1981 did not seem to concern housing or shelter at first glance. Questions about the legality of preventative detention were raised by the complaint. The court has seized the chance to interpret Article 21 broadly. After much thought, Justice Bhagwati has concluded that a more holistic and constitutionally-grounded understanding of the right to life is necessary for its continued viability, its ability to uphold the inherent value and dignity of each person, and its impact on future generations. Furthermore, the comment made by Justice Bhagwati was:

In our view, everyone is born with the fundamental right to live in an environment that respects their inherent dignity, which includes the following: the ability to learn and grow intellectually, to freely move about and interact with other people, to have a roof over their heads, to eat enough to stay warm, to dress appropriately, and to find a place to live that is both secure and sufficient. The right to exist and the freedom to participate in the most basic human activities are intrinsically included, regardless of one's position on the issue activities and functions. Deprivation of this right to life would be the result of any action that violates or diminishes human dignity.

The Indian Scenario on the Right to Housing

Moving away from a literal interpretation and towards a more inclusive one that safeguards society's most vulnerable people, the Supreme Court of India has adopted a pragmatic approach in interpreting its Constitution's "right to life" guarantee. Indian housing legislation has received worldwide acclaim for this paradigm change. In their verdicts, the Indian courts provided a reasonable definition of the right to life that encompasses more than simply the provision of material needs; it also guarantees structural equality, dignity, opportunity, and intellectual growth. Interconnections between different rights to a decent human existence are also laid forth in the Indian instances. In addition, the holistic approach was chosen, and the idea that housing rights and other. The rejection occurred because economic, social, and cultural rights are inherently separate from political and civil rights. This debate in India over housing rights has implications far beyond the country's boundaries. It is important to remember that India's distinctive discourse on rights, together with the country's social and economic circumstances, are the driving forces behind the worldwide discussion on rights that India has sparked. Civil and political rights are no longer the only ones that the regional system prioritizes; economic and social rights are just equally important. A worldwide conversation with NGOs like Amnesty worldwide prompted this growth, which in turn sparked the creation of the Global Campaign for Human Dignity. It has been recognized by the organization that:

Not having enough money is only one aspect of poverty; it

also encompasses a lack of education, influence, safety nets, and instruments necessary for a decent living. Everyone has the inherent worth and dignity as a human being, and that includes the right to adequate housing, the right to physical integrity, and the right to education.

Indian Schemes and Policies by The Government to Tackle Housing Problem

Since gaining independence, little emphasis has been placed on housing. During Vancouver's Habitat 1 Conference, delegates overwhelmingly agreed that enhancing people's quality of life should be the primary goal of any human settlement strategy. This highlights the critical importance of housing in this context. An inclusive society free from discrimination based on race, color, sex, ideology, language, or any other factor can only exist if policies are put in place to ensure that everyone's basic needs are met, including but not limited to: medical care, nutrition, shelter, schooling, jobs, apprenticeships, and retirement benefits. So, housing is one of the basic requirements for both humans and civil society.

Conclusion

Concerning the challenges encountered by social workers in assisting adults experiencing homelessness were the focus of this research. Client uncooperating, safety and security concerns, heavy caseloads, inadequate supervision, few resources, inadequate funding, difficulties accommodating transgender clients, and mental health patient diagnosis were among the numerous difficulties brought to light by the study.

As a distinct branch of Indian law, as a result of developments brought forth by cases involving inadequate housing; the rationale behind these rulings has advanced human rights on a global scale. But the protections afforded to the inhabitants have been severely limited by the instances that sprang from Olga Tellis. Even if there aren't many examples, they're all in the media. Moreover, the remedies in these judgments are of a transitory character, situationally particular, and hence not universal, and no decision involving a substantial formulation of the right per se has been established by the right to housing. On the other hand, the right to housing and shelter, which is a part of the right to life, is protected by a strong and unique framework under Indian law. The agreement contains procedural procedures for rehabilitation and compensation. The persistent political difficulties experienced by India's informal settlers may be attributed in large part to these promises. As a result of modernization efforts and rapid urbanization in India, the right to housing is susceptible to changes in political climate, economic conditions, and social norms. forces; the Nawab Khan judgment has adopted a divided and balanced approach to this problem. In light of the analysis's revelation that massive investment is necessary to meet the issue of the significant shortage of houses in both urban and rural regions, the housing industry merits priority consideration from all angles. It is imperative that all past housing policies fail to be forgotten while making new ones. Promoting the housing project with precision is essential if it is to reach its intended recipients.

As a last piece of advice, South Africa needs stronger laws and policies to regulate service provision and safeguard the

rights of adults experiencing homelessness. This would help social workers understand better how to organize intervention services and how to offer services. To further alleviate social workers' administrative burdens, NGOs and NPOs could hire more social auxiliary workers. Finally, since this is such a pervasive societal problem, it is suggested that organizations providing assistance to the homeless be given additional resources and financial support.

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