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The Homeless Problem in Ventura County

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Homelessness is one of the problems that hinder the development of the American society. Approximately two million women, men, and children in the nation are homeless. Such individuals struggle to stay alive while the society seems to turn its head from the issue. Mostly, people without sufficient sources of income might end up on the streets. In addition, poor mental or physical health, domestic violence, lack of affordable housing, poverty, and unemployment are yet other causes of homelessness in the US. In response to this matter, different humanitarian organizations urge the government to develop social welfare programs to mitigate the number of the homeless people in the nation. Similar to most of the counties in the country, the rate of homelessness in Ventura County, California, is alarming. Thus, both levels of governments should formulate plans to address homelessness in not only the region but also other areas facing the same problem.

Background

The Ventura County Homeless Count and Subpopulation research in 2015 indicated that over 1417 adults and children in Ventura County were homeless during the point-in-time count (Goldstein, 2015). The number shows a slight decrease compared to the numbers of unsheltered individuals in the preceding year. The cities of Ventura and Oxnard account for two-thirds of the homeless persons in the county (Council et al., 2016). However, the city of Simi Valley has the third highest number of the unsheltered population in the county (Goldstein, 2015). The United States Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) has requested the local jurisdiction applicants to undertake “one-day point-in-time” sheltered and unsheltered homeless count every year to bring the issue to the attention of the society as a whole (Day, 2015). The

organization requires sheltered count that includes transitional housing programs and emergency shelters. Additionally, HUD requires local jurisdiction applicants to collect subpopulation information for different groups that encompass the chronically homeless people, persons with mental disabilities, chronically unsheltered families, drug abusers, domestic violence victims, veterans, persons with HIV/Aids as well as unaccompanied youths.

The country administration has been implementing different strategies to curb the problem. One of these methods includes housing programs for the homeless. *Housing First* has assisted the county in the reduction of the issue. The implementation of the program entails moving homeless people including the chronically unsheltered families from the streets into structures and offering wrap around services to make sure they are stable (Council et al., 2016). The *Housing First* program links chronically homeless people to permanent shelters, thus, providing subsidized housing services (Day, 2015). The program is different from the housing readiness approach that insists that homeless families should address other problems including mental illnesses and substance abuse through management in transitional housing or shelter before settling to subsidized permanent shelters.

Secondly, *Rapid Re-housing* model has contributed in resolving homelessness problems. The approach helps the families and persons who are not chronically homeless obtain permanent homes immediately and stabilize them within the shortest time possible. The plan helps people who have not been in streets for disabling situations and illnesses. Instead, it focusses on people who have been independent in the past but need temporary assistance for months. The program helps such families and individuals become self-sufficient through employment or public assistance (Council et al., 2016). In some cases, *Rapid Re-housing* program may assist homeless

people who need long-term monetary assistance in terms of food, low-cost clothing, transportation, and household supplies.

The third method concerns the *Targeted Street Outreach and Engagement* that people promote to accomplish the goal of permanent housing. The project was initiated by Housing Navigators that concentrate on efforts to connect street families with permanent shelters instead of offering them with temporary services. The plan accomplishes its missions through identifying suitable housing and having access to such opportunities on the initial encounter with street families. Furthermore, the program assists street families and individuals in navigating the requirements to access such shelters. Funding these social welfare programs would eventually eradicate homelessness in Ventura County.

Purpose of Study

The present study seeks to determine various factors that influence homelessness in Ventura County. Firstly, the study will identify the effects of the implemented social welfare programs on homelessness. It will determine whether these programs account for the slight reduction in homelessness. Secondly, the study will evaluate the ratio of the homeless minority population compared to the Whites. The comparison of homeless population among the diversified American society may entail the examination of the relationship between income and homelessness since studies link white families with high incomes compared with minority households. In the study will investigate the efforts of the administration in the region concerning measures to eradicate the matter.

Research Question

What are the contributions of the social inequalities (Will the only measure of social inequality be asking race/ethnicity or are there other indicators or variables that measure inequality?) in the spread of homelessness and the role of the administration in addressing homelessness?

Data Sources

For one to address the research question, it is vital to consider reliable sources of information. In the first place, the study will collect data from interviews and social welfare program records particularly the ones that help the society in resolving the problem. Surveys and documents reviews would assist the researchers in investigating the details of the matters including the most affected ethnic communities, and government interventions on the issue.(Will the only measure of social inequality be asking race/ethnicity or are there other indicators or variables that measure inequality?)

Study Hypotheses

Hypothesis 1

The government's social welfare programs are accountable for the decreasing rate of homelessness in Ventura County. These programs have seen the settlement of a significant number of street families and unsheltered persons. (Will the only measure of social inequality be asking race/ethnicity or are there other indicators or variables that measure inequality?)

Hypothesis 2

The problem of social inequality propagates homelessness in the region. Social identity might affect an individual's financial ability since white people might be likely to secure better

job positions compared to the minorities. (Will the only measure of social inequality be asking race/ethnicity or are there other indicators or variables that measure inequality?)

Variables

Dependent: Homelessness

For the researchers to obtain information regarding the issues, it is essential to understand that the rate of homelessness varies across the different cities in the county. For this reason, the investigators need to inquire about homelessness from the study informants and seek supporting evidence from human welfare organization. The researchers will ask different questions about homelessness to understand the feelings of the community about the problem. In addition, the researchers will enquire about the reason for the differing rates of homelessness across the cities in the county. (Will the only measure of social inequality be asking race/ethnicity or are there other indicators or variables that measure inequality?)

Independent Variables

Employment

The study will investigate the link between the employment and homelessness. The researchers (Will the only measure of social inequality be asking race/ethnicity or are there other indicators or variables that measure inequality?) should formulate questions to the participants on the relationship between the two factors. Unemployment reduces people's financial abilities and thus, one of the major factors contributing to the problem.

Social inequality

Concerning social inequality, discrimination is one of the problems that could influence individuals' financial income. The minority groups including Blacks, Hispanics, and Indians

have fewer opportunities to secure a high paying job compared to the majority community (Martin, 2015). Therefore, the study will investigate social inequality as one of the factors for homelessness. (Will the only measure of social inequality be asking race/ethnicity or are there other indicators or variables that measure inequality?)

Sampling

The study will invite willing participants from across the county on a voluntary basis. The researchers target 300 individuals to inform the research. The researchers will use a stratifying sampling method to optimize the relevance of the information offered during the interviews. The study targets persons who have been victims of homelessness, persons who have earlier engaged with social welfare programs and other individuals informed on the matter.

Data collection and Analysis (since you mention a survey, for the final paper you should provide a sample survey and example of coding for future analysis)

The study will use interviews and information collected by social welfare organizations including HUD to determine the research questions. Before the initial interviews, the participants will be required to sign an informed consent form. Moreover, the study will ensure that all the identifying information is protected to conceal the identity of the informants. The research will utilize a deductive analysis approach that concerns the comparisons between similarities and differences in both the interviewees' responses and data from social welfare organizations. In the analysis phase, the study will use verbatim transcription for the audios recorded during the interviews. After the transcription, the researchers will reread the data to understand the participant's perspectives about homelessness in the region after which they will conduct a data analysis (Martin, 2015). The study will use coding to determine the connections and

discontinuities. In the researchers compare contributions of each participant, relate the data to the information contained in social welfare surveys, and perform data saturation. A potential limitation of the study includes the sampling method that might exclude people with valuable information on the matter. Furthermore, the study might require a higher number of participants to yield results that are more legitimate.

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