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Exploring the perceptions of local residents regarding homelessness in the Strandfontein community.

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ABSTRACT

This study aimed to explore the perceptions of Strandfontein residents regarding homelessness in their community. The study employed a qualitative research design, specifically an exploratory approach, through face-to-face semi-structured interviews to gain rich insights and an understanding of residents' views regarding homelessness in their community. The interviews were conducted with twenty (20) residents who have lived in the Strandfontein community for more than five (5) years. The sample consisted of fourteen (14) females and six (6) males, selected through purposeful and snowball sampling methods. The findings of the study revealed a diverse range of attitudes and beliefs among community residents regarding homelessness. Some residents demonstrated empathy, tolerance, and acceptance of homeless individuals, acknowledging the collective responsibility of the community to support people experiencing homelessness. These individuals recognised the complex societal factors contributing to homelessness. Conversely, other residents emphasised homeless individuals' responsibility. However, it was observed that participants' limited knowledge and indirect experiences, influenced by second-hand information or media portrayals, shaped their perceptions of homelessness, leading to misconceptions and biased views. Additionally, in some instances, participants attributed their perceptions to direct interactions between homeless individuals and residents. However, for most, these interactions reinforced negative stereotypes and highlighted the importance of informed and compassionate interactions. Interestingly, despite these variations in perspective, residents held contradictory views. They recognised the need to help homeless individuals while simultaneously attributing homelessness to individual choices. Furthermore, despite being open to integration, practical guidance and information on effective community engagement were lacking. Based on the study's findings and participant suggestions, several recommendations were proposed to address homelessness and foster social integration. In light of these findings, the following actions should be considered. Firstly, targeted stakeholder interventions should be implemented to address bias and attitudes towards homelessness. This can be achieved by enhancing the presence of social services within communities and promoting collaboration among stakeholders, ensuring comprehensive support and effective solutions. Furthermore, the establishment of representative community committees, with active participation from homeless individuals, can provide a platform for ongoing dialogue, problem-solving, and collective decision-making. Additionally, raising awareness and providing education to community members and homeless individuals can significantly combat misconceptions and build empathy within the community. This is done through skills development workshops and reintegration programmes.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1. Introduction

Homelessness is a global issue that permeates all corners of the globe as a result of structural, social, and economic causes. It affects not only the individual in the local environment but also the families and communities in which we live. This study aims to explore the perceptions of Strandfontein residents regarding homelessness within their community. It seeks to explore and understand the perceived effects of homelessness on the community of Strandfontein, and to explore how residents feel about the integration of homeless individuals within the community. This chapter presents the background of the study, the statement of the problem, the rationale of the study, the research aims and objectives, the research questions, and the clarification of concepts for the study.

1.1. Statement of the Problem

Homelessness is a global issue that permeates all corners of the globe as a result of structural, social, and economic causes. It affects not only the individual in the local environment but also the families and communities in which we live. In this regard, this study delves into homelessness within a small community in the greater Mitchells Plain area, to explore and understand residents' attitudes, knowledge, and perceptions about homelessness in their communities in the global south (De Beer & Vally, 2021; Toolis & Hammack, 2015; Young & Petty, 2019). Additionally, this study sought to explore the extent of residents and homeless individuals' involvement in community development efforts aimed at addressing homelessness

In South Africa, homelessness primarily results from poverty and socio-economic issues, different from developed nations where personal circumstances and housing market inefficiencies play a key role (Kok et al., 2010). Therefore, the homeless population in South Africa largely consists of low-income individuals seeking opportunities in larger metropolitan areas as a means of survival, exacerbating the housing issue in the cities (Roets et al., 2016). As a result, the migration and urbanisation of individuals in South Africa, driven by economic prospects, has contributed to a rising urban poor population, further increasing the homeless population in many metropolitan areas (Cross et al., 2010).

Globally, the United Nations [UN] estimates the homeless population to range from 100 million to over one billion. Cross et al. (2010) estimated South Africa's homeless population

to be at 100000 to 200000. Additionally, a recent U-turn (2020) study reveals that Cape Town is home to 14357 homeless individuals, with an annual expenditure exceeding R744 million. A substantial portion of R355 million is allocated to reactive or punitive measures. Notably, R286 million is exclusively dedicated to covering criminal justice costs. Humanitarian contributions from the public reach R286 million annually, while developmental spending, including the establishment of shelters and social development initiatives, totals R121 million annually. The study also involves a survey of 350 homeless individuals, with 70% having experienced homelessness for over a year and 45% for over five years (Hopkins et al., 2020).

Moreover, it is essential to recognise that homelessness is not solely a metropolitan issue, primarily concentrated due to migration and urbanisation (Renkin, 2015). Research often overlooks the prevalence of homelessness within rural and urban communities, where homelessness may not be concentrated but is indeed numerous, widely dispersed, and hidden (Buck-McFadyen, 2022; Yousey & Samudra, 2018). Therefore, the accurate enumeration of homeless individuals within these rural and smaller communities remains a significant challenge. As a result, the voices and opinions of both residents and homeless individuals in these areas often go unnoticed by the media and academia (Gaber, 2022; Petit, 2019; Tsai et al., 2017). This oversight oftentimes results in one-size-fits-all solutions for the homeless population.

The researcher, residing and working in the community of Strandfontein and the broader Mitchells Plain area, respectively, emphasises that the existing homeless services in these communities are either inadequate or insufficient. This is especially concerning given the high concentration of homelessness in Mitchells Plain, estimated at 1000 to 3000 individuals (Bothma, 2023). Surprisingly, no shelters or 'safe spaces' are available in the area, pushing homeless individuals to seek refuge beyond Mitchells Plain, there is also no recent or accurate enumeration of homeless people to understand the extent of the phenomenon of homelessness for suitable recommendations and interventions strategies to be implemented in this area (City of Cape Town, 2019).

Additionally, the controversial COVID-19 temporary emergency shelter in Strandfontein that accommodates up to 2000 homeless individuals, raised human rights concerns and strained community-government relations (Commission, 2020; Gilles Van Cutsem). Many residents felt excluded from the decision-making process and perceived the government as apathetic towards both the homeless and the resident's concerns. Furthermore, while some homeowners

recognised the need to provide shelter and care for the homeless, especially during this global pandemic, others expressed concerns about potential declines in property values and rising crime rates. Residents also feared inadequate management of the facility, leaving them to grapple with the implications after its dismantlement (Charles & Solomon,2021).

Therefore, the participation and involvement of community residents play a significant role in promoting social integration and cohesion within the community and with homeless individuals. By contributing their expertise and insights into community dynamics, they can help identify effective interventions to support marginalised groups. Thus, meaningful engagement with community residents can positively influence attitudes towards homeless individuals, leading to greater success in addressing homelessness. Similarly, neglecting community perspectives can result in overlooking important factors that may hinder the effectiveness of interventions (De Beer & Vally, 2021).

These unfolding events can significantly influence residents' perceptions and community dynamics, either in favour or against homeless individuals. This issue is not unique to South Africa or the specific community under study, but it underscores the pressing need for in-depth research into the attitudes and perceptions of residents regarding homelessness within these communities. Understanding these dynamics is critical for the development of effective policies and community-based interventions that promote awareness, understanding, and support for individuals experiencing homelessness.

1.2. Rationale and Significance of the study

The significance of this study deepens our understanding of residents' attitudes and perceptions towards people experiencing homelessness. As a result of this understanding, future interventions could be directed toward reducing negative perceptions and improving public awareness of marginalized populations. In addition, the study contributes to the development of initiatives that involve homeless individuals in decision-making regarding the resources they require. By doing so, interventions could be more effective in addressing the root causes of homelessness and reducing the negative effects of ineffective policies.

The findings of this study also provided insight into which measures serve as better guides to more effective support services for homeless individuals. This was especially relevant for social service professionals, such as community development workers and social workers, who work with both homeless individuals and the community simultaneously. By identifying

relevant interventions for social integration and inclusion, these professionals can help break down barriers and create opportunities for effective communication, education, and awareness.

The negative perceptions and attitudes of homeless individuals manifested through labelling and stigmatization, pose significant challenges to the success of their integration. Addressing this issue requires a concerted effort to shift public discourse towards a better understanding of the complex factors influencing homelessness and the challenges homeless individuals face. By increasing public awareness and challenging stereotypes and stigmatizing attitudes, we could improve public perceptions of homelessness and promote more inclusive attitudes towards marginalized populations. By creating a supportive and compassionate society, homeless individuals could gain access to the resources and services necessary to rebuild their lives and reintegrate back into society.

1.3. Research Topic

The research topic is: Exploring the perceptions of local residents regarding homelessness in the Strandfontein community.

1.4. Main Research Question/s

What are Strandfontein residents' perceptions regarding homelessness in their community?

1.4.1. Sub-Questions

- 1.4.1.1. What are the Strandfontein residents' personal beliefs, values and attitudes regarding people experiencing homelessness/homeless people?
- 1.4.1.2. What are the perceived effects of homelessness on the community of Strandfontein?
- 1.4.1.3. What are the perceptions of the Strandfontein residents' regarding the integration of homeless individuals within the community?

1.5. Research Objectives

- To explore the perception of Strandfontein residents regarding homelessness in their community
- To explore Strandfontein resident's personal beliefs, values and attitudes regarding people experiencing homelessness
- To explore and understand the perceived effects of homelessness on the community of Strandfontein

- To explore the perceptions of the Strandfontein residents regarding the integration of homeless individuals within the community

1.6. Main Assumptions

The researcher assumed that people experiencing homelessness are perceived as a homogenous group, by society. Further assuming that society often attributes the homeless individual's situation to their failure, rather than to systemic and structural disadvantages. (Smidova & Vavra, 2016; Tsai et al., 2019; Young & Petty, 2019). This narrative contributes to the stigmatisation, criminalisation, and social isolation of homeless people, resulting in their feelings of hopelessness and helplessness (Tsai et al., 2017; Tsai et al., 2019). This, in turn, can lead to tensions between community residents and homeless individuals, especially if the latter are seen as a burden on local resources and services. By assuming that society's perception of homeless individuals is a key factor in shaping their experiences and interactions with their communities, these assumptions highlight the need for further research to understand the social and structural factors that contribute to homelessness, as well as the need to challenge negative stereotypes and promote greater social inclusion and integration of homeless individuals into society.

1.7. Clarification of Concepts

- Homelessness

In South Africa, homelessness is defined as the lack of a permanent residence and includes individuals who were provisionally housed, who are in emergency shelters or on the streets, or who are at risk of losing their homes (De Beer & Vally, 2017; Roets et al., 2016; Rule-Groenewald et al., 2015). Although this definition is structural, it is generally accepted that homelessness is broad and diverse, with no single definition, and so can be used in a variety of ways (Olufemi, 1998). For this study, homelessness is understood to be a complex and multifaceted phenomenon that not only encompasses the structural aspects of being homeless but also the lack of access to a stable and safe place to call a 'home', including access to basic resources and social support networks needed to maintain housing stability and security.

- Social cohesion

The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD] (2011) defines social cohesion as a society that works towards the well-being of all its members, fights exclusion

and marginalisation, creates a sense of belonging, promotes trust, and offers its members the opportunity of upward mobility.

- Perception

According to Baron and Branscombe (2022), perception is how an individual sees others and how others perceive an individual. This can be done in many ways, but most importantly through judging someone based on one's perception of the group to which that person belongs. In this study, perceptions will refer to the residents' attitudes and views regarding homelessness and the homeless population in the community of Strandfontein.

- Attitudes

Baron and Branscombe (2022) state that attitudes are the mental representations of various features of the social or physical world. They are acquired through experience and exert a directive influence on subsequent behaviours. In this study, attitude refers to the residents' beliefs about homelessness and homeless people in the community of Strandfontein.

- Resident

In South Africa, The Income Tax Act no.58 of 1962, defines the term "resident". This definition states that any natural person will be considered an ordinarily resident if South Africa is their usual or principal residence or their real home. In this study, a resident is defined as someone who lives in a unit of accommodation for a household. It may consist of one structure, more or a part of a structure within a specific community. Additionally, it must be the individual's or household member's most fixed and settled place of residence (1962). In this study, this means that the community of Strandfontein is the resident's habitual abode or the place where that person spends the majority of their time and maintains their personal belongings. The term resident of Strandfontein will also be used interchangeably for the following terms: household member, tenant, and homeowner concerning their usual place of residence where the person resides on average which would be the Strandfontein community.

- Stereotyping

Stereotypes are beliefs about social groups based on traits or characteristics that they are thought to share. Stereotypes are cognitive frameworks that influence how social information is processed. In this study, stereotypes have the potential to elicit general feelings of hostility,

which can lead to discrimination against members of the targeted group (Baron & Branscombe, 2022).

- Belief

Beliefs are primarily preconceived notions that everyone has about themselves, others, and various phenomena that occur in their environment. It is our perception of how things are. Beliefs are typically deeply held, and values stem from those beliefs. It is an internal feeling that something is true, even if that belief is irrational or unjustified (Moise, 2014).

1.8. Conclusion

This chapter provides the rationale for the study. It emphasises the primary research questions, sub-questions, the research objectives, and the main assumptions, as well as clarifies the concepts used by the researcher.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2. Introduction

This chapter concentrates on the review of the literature and the discussion of the theories used for the analysis of the study. This section also focuses on some existing works on homelessness, including perceptions of individuals globally, and within the South African context. The chapter also discusses the theories used in the study namely Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems perspective as well as the Socio-ecological theory derived from the former.

2.1. Review of the Literature

2.1.1. An Overview of Homelessness: A Global Perspective

Despite its complexity, homelessness remains a globally significant issue. It affects people differently and in varying degrees throughout the world. To comprehensively grasp and understand the definition and scope of homelessness, we must understand how different countries define homelessness. Comparing these international perspectives to that of South Africa reveals the similarities and differences between different contexts and patterns. This comparative analysis can inform policy and practices, both within South Africa and beyond.

For example, in Canada, there is no singular definition of homelessness within the country. However, the Canadian Observatory on Homelessness [COH] has contextualised the phenomenon as the condition of an individual or family's lack of stable, permanent, and suitable housing, with no immediate prospects or means of acquiring it (Gaetz et al., 2012). The COH also recognises that this situation is a result of systemic or societal barriers, due to a shortage of affordable and appropriate housing, financial, mental, cognitive, behavioural or physical challenges experienced by individuals or households, as well as racism and discrimination (Echenberg & Jensen, 2020). Likewise, in Nigeria, there is no official national definition given to the homeless, as it is often loosely defined as living in structures not designated for human accommodation, or as having nowhere to live or stay (Chidebell, 2013). This is equally the view of homelessness in the vast majority of African Countries. Chidebell (2013) further elaborates that it would then be within reason to define homelessness in the Nigerian environment as the state of a lack of access to an adequate, and/or permanent, living place; or the lack of a location to call home, due to alienation from family and community.

2.1.2. Contextualising Homelessness in South Africa

In South Africa, homelessness is defined as the lack of a permanent address. It encompasses various situations, including people without shelter, individuals who were provisionally housed, individuals residing in emergency shelters or on the streets, or those at risk of losing their homes (De Beer & Vally, 2017; Roets et al., 2016; Rule-Groenewald et al., 2015). While this definition primarily addresses the structural aspects of homelessness, it is important to recognise that the phenomenon of homelessness is not solely structural or a result of individual risk factors. The concept of ‘home’ is an intricate construct, as emphasised by several researchers across a diverse literature. Olufemi (2002) defines it as a multifaceted concept with varying meanings for individuals, making it an essential aspect of human life. The literature explores the profound significance of ‘home’ and its influence on shaping individual lives and social structures. However, some challenges arise in defining its universality, particularly in considering the role of family or family-like systems in creating a sense of home. In the South African context, homelessness is a far-reaching condition that extends beyond the absence of shelter, encompassing a range of circumstances from shack dwelling to rough living on the street (Mashau, 2017). As a result, ‘home’ transforms into a powerful symbol of belonging, not limited to a specific dwelling but extending to a broader social network that significantly influences social cohesion and community well-being (Ball, 2005).

Previous research (De Beer & Vally, 2017; De Beer & Vally, 2021; Makiwane, Tamasane & Schneider, 2010; Prinsloo & Van Der Berg, 2018) has shown that the phenomenon itself cannot be described by a single definition. Homelessness is more than just the lack of a roof over one's head and while individual causes can certainly contribute to homelessness, they often stem from broader drivers and factors; it encompasses a wide range of complex circumstances and situations. As a result, establishing an understanding and definition of South Africa's social diversity is difficult. According to Roets et al. (2016) and Makiwane, Tamasane and Schneider (2010), to develop a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon of homelessness and establish a common definition, it is essential to consider and understand the different perspectives that are driven by various issues such as historical, economic, social, spatial, political and psychological factors, to name a few that contribute to the phenomenon. Furthermore, according to Obioha (2019), homelessness in South Africa is a social problem driven by factors such as historical disadvantages, migration, unemployment, social exclusion and home desertion. Such factors are often underpinned by primary drivers of homelessness, which in turn, are indicated to be more structural than an individual's contribution to

homelessness (Piat et al., 2015; Speak, 2012). Likewise, Mabhala (2021) posits that these structural risk factors refer to the underlying systemic issues that perpetuate and exacerbate homelessness while individual risk factors are associated and referred to by society as an individual's circumstance or personal responsibility that increases their vulnerability to homelessness (Mabhala et al., 2021).

Historical Factors

From a historical perspective, the enduring consequences of past colonial and apartheid regimes in South Africa are closely intertwined with the pervasive issue of homelessness (Obioha, Emeka E., 2022). While the phenomenon cannot be traced back to any particular moment when people became homeless, the loss of livelihoods and economic opportunities that were subsequently enforced through varying apartheid laws such as policies of land dispossession during apartheid amplified displacement and directly influenced the current state of homelessness in the country. The unequal distribution of land, coupled with the forced removal of Black South Africans from their ancestral territories and being uprooted from their communities, and with the establishment of townships and informal settlements, has led to overcrowding and substandard living conditions (Obioha,2022). The effects of these relocations have been longstanding, where entire communities have been relocated to the very outskirts of economically thriving central city districts and placed in poorer areas characterised by spatial and income inequality (Zhao, 2023). Consequently, a lot of black households still reside in these areas, often travelling extensive distances to major urban centres in search of employment opportunities (Mashau, 2014).

With the reprehensible treatment of migrant labour, the implementation of controlled urbanization policies and the establishment of racially segregated residential areas, all of which led to housing backlogs, continue to have a lasting impact on (Moyo, Patel & Ross, 2015). These historical policies of the apartheid regime have continued to exert a significant influence on contemporary social and economic conditions, contributing to the complex array of factors that give rise to homelessness. These factors are deeply interconnected encompassing a wide range of social and economic issues that collectively shape the experience of homelessness, as the lingering effects of these policies continue to be felt and have contributed to the ongoing challenges of addressing homelessness (Kriel, Tembe & Mashava, 2017).

Economic Factors

The effect of financial disparities on individuals experiencing homelessness can be profound and wide-ranging. For many the lack of employment opportunities and low or stable income is a primary barrier to securing safe and stable housing and has important contributory implications to their physical and mental health. Without stable employment or a consistent income, individuals may be at high risk of homelessness as they become unable to pay for rent, food, and necessities making it difficult for social inclusion and recovery back into society (Poremski et al., 2015). Income support can greatly reduce the prevalence of risky and costly behaviours in this population not to mention reducing the options for subsistence, such as their high visibility act of panhandling which becomes the primary focus of public attention and harms society's opinion of this vulnerable population in society.

Additionally, the high cost of housing in many urban areas, coupled with the limited availability of affordable housing, creates a significant financial barrier to securing stable housing. In many countries, housing is recognised as a basic human right. The dignity and security of a stable home provide the platform upon which we can fully participate in the social and economic life of our community (Carnemolla & Skinner, 2021). However, many individuals may find themselves trapped in a cycle of housing insecurity, unable to secure stable housing due to high costs or lack of availability, which in turn contribute to ongoing financial difficulties.

Social Factors

According to Zhao (2023), the majority of individuals experiencing homelessness face a complex interplay of societal causes, which can occur concurrently or in conjunction with other contributory factors such as economic conditions or historical influences. These factors encompass various challenges, including family breakdown, domestic violence, substance abuse, mental health issues and more (Shinn, Gibbons-Benton & Brown, 2015). Despite the prevailing notion of associating homelessness solely with individual risk factors, these social factors are far more intricate and multifaceted than commonly perceived by society. Media portrayals and limited understanding often reinforce the misconception that homelessness is primarily caused by individual vulnerabilities (Simpson Reeves et al., 2022). However, it is imperative to recognise that homelessness is a multifaceted issue rooted in multiple interrelated risk factors. Effectively addressing homelessness necessitates a comprehensive understanding and consideration of these diverse contributing factors.

Expanding on the notion of societal causes of homelessness, it is useful to consider the interplay of various social factors. Homelessness is rarely triggered by a single factor but is often the result of a complex web of circumstances. For example, according to Pophaim and Peacock (2021), in the presence of alcohol and substance abuse disorders, the disruption of social ties is more common. Mentally and physically challenged people are often abandoned by their families as well as the rest of society. Moreover, the result of familial breakdown and conflict can lead to financial strain and a lack of social support, all of which can increase the risk of homelessness (Pophaim & Peacock, 2021). Similarly, domestic violence can cause trauma, physical injuries, and emotional distress, all of which can impact an individual's ability to maintain stable housing. Additionally, Substance abuse and mental health issues can further compound these challenges, making it difficult to maintain employment and access necessary resources as it greatly weakens social ties and the depletion of one social capital (Pophaim & Peacock, 2021). These challenges can further exacerbate existing social issues, such as poverty and discrimination, making it more difficult to break out of the cycle of homelessness.

2.1.3. Attitudes and Perceptions towards Homelessness

The phenomenon of homelessness affects people from all over the world, as our perceptions and attitudes towards homelessness vary. The majority of available research on homelessness in South Africa is derived from worldwide contexts and experiences due to the paucity of studies on homelessness in South Africa about attitudes towards this phenomenon (Clifford & Piston, 2017; Smidova & Vavra, 2016; Tsai et al., 2017). For instance, recent studies (Clifford & Piston, 2017; Petit et al., 2019; Smidova & Vavra, 2016) show the development of people's views on homelessness and homeless individuals. It is demonstrated that individuals will exhibit some positive attitudes toward tackling homelessness as a societal issue and advocate a readiness to assist. Additionally, there is also a desire to advocate for issues on homelessness, as well as increased intervention and funding for housing programmes and services (Makiwane, Tamasane & Schneider, 2010; Obioha, Emeka E, 2019; Olufemi, 1998). This suggests that people do at least understand the role that society may have in the perpetuation of homelessness and how they can contribute to mitigating this phenomenon in society. However, these attitudinal responses are made indirectly and without interaction or engagement with the homeless themselves.

Attitudes are supportive of tackling homelessness, yet, typically, the homeless person's situation is attributed to their own choice to the degree where it tends to be normalised by

society. For example, in Europe, a significant part of the population perceives the cause of homelessness as a result of growing social inequality, but also that poverty in the form of homelessness is a personal failing or the homeless person's own choice, rather than the phenomenon itself being a social and structural problem that should be solved collectively (Petit et al., 2019; Smidova & Vavra, 2016). These statements reinforce prejudicial behaviour such as stereotypes, impose blame, and imply laziness on the individual and the cause of their homelessness. Negative attitudes against homelessness are pervasive, and a sizable proportion of the population has these distorted impressions of the homeless community. According to Pospěch (2020), homeless people in public areas become an issue not because of their poor circumstances, but because of their physical and moral visibility, which raises concerns about the safety, sanitation, and visual attractiveness of public space. Similarly to previous studies, Tsai et al. (2019) reported that the majority of participants expressed some fears and concerns about the dangers of homeless people, as well as the perceived negative effects of homelessness on communities. These kinds of beliefs imply that individuals feel threatened by the presence of homeless people in their surroundings and that homeless people disrupt their lives. These examples can be observed when people advocate for improved homeless services but refuse to have those services available in their community due to the diversion of funds intended for the community to resources for the homeless (Smidova, 2016; Tsai, 2019). For people experiencing homelessness and looking for a way back to reintegrate into society through support networks and social relationships, it has been found that these preconceived notions of stereotypes, prejudice and social stigmatising attitudes are barriers to effective intervention practices (Aubry et al., 2013; Mahlangu & Kgadima, 2021).

2.1.4. Gap in Literature

In the South African context, a notable gap exists in the literature, not only concerning the perceptions and attitudes of residents in the Strandfontein community towards homelessness but to a broader issue within the country. (De Beer & Vally, 2021). The dearth of literature and explorations within this specific locality mirror a larger research gap that exists due to the infrequent conduct of systematic perception surveys across the nation. The scarcity of research extends to multiple neighbourhoods, not just Strandfontein, and is troubling considering the pervasive issue of homelessness in various regions of South Africa.

The absence of focused research into residents' views on homelessness in Strandfontein, and similarly across the country, limits our ability to gain a comprehensive understanding of the issue at a local level. Homelessness is not a monolithic issue, it is deeply influenced and intertwined with local socioeconomic factors, cultural norms, historical drivers, and community-specific policy decisions. Neglecting to explore the perspectives of residents in these communities perpetuates the risk of implementing one-size-fits-all solutions that fail to address the nuanced challenges faced by homeless individuals and the communities they reside in.

Furthermore, the failure to study and engage with Strandfontein, and the greater Mitchells Plain area where homelessness is even more prevalent (Phaliso, 2022), underscores a broader problem. It reflects the ongoing marginalisation of the homeless population and disregards the lived experiences of those directly affected by homelessness. The lack of engagement with the attitudes, assumptions, and biases of these communities can perpetuate misconceptions and hinder progress toward a more inclusive society.

This gap also highlights an issue within South African academia and research more broadly. It points to a lack of prioritisation for research topics relevant to marginalised communities and may be influenced by prevailing biases and an insufficient representation of these communities in academic research spaces.

2.2. Theoretical Frameworks

2.2.1. The Social-Ecological Model

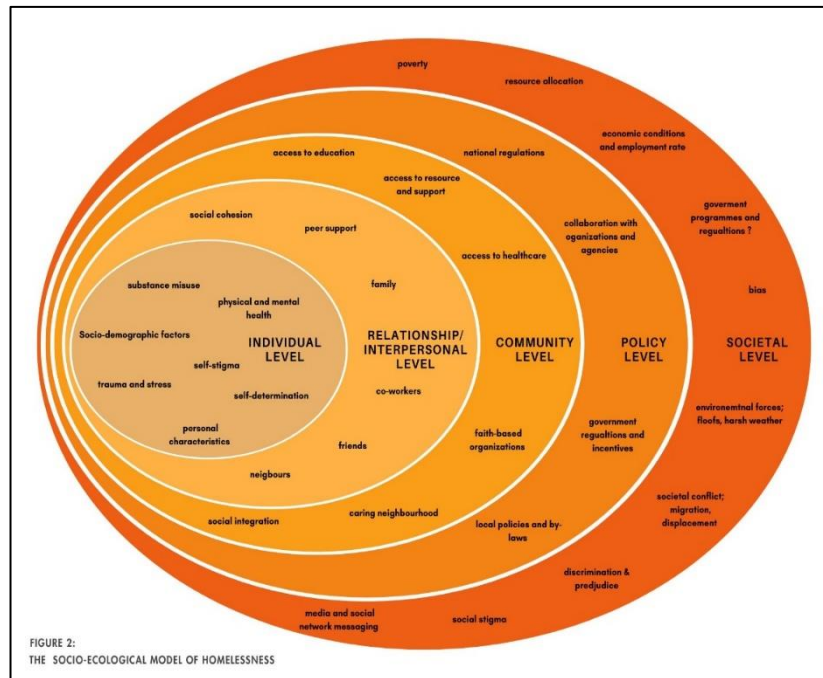


Figure 1: The Socio-Ecological Model

Urie Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems perspective is a broad paradigm that seeks to characterise human development within the context of one's surroundings (Bronfenbrenner, 1992). The paradigm situates the individual inside the five interrelated systems, with each system explaining an individual's state depending on their interactions with the others (Bronfenbrenner, 1992). The many systems are depicted on the model's hierarchical levels, beginning with the microsystem, progressing to the mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem and finally the chronosystem.

Consequently, the socio-ecological model was derived from Urie Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Human Development Framework and is an expansion of the ecological systems perspective. According to (Stokols, 1996), the socio-ecological paradigm is rooted in certain core principles or themes concerning the interrelations among environmental conditions and human behaviour and wellbeing. The socio-ecological model is a significant approach to conceptualising homelessness and the factors that shape and influence societal attitudes towards people experiencing homelessness. Given the complexities of the phenomenon, this model provides a

framework for identifying and understanding the major influences and factors that contribute across five distinct levels: the individual, interpersonal/relationship, community, policy and societal. Each of these levels encompasses perceptions surrounding homelessness as well as triggers to the risk of homelessness and must be considered when developing multifaceted and effective intervention strategies to address the ongoing homelessness crisis. It is an important step in conceptualising homelessness and what influences the attitudes of society regarding the social phenomenon.

Intrapersonal (Individual)

As homelessness exists within the complexities of a broader environment the model recognises that there are multiple interacting layers of environmental, social and communal factors that influence human behaviour. McLeroy (1988) posits that the first level consisting of the intrapersonal level looks at the characteristics of the individual whose behaviour is influenced by their personal knowledge, beliefs, and attitudes, as well as their characteristics, including the developmental history of the individual. These factors influence help-seeking behaviours, access to support systems, and the ability to secure stable security. Addressing these individual factors along with fostering empathy and reducing stigma, is crucial for creating interventions that support individuals experiencing homelessness and promoting a more compassionate community environment.

Interpersonal (Relationship)

The second level of the framework signifies interpersonal factors such as formal and informal social networks and support systems including the family, peer support, friends, and relations with neighbours, healthcare, and social service professionals. According to McLeroy et al. (1988), interpersonal relationships are important sources of influence in the homeless individual's behaviour and how they navigate society. For example, McLeroy et al. (1988) posit that significant others are important influences in decisions one makes to actively get assistance and support. Ultimately, social relationships can affect how individuals cope with the stress and trauma of living on the streets with and without their support networks, decisions about where to live, and the risk of morbidity and mortality that homelessness can have on an individual experiencing homelessness. Social relationships and support networks are essential aspects of our social identity, whether we want it to be or not. According to Cummings et al. (2022), they provide important social resources, including emotional support, information, access to new social contacts and social roles, and assistance in fulfilling social and personal

responsibilities to find pathways out of homelessness. According to McLeroy et al. (1988), these social resources are important mediators of life stress and important components of overall well-being.

Community

At the community level, which represents the third level of the socio-ecological framework, the focus is on the interaction between individuals and their immediate environment within a specific geographic area (McLeroy et al., 1988). At this level, the framework highlights the significance of relationships and interactions among these different entities. According to McLeroy et al. (1988), mediating structures, which encompass family, informal social networks, churches, voluntary associations, community-based organisations, and neighbourhoods, serve as vital sources of social resources and contribute to an individual's social identity. These mediating structures act as repositories and influential factors in shaping community norms, values, individual beliefs, attitudes, and behaviour and play a significant role in shaping the social fabric of the community (McLeroy et al., 1988). They form the foundation of social support networks, fostering social connectedness, cohesion, resource sharing and overall support within the community (McLeroy et al., 1988). In a community where strong social ties exist and there is a culture of empathy and support, people experiencing homelessness may be greeted with more compassion and understanding. This, in turn, encourages advocacy for social programmes, affordable housing initiatives, and skills development programmes. However, in situations where meaningful relationships are not maintained, community engagement is lacking or where competition or conflict arises among community-based agencies for the same limited resources, attitudes and perceptions towards homelessness may be influenced by the interactions between these relationships and the extent to which homelessness is prioritised as a social issue.

Societal

In this study, the societal level makes up the fourth level of the socio-ecological framework. Attributing its characteristics to the larger social context which encompasses economic conditions, social stigma, discrimination and prejudice, elements of the media portrayal regarding homelessness, law enforcement and the campaigns that seek to bring awareness and education about the phenomenon of homelessness, all of these characteristics may influence the support networks, family, peers and co-workers attitudes and norms, which ultimately affects homeless individuals attitudes and behaviour. McCarthy (2017) and Simpson Reeves et

al. (2022), posit that media portrayals shape the public opinions of who is deserving and underserving in our communities and portrayal is directly informed by people's experiences. Additionally, cultural values or norms refer to the perceived standards of acceptable attitudes and behaviours within networks. For example, resident's misperception regarding homeless people as lazy, criminals and or vagrants could stem from the social learning they may have been socialised into through their own families, peers or even the community's sense of views and may not recognise the potential risk that these attitudes and perceptions have towards homeless individuals themselves.

Policy

Lastly, the outermost level of the sociological model would be the policy level. According to McLeroy et al. (1988), this level encompasses local, state and national regulations, laws and policies. Policies are enacted to safeguard the well-being and quality of life for all citizens and can developed through varying levels of entities and institutions through local or national legislation. Theoretically, policies should aid in improving the implementation of the best processes to reduce the prevalence of homelessness within society, for effective policy implementation, all levels of the socioecological framework should be considered in the adoption or implementation of such strategies. For instance, McLeroy et al. (1988) posit that the mediating structures discussed within the community level also serve as a connection between the individual and the larger social environment. Mediating structures serve as a point of access to, and influence, the policy-making process. Therefore, by strengthening the ability to influence this mediating structure to influence policy, you are thereby strengthening their ability to meet the needs of their members.

2.3. Policy and Legislation

Homelessness in South Africa has increased and gained much recognition over the past few years; however, South African national legislation does not directly address homelessness as a single statute but responds to the underlying social and economic issues surrounding homelessness through several statutes. This section highlights the policies and legislations that the South African government has developed to address homelessness and will briefly outline some of them.

2.3.1. Constitution of the Republic of South Africa

The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (Act 108 of 1996) is the supreme law of the land, upholding the values of human dignity, equality, and freedom. A primary component of the constitution that addresses homelessness is Section 26 of the Constitution, which recognizes the right to adequate housing as a basic human right (Republic of South Africa, 1996). The constitution also recognizes the rights to healthcare, education, and social security, all of which are protected and promoted. The government must take reasonable measures to ensure that all citizens have access to these services. There is considerable strength in this provision of the constitution because it focuses on ensuring the well-being of all citizens and places the responsibility to address the problem of homelessness on the government.

However, despite these positive attributes, the Constitution contains several limitations concerning homelessness. One of the main limitations of the Constitution is that it only recognizes the right to housing as a progressive right. This means that the government is not obligated to provide housing to everyone immediately. Instead, the government must take reasonable measures to ensure the progressive realization of this right by its resources (Republic of South Africa, 1996). Another limitation is the lack of specific guidance in the constitution on how the government should address homelessness when there are already few policies and programmes aimed at addressing homelessness in South Africa. It is essential to acknowledge a critical gap in the current legislative and policy landscape. Notably, South Africa lacks a comprehensive national policy framework specifically addressing homelessness.

Additionally, the government faces limitations in the sense that it does not have enough resources to fully implement constitutional guarantees and obligations on housing, healthcare, education, and social security, which prevents many people from accessing these services. It should be noted that in addressing the intergenerational effects and root cause of homelessness related to systemic discrimination and land dispossessions, the legal tools available for asserting these rights and ensuring the protection of all citizens' rights fall short of fulfilling those objectives. Therefore, it is important to address the lack of a national policy framework for homelessness and to develop more specific guidelines and strategies for effectively addressing this issue in South Africa.

2.3.2. Street People Policy

To aid the homeless population in addressing homelessness, the city of Cape Town's Street People Policy was implemented in December 2013 after its initial draft in 2004 (city of Cape Town, 2013). The strategy outlined the resources and reintegration mechanisms that may provide homeless individuals with access to skill development services, healthcare, and employment opportunities and services. In addition, the policy intended to clarify the roles and responsibilities of each stakeholder and role actor to facilitate the reunification and reintegration of homeless individuals back into their families, communities, and societies (city of Cape Town, 2013). The street people policy commenced with a series of definitions and specified who and what the policy impacts (Dellacroce et al., 2019). The policy indicates that it is consistent with several overarching strategy papers that guide the city's priorities.

2.4. Conclusion

This chapter has offered a review of the important literature on the subject of homelessness. It has cited the Constitution of South Africa, the Bill of Rights, and the Street People Policy as the underlying legislation justifying the need for increased homeless service provision. It was determined that South Africa lacks legislation that explicitly addresses homelessness, making it difficult for the government to create a strategy that addresses the needs and complexities of all those who suffer homelessness. The chapter then explored Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems framework, emphasising that meaningful human development requires the participation and integration of all systems within the ecological model. In addition, the chapter provided a contextualization of homelessness by discussing the following: the effects of homelessness and the attitudes and perceptions regarding homelessness and homeless people as presented in previous studies.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH SETTING AND METHODOLOGY

3. Introduction

This chapter focuses on the research methodology used for this study. It provides a presentation of the research setting, the research design, the population sample, the data collection tool, the data analysis method, data verification and the limitations of the study.

3.1. Research Setting

Overview of Mitchells Plain

As with most South African suburbs, Mitchells Plain's history is linked to colonialism and more recently Apartheid. South Africa saw a major shift in its social structures during the 1960s and 1970s with millions of humans being forcibly removed from the cities by the government of the time (City of Cape Town [CoCT], 2021). Mitchells Plain which is predominantly a Coloured township in Cape Town consists of a population of over 310485 residents (Statistics South Africa [StatsSA], 2013). Geographically, Mitchells Plain lies about 20 kilometres from the City of Cape Town at the end of a railway line, just west of Langa (South African History Online,2020).

Established in the 1970s as a response to housing shortages in the city, Mitchells Plain is not home to over 91% of generally low-income and working-class Coloured residents following the implementation of the Group Areas Act of 1957 (Haysom et al.,2017). However, the main areas of Mitchells Plain (mainly the eastern half of the suburb) had deteriorated into urban ghettos. So much so that Mitchells Plain is one of fifteen areas identified as a high priority for action against crime and drug abuse – renowned for its gangsterism and substance addiction among its youth, and many informal settlements sprung up in some areas, particularly Strandfontein, Eastridge and Tafelsig.

According to the Department of Provincial and Local Government, the major challenges Mitchells Plain has grappled with for years are spatial marginalisation, high crime rates, overcrowding and limited access to public amenities (Department of Provincial and Local Government [DPLG], 2011) A total of 64,3% of households fall within the low-income bracket of which 16,5% have no income (CoCT, 2016). Many families relocated to Mitchells Plain from District Six when it was razed to the ground. Additionally, Mitchells Plain accommodates almost a million residents from diverse classes and backgrounds, divided into several subsections and thereby subareas. The western half of the town is inhabited by the well-established middle class, while the eastern half is made up of poor working-class communities. In this sense, Mitchells Plain is economically divided with the

western half consisting of Strandfontein, Westridge, Rocklands and Portlands and the eastern half consisting of Tafelsig, Beacon Valley and Eastridge in terms of socio-economic status, employment and crime (South African History Online,2020).

Moreover, while the City of Cape Town’s Street People Enumeration registered 368 homeless people in 2018/2019, it is crucial to note that this figure might not fully capture the entire homeless population (City of Cape Town, n.d). According to U-turn CEO Jean Knighton-Fitt, the actual number of homeless individuals in Mitchells Plain could be substantially higher, with an estimate suggesting that there may be nearly 3000 homeless people in the area (Bothma, 2023). This significant discrepancy between the official count and the estimate from a prominent organisation specialising in the field and works within the Mitchells Plain areas highlights the complexity of accurately assessing and addressing homelessness within the region.

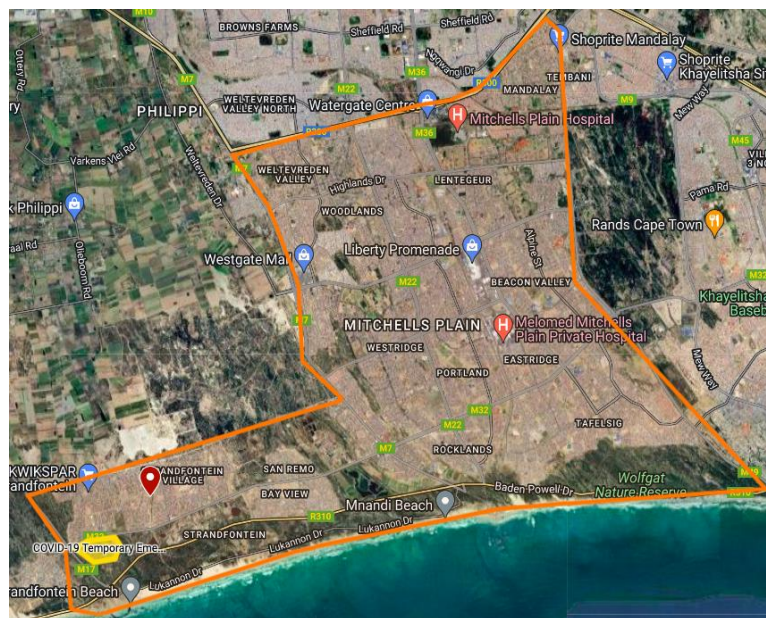


Figure 2: Map of Mitchells Plain (Prepared by Author, source: <https://www.google.com/maps/d/viewer,2023>)

The community of Strandfontein

The community of Strandfontein is one of the smaller sub-areas of Mitchells Plain, Cape Town. Established in 1976 as an extension of the housing development initiatives that sought to fill the housing shortage quota. According to the 2011 census, there were more than 27686 people residing in Strandfontein, where the total number of households was 9858. Of that population, 79% of residents stay in homes with 64.4% having household ownership, and 12.1% live in shacks. The median age of residents is 28. Female residents make up 51% of the population, while 49% are male. The majority of the population is Coloured (86%) and speaks English as a first language (67%).

The area is positioned on the periphery of economic activity. Strandfontein itself offers limited economic opportunities, often requiring its residents to commute to more economically active areas. Although there are a few small enterprises in the area, the establishments are predominantly small family businesses such as mini business centres, salons, butcheries, and house shops ('spaza' shops). As a result, the community of Strandfontein is identified as a low-to-middle income community, often viewed as comparatively more affluent than its neighbouring sub-areas in the Greater Mitchell's Plain region. This distinction can be attributed to several defining characteristics, most notably its considerable distance from the areas with high gang activity, drug abuse rates, incomplete educational attainment, and households grappling with poverty, in addition, it's worth noting that a large majority of properties in some Mitchells Plain sub-areas are either state-owned or prone to overcrowding, which have also largely contributed to the increase of homelessness within the area of Greater Mitchells Plain (StatsSA, 2013). While specific homelessness statistics for Strandfontein are not available, the researcher observed that homeless individuals are still present in the community, particularly in areas such as the streets near shops, within the dunes surrounding the community or the presence of the informal structures that offer some form of shelter.

Despite its relatively more favourable socio-economic status, Strandfontein is not exempt from the social challenge that afflicts its fellow sub-areas. These challenges encompass exposure to drug and substance abuse, the presence of small pockets of informal structures, instances of petty theft, levels of unemployment, and the pervasive issues of crime and gangsterism that permeate this small community. This community presents a unique research setting, where many, if not most, of its residents have been long-term inhabitants, tracing their residence back to the community's inception. Strandfontein was one of the initial housing developments within the broader Mitchells Plain area, representing a moment for numerous residents who found their first opportunity for homeownership there. For others, this community symbolised a new beginning, from the escalating violence and crime that was becoming increasingly prevalent in certain areas of Mitchells Plain.



Figure 3: Map of Strandfontein (Prepared by Author, source: <https://www.google.com/maps/d/viewer,2023>)

3.2. Research Design

Research design involves specifying the most effective approach for conducting research and determining the methods to be used (Babbie, 2020). It encompasses a predetermined set of guidelines, steps, and templates (Roestenburg, Strydom & Fouché, 2021). The study used a qualitative design, and more specifically the exploratory approach, which was primarily guided by participants' views and lived experiences (Babbie, 2020). The purpose of this method was to explore residents' attitudes and perceptions regarding homelessness and homeless individuals in the Strandfontein community. Austin and Sutton (2014) iterate that exploratory research seeks new insights into phenomena and sheds light on ambiguous situations. The aim is not to derive and define evidence but to serve as a foundation for further research. This study is undertaken by the researcher so that they can learn more and better understand themselves by gaining insights into this specific phenomenon (Austin & Sutton, 2014).

By adopting a qualitative research approach, it becomes possible to comprehend human behaviour within the contextual framework of the social structures in which such behaviour occurs (Austin & Sutton, 2014). Therefore, this approach was selected to explore the perception and attitudes of residents towards the social integration of homeless individuals within the community, as well as their perspectives on homelessness, in their own words. As noted by Lune and Berg (2017), this qualitative technique not only adds value to the data collected but also allows researchers to share

in the understanding and perceptions of others, facilitating an in-depth exploration of those attitudes and experiences. Moreover, it generates a wide range of ideas, opinions, and viewpoints held by diverse groups on the issues at hand. Furthermore, the qualitative approach attempts to fill in the gaps of under-discovered research areas that are left unexposed by quantitative methods.

3.3. Population and Sampling

According to Babbie (2020), this method allows you to choose who and what to study. It is the study of the relationship between a population and the sample drawn from it. A study's population is the group from which we want to conclude. Whereas the sample refers to an adequate representation of the population of interest, where it will be collected and studied.

3.3.1. Study Population

The population identified in the study comprised largely of 20 working-class residents of the Strandfontein community, a sub-area within Mitchells Plain. The researcher's choice of this specific area and population was driven by the intention to explore how these residents perceive and interact with homeless individuals. The significance of the infamous COVID-19 temporary shelter incident further underscored the need to understand the extent to which residents' voices and decisions have the potential to influence the portrayal of homelessness and homeless individuals and their successful integration into the community. Notably, there has not been subsequent research addressing the attitudes and perceptions of residents within this area. Thus, conducting this study in Strandfontein provided the researcher with a more comprehensive and detailed understanding of the residents' attitudes and behaviours concerning homelessness in the community.

3.3.2. Sampling Technique and Sample Characteristic

The study employed two sampling techniques that were utilised during the recruitment process. First, non-probability purposive sampling. Non-probability sampling occurs when the likelihood of incorporating each population element in a sample is unknown and cannot be estimated. Purposive sampling allows the researcher to sample a group of individuals or a specific site that can provide the desired information and best inform the researcher about the research problem under exploration (Creswell, 2020). The researcher focused exclusively on Strandfontein residents, employing purposive sampling to identify suitable participants. However, due to limited interest in participating in the study, a snowball sampling technique was used. The researcher used this sampling method to recruit subjects through referrals on the basis that the purposive sampling no longer served its purpose. The researcher sought referrals from the existing participants, with the understanding that the existing participants might know of others interested in taking part in the

study. Additionally, The researcher ensured that they adhered to the POPIA Act by refraining from direct contact with the referred participants. Instead, the potential participants initiated contact, granting the researcher permission to arrange suitable interview times. As a result, participants who suggested and referred other potential participants to the researcher had a better notion of who would be interested and more informed about the community dynamics.

A sample size of twenty people over the age of 18 was chosen. According to Bless, Higson-Smith and Sithole (2013), a small sample size for qualitative research is more advantageous. The smaller sample size allows the group of participants to mirror and reflect the target population and its characteristics in more detail. Furthermore, the aim of qualitative data collection, particularly in this study with its small sample size, is to locate and obtain information from this sample through an extensive information-gathering (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

The inclusion criteria sample characteristics for this study focused on:

- Participants needed to be over the age of 18.
- Must be a resident of the Strandfontein community for more than 5 years, as either a renter, homeowner, or household member.
- They would have to communicate in English or Afrikaans, which is the researcher's first and second language, respectively.

The exclusion criteria for the study excluded people who lived outside of Strandfontein. The study also excluded residents who lived in Strandfontein for less than the stipulated (5) years. This criterion allows residents who have been residing in Strandfontein for longer than five years to speak on the dynamics and their familiarity with the community, as well as their attitudes towards homelessness and homeless individuals' integration into the community.

3.3.3. Sampling Procedure

Participants were recruited through three different methods:

Firstly, individuals were recruited through referrals from people known to the researcher, also known as gatekeepers. The researcher had no prior relationship with the referred participants, making this method initially seem like a viable option. However, due to most participants being unavailable and the limited time for recruitment, this method proved impractical.

The researcher then shifted to the second recruitment phase. Leaflets describing the purpose of the study, voluntary and confidential participation, eligibility criteria and the researcher's contact information were created and distributed at various location in Strandfontein, such as shopping

areas, churches, and the community library. A token of appreciation was offered upon successful completion or involvement in the study, which the researcher made sure to emphasise through the leaflet and when being contacted by the participant.

For the third and final method of the recruitment phase, the researcher turned to the Strandfontein community forum on Facebook. The researcher contacted the group's administrator, who was very willing to assist and post the researcher's leaflet on their forum. This approach allowed the researcher to target specific users within the community, adhering to the population sample and selection criteria of the study. And because the group administrator was gracious enough to vouch for the researcher and the study being undertaken, this method proved more viable in their recruitment for participants. Interested participants, thereafter, were directed to contact the researcher through various communication channels, such as Facebook messenger, WhatsApp, or email.

3.4. Data Collection Approach

The process of gathering information to answer research questions is referred to as the data collection (Creswell, 2020). One of the primary data collection methods in qualitative research that was used in the study is semi-structured interviews. The semi-structured interviews were in-depth and conducted face-to-face with the twenty participants. This method of semi-structured interviews was utilised as it allowed for face-to-face repeated interactions between the researcher and the participants in which the researcher sought to understand the latter's perceptions (Kumar (2018)). The duration of the interviews ranged from 30 to 45 minutes, depending on how long it took each participant to respond to the questions. To facilitate analysis, the interviews were recorded and depending on whether the participant answered in Afrikaans, it was translated by the researcher and then transcribed by the researcher.

A total of twenty face-to-face interviews were conducted, in neutral venues that were based on the level of privacy and comfortability for both the participant and researcher. When participants preferred their residences, the researcher met with them there, notifying a close member of the researcher, for safety once the interview had concluded. However, for the majority of the interview, the agreed-upon neutral venue was the community library. During the interviews, only the researcher and the participant were present to maintain the confidentiality of the information shared and also to keep the discussion focused without any third-party interruptions.

3.4.1. Data Collection Tool: Interview Schedule

As a general plan of inquiry, the researcher used a semi-structured interview schedule. A semi-structured interview is a qualitative research method that combines a predetermined set of open-ended questions with the opportunity to prompt discussion and further explore the participants' specific themes or responses (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The interview schedule was used as a tool to develop a consistent blueprint and guide for flexibly gathering information. Furthermore, the schedule included several predetermined and thematic open-ended questions designed with the research objectives in mind. It provided the researcher with a detailed overview of a participant's perspective on a specific topic. This method's adaptability also allows participants to raise issues that the researcher had not previously considered. It allowed the researcher to direct the line of questioning based on the responses of the participants, which is especially useful for an exploratory study.

3.4.2. Pilot Pre-test Interview

Shakir and ur Rahman (2022) suggest that a Pilot interview serves as a pre-test for a specific research instrument, such as an interview guide or a questionnaire. Its purpose is to assess the effectiveness of data collection and analysis methods (Shakir & ur Rahman, 2022). According to Roostenburg, Strydom and Fouché (2021) Strydom (2020), conducting a pilot study allows researchers to acquaint themselves with the subject of their intended study and provides participants with an opportunity to familiarise themselves with the researchers and the research process. Furthermore, a pilot study ensures the validity and methodological rigour of a qualitative investigation (Shakir & ur Rahman, 2022). Overall, the pilot study holds significant value in the research process, playing a crucial role. The pilot study plays a crucial role in research and holds significant value in the overall research process (Shakir & ur Rahman, 2022).

3.4.3. The Data Collection Procedure

The researcher decided to personally visit the churches and mosques in Strandfontein. These venues often had confessionals or boardrooms that could potentially serve as suitable interview spaces. The researcher believed that utilising these spaces would create a more comfortable environment for participants. However, arranging meetings within these venues proved challenging due to their limited availability, often requiring appointments scheduled months in advance. Consequently, these efforts to secure venues from churches and mosques yielded no fruitful results.

As an alternative, the researcher sought permission and approval from the local public library and a nearby print shop. Both locations offered conference and meeting room spaces that provided the required privacy and served as a neutral ground for participants and the researcher, however, the print shop required the researcher to schedule the use of their space in advance, as it also served as their primary workspace. Consequently, the researcher ultimately opted to utilise the public library, where the librarians were able to accommodate the flexibility of the face-to-face interviews. By working alongside the librarians, the researcher ensured minimal disruption to the library environment during interviews by scheduling them during the quietest times and days. This proactive communication with the librarians helped mitigate any inconvenience to both the interview process and the library patrons.

Using the public library as the primary venue allowed the researcher to build rapport with participants, particularly female participants who felt more comfortable in the familiar environment. Initial scepticism arose among participants when discussing interview venues over the phone, as some were unfamiliar with the suggested locations. However, when informed that the interviews would take place within the library, participants immediately recognised the location and expressed their comfort with it being close to their homes and within a familiar environment. This familiarity and comfort encouraged participants to speak openly and share their experiences and opinions. The interviews themselves were conducted in English, although participants were given the option to use Afrikaans if it helped them articulate their thoughts better. Translations were provided for interviews conducted in Afrikaans, as it is the researcher's second language. To ensure clarity, interviews were digitally recorded using a cell phone and portable mini microphone.

3.5. Data Analysis

The methods of analysis employed in qualitative research can vary depending on the nature of the work and the type of data being collected. However, they all share a common objective of effectively organising, interpreting and presenting the collected data to gain insights into the phenomenon being explored (Jason & Glenwick, 2016). In this particular study, after conducting interviews and collecting information, the researcher engaged in data analysis to identify consistent patterns that were relevant to the research questions (Bless, Higson-Smith & Sithole 2013). To accomplish this, an inductive reasoning approach was adopted. This approach uses inductive reasoning, which involves moving from specific observations by the researcher to more general conclusions (Trochim, Arora & Donnelly, 2016). By utilising this method, the researcher was able to adopt a 'bottom-up' approach, relying on the participant's insights and perspectives (captured through quotations) to generate interconnected common themes (Trochim, Arora & Donnelly,

2016). To guide the data analysis process, Tesch (1990) eight steps were employed in this study. These steps provided a systematic and organised framework for categorising and organising the collected data (Tesch, 1990). Additionally, to facilitate the management and organisation of the data, the researcher incorporated the use of NVivo software.

The application of Tesch's eight steps (1990) in this study is outlined as follows:

1. The researcher began by carefully reading the first data document (transcript) of one participant's interview to gain a comprehensive understanding of the transcript. By paying attention to details and initial impressions, the researcher wrote down their thoughts based on the emerging ideas. As subsequent transcripts became available, the researcher continued reading and analysing the rest of the transcripts (a total of twenty transcripts in this study). Initially, the researcher had access to eight fully transcribed interviews, which were the first set of transcripts that they reviewed.
2. Next, the researcher selected a particularly interesting transcript from the initial set of eight transcripts. This transcript provided a unique perspective. In this transcript, the participant shared their insights and experiences related to their interactions with homeless individuals. The researcher focused on identifying the main topics that were prevalent in this interview discussion. These topics included the challenges associated with finding suitable shelters for homeless individuals, the complexities of assisting homeless individuals, and the social perceptions surrounding homelessness. Instead of delving into specific content or details, the researcher paid close attention to transitions or shifts between these topics. For example, the participant recounted stories of advocating for homeless individuals' rights and then shifted to discussing the systematic factors contributing to homelessness. The researcher diligently noted these shifts in the margins of the document.
3. Once the topics were identified from the available initial eight transcripts, the researcher created a comprehensive list of all the topics across these transcripts. The researcher continued to add to this list as subsequent transcripts became available. As more transcripts were added to their dataset, the researcher expanded the comprehensive list of topics. Initially, the researcher identified topics that represented broad areas of interest or discussion in the data. These topics that consistently emerged and were similar across multiple transcripts were grouped to form categories, allowing for a structured and systematic approach. Therefore, within these categories, the researcher further identified topics that were related to each other, forming

overarching themes. The researcher's use of NVivo's coding features enabled the creation of codes for each topic, whereby appropriate labels or codes were assigned to these themes. For example, one of the overarching categories that emerged from multiple transcripts was the different perspectives on participants 'Attitudes and Beliefs towards Homelessness'. These categories served as a higher-level grouping to that of the subtopics. Within this category, the researcher identified subtopics. The subtopics represented more specific aspects or subcategories within the overarching and corresponding category.

4. The researcher revisited the data and made new copies of the documents they worked with. Initially, the researcher made new copies of the initial eight transcripts. As the remaining twelve transcripts became available, she continued making copies and including them in her analysis. Using the lists of topics created in step 3, the researcher employed the NVivo software tool, as a preliminary organisation system. For example, the researcher initially assigned the code 'UH' for 'Understanding Homelessness' and 'COH' for 'Causes of Homelessness', and so on. Notes and thoughts during this process were recorded using annotation and comment features. The researcher also included the twelve newly transcribed documents that were initially excluded, allowing the preliminary organising system to be tested on new data.
5. With the initial coding and organising system in place, the researcher refined it further. The researcher focused on finding descriptive wording for topics that had evolved into main categories. For instance, the researcher grouped the 'Attitudes and Beliefs towards Homelessness' category and subsequently refined and created the subcategories as follows: 'Contributory Factors to Homelessness', 'Defining Homelessness' and 'Access to Resources and Information' under the category. The researcher carefully reviewed the categories, considering their relationships to their subcategories. By doing this, the researcher aimed to strike a balance between overly narrow categories and excessive overlap. They also considered the number of categories created and the manageability of categories for effective data analysis and interpretation.
6. In this step, the researcher made final decisions on abbreviating each category name and ensured that the codes were alphabetised to avoid inadvertently creating duplication with different meanings. For example, because the subcategory names had changed within the category 'Contributory Factors to Homelessness' has been abbreviated to 'CFH' and 'Defining Homelessness' has been abbreviated to 'DH'. By utilising the sorting and organising features

of NVivo, the researcher arranged the codes conveniently for review and consistency. This step was important for maintaining clarity and avoiding confusion.

7. Subsequently, the researcher gathered and organised the data material corresponding to each identified category. With the assistance of NVivo, the researcher assembled the relevant data segments from different documents into their respective categories, providing a consolidated view. This analysis helped identify commonalities, unique aspects, contradictions, and missing information within each category, allowing for a comprehensive understanding of the data. While the researcher considered the purpose of the study and the research questions, it was important to approach the analysis with an open and unbiased mindset, allowing the data to shape the findings and interpretations. This step was crucial for gaining insight into the topics, and thereafter the content within each category and uncovering its significance to the research topic.
8. During the final step, the researcher continuously reviewed the initial results. They reviewed the codes and categories created during the analysis to determine if modifications or adjustments were necessary. This involved renaming codes, regrouping categories, or creating new codes to capture nuances in the data. By focusing on recoding existing data, the researcher aimed to extract valuable information and conduct a detailed exploration and interpretation of the dataset. This led to more comprehensive findings, providing a solid foundation for writing the research study.

3.5.1. Trustworthiness

Lincoln and Guba (1985, as cited in Connelly, 2016) proposed that when conducting research, a certain level of confidence in the truth of the data be used to improve the quality of the study. It strengthens the value of the study by demonstrating its reliability to the readers' (Lincoln and Guba, 1985, as cited in Connelly, 2016). Trustworthiness is frequently demonstrated and established by using terms focused on four criteria for judging the validity and soundness of the qualitative research (Trochim, Arora & Donnelly, 2016). These terms are credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability.

- *Credibility*

According to Trochim, Arora and Donnelly (2016), the credibility criteria entail establishing the findings of the qualitative research. This ensures that the qualitative research is assessed in terms of its validity and believability from the perspective of the research participant. This criterion aids the

research process because participants are the only ones who can legitimately give their own experience and account in describing or understanding the phenomenon of interest (Trochim, Arora & Donnelly, 2016). To evaluate credibility in this study, each interview was digitally recorded and then transcribed verbatim into written transcriptions. The researcher used a transcription or subtitle-generated software, which allowed the researcher to listen to the recording and generate and transcribe the words of the interviews verbatim, allowing the researcher to stop and pause as well as to adjust the volume of the recording as needed for better clarification. This ensured that the data was an accurate representation of what the participants said and what they meant by their responses. Thereby, the data did not contain any opinions of the researcher other than what the questions asked and probed for additional information from the participants, if necessary.

- *Transferability*

Transferability refers to the degree to which the results within qualitative research can be generalised or transferred to other contexts or settings (Trochim, Arora & Donnelly, 2016). With the transferability of this study, a broad overview of how the information was collected and analysed is provided. The methods used and the methodological decisions made can be applied to a similar setting and environment in that readers can determine how applicable the findings are to their situations as the context may vary depending on the research environment (Amankwaa, 2016).

- *Dependability*

According to Babbie (2020), dependability aims to demonstrate that if research were measured or repeated with the same or similar participants in the same or comparable situations, similar findings would be obtained each time. To assess dependability in this study, the research design, interview schedule for data collection, and application in the research study allowed the study to be duplicated in a similar context.

- *Confirmability*

The degree to which the results can be confirmed or corroborated by others is referred to as confirmability (Trochim, Arora & Donnelly, 2016). The researcher who will be documenting the study will use confirmability to check and recheck the data throughout. The data set included digital recordings, transcriptions, and annotations made from these recordings, so if these findings need to be confirmed, this information will be available.

3.6. Limitations of the Study

According to Babbie (2020), qualitative research is concerned with understanding and describing a social phenomenon, with findings limited to context rather than being generalised to a population.

The researcher identified a limitation in the study to be the sample size. The sample size of the study was limited to twenty participants and was geographically limited to one area. As a result, the findings would be interpreted in the context of this specific sampled population. Furthermore, while studies can be conducted in other communities as a result of this study, the collected data will vary in its findings and cannot be generalised to the entire South African population. Nonetheless, because the study was exploratory, the topic of study can be further explored in the future.

3.7. Ethical Considerations

- No harm

Flick (2018) argues that when approaching people to become participants in your research, it should be certain that they do not suffer any disadvantages, harm or risks from taking part. Roostenburg, Strydom and Fouché (2021) further explain that the participant should be thoroughly informed beforehand about the potential impact of the study. This allows them to withdraw from the research if they so wish to do so. It is therefore important that the researcher is ethically obligated to protect their participants within reasonable limits so that there is no possibility of physical and/or emotional harm towards the participants (Roostenburg, Strydom & Fouché, 2021).

The researcher was aware of the anticipated risks of social and emotional harm that could result from participation in the study, due to its sensitive nature (Roostenburg, Strydom & Fouché, 2021). To address this, the researcher took measures to mitigate the participants' risks, including providing consistent debriefing throughout the study. During the interviews, it was observed that some participants were emotional when recounting their experiences with homeless individuals or homelessness within the community. In such instances, participants were given the choice to either continue with the interview or terminate it altogether. Moreover, the researcher remained attentive to the participants' emotional responses during the interviews, providing necessary support when needed. Although no participants experienced emotional distress, the researcher continuously emphasised their right to withdraw from the study if they felt any discomfort or unease. Additionally, the researcher informed all participants that they were available for debriefing at the end of each interview. Lastly, Due to the sensitivity of the study, the researcher was also mindful of how questions were framed during the interviews.

- Voluntary, informed consent

According to Babbie (2020), voluntary participation is based on the understanding that the participants fully comprehend the potential risks to themselves if they participate in the study. Participants are then required to sign a consent form indicating that they are aware of the risks but still wish to participate (Babbie, 2020). Although no participant was able of providing consent

through paper documentation. The option was still made available to them where informed consent was also employed through digital audio and recording. Overall, this was also important to emphasize to participants because many participants appeared reluctant at first to participate in the study, thus the researcher needed to acknowledge and reinforce that participation in this study was not mandatory.

In the study, the researcher explained to the participants the purpose of the study and the rationale behind their search for participants. Before meeting with the participant, a vetting stage was conducted, involving a brief discussion over the phone to explain the study's objectives and the criteria for participant eligibility. Throughout the interview process, both before and after the interview, the researcher consistently emphasised the voluntary nature of their participation. Participants were assured of their right to withdraw from the study at any time. Following the guidelines suggested by Creswell (2020), the researcher provided instructions to the participants for completing the consent form ([see Appendix B](#)) and allowed them to either sign or decline participation in the study. Written consent was obtained in the manner described above. Since all participants were over the age of 18, they were personally requested to sign the consent forms at the beginning of the interview.

- Privacy, anonymity, and confidentiality

Participants have the right to privacy, anonymity and confidentiality (Tracy, 2020). To protect the participants' identities, the researcher must engage in practices that safeguard the participants' confidential information. This would entail securing the data with password-protected computer files and assigning pseudonyms to participants who want to remain anonymous (Tracy, 2020). The researcher established clear guidelines to ensure sensitive and confidential treatment of participant's experiences whenever necessary. Coded markers, such as 'Participant 1,2,3, etc.', were used to maintain participants' anonymity, as their real names and personally identifiable information were not used in the study. During the data collection process, any information that could indirectly identify participants, such as occupation, street name, previous school attendance, and names of family or friends mentioned during interviews, was either modified or omitted (Tracy, 2020).

Participants' anonymity was maintained throughout the entire study, starting from the recruitment process, and extending until the completion of data collection and report writing. The researcher encouraged participants to contact them directly using the provided contact information, allowing them to participate in the research without publicly revealing their identities through the recruitment advertisements. Moreover, the researcher ensured the confidentiality of the participants by transcribing the recorded interviews and keeping the stored information private.

To safeguard participant privacy, the researcher took precautions to minimise the chances of others observing participants' involvement in the study or overhearing their responses. With the participants' consent, an enclosed office space within the community's public library was utilised. Although the public library itself is not considered a private space, the researcher was granted access to an enclosed office space within the library. The researcher also made sure to schedule the interviews on the library's least busy days, with assistance from the library staff, who provided guidance on identifying those days. This arrangement ensured a level of privacy that was suitable for both the participants and the researcher.

Debriefing of the participants

According to Braithwaite, Allen and Moore (2017), researchers must incorporate a debriefing process for their participants. The purpose of debriefing is twofold: firstly, it helps prepare participants for potential lines of questioning during interview sessions. By providing participants with an overview of the research and its objectives, participants were better equipped to engage in meaningful discussions during the interview. Secondly, as highlighted by Roestenburg, Strydom and Fouché (2021), debriefing serves as a platform to address participants' immediate feelings and rectify any misconceptions that may have arisen in their minds. In doing so, the researcher not only enhanced the accuracy and validity of the data collected but also minimised any potential harm that could have occurred despite the precautions taken.

Typically, the debriefing process takes place after a participant's involvement in the study. However, before conducting the interviews, the researcher made a concerted effort to clarify any misunderstanding participants may have had regarding their involvement in the study. It helped to establish a foundation of understanding and ensured that participants were fully informed and consenting. Given the sensitive nature of the questions asked during the interviews, the researcher informed all participants that they were available for debriefing at the end of the interviews. This reassurance is important to maintain participant trust and rapport and ensure their well-being throughout the research process.

- Deception of Subjects

According to Corey et al (1993, cited in Strydom 2014), deception involves withholding information or providing incorrect information to make sure that participants agree to take part in a study when they may have otherwise refused. This occurs when a researcher intentionally misleads subjects through written or verbal instructions, the actions of others, or certain aspects of the research environment (Strydom,2014).

In this study, the participants were not subjected to any form of deception. The researcher introduced themselves as a student affiliated with the University of Cape Town. Moreover, the purpose and content of the study, the role of the participants, and the approximate duration of the interviews were thoroughly explained, both in written form and verbally. To prevent any potential deception of the participants, each individual signed a written consent form, acknowledging that they were fully informed about the study details.

3.8. Reflexivity

Annink (2017, as cited in Iphofen & Tolich, 2018) defines reflexivity as the researcher's awareness of their presence in the research process, to improve research quality. As a researcher, we have to acknowledge the importance of being self-aware and reflexive about our role in the process of collecting and interpreting data when conducting research (Korstjens & Moser, 2018).

As a researcher conducting a study on the residents' attitudes and perceptions towards homelessness and homeless individuals in the Strandfontein community, I need to reflect on my role and position within this community. Being both a household member and a resident in this area, I am aware of the privilege that comes with having a stable home and access to resources, which many individuals experiencing homelessness do not have. I recognise that my background and situation may influence my perspective, and I aimed to approach the research with a balanced and empathetic mindset.

Initially, I approached the study with the assumption that the prevalence of homelessness in the areas would make the research process relatively straightforward due to the existing literature on the subject. However, as I delved deeper into the topic, I realised not only the limitations of my knowledge but also a significant research gap regarding homelessness in urban communities from the perceptions of South African residents. This realisation emphasised the complexity of the issue in the South African context. Additionally, it led me to adopt a more humble and open-minded approach, acknowledging that there is much to learn from different sources and perspectives.

As I navigated the role of researcher and resident, I remained acutely aware of the potential for subjectivity and limitations in this study. To address these challenges, I engaged in continuous self-reflection throughout my research process. This reflexivity allowed me to recognise and acknowledge my personal experiences and emotions that could have influenced data collection, analysis, and interpretation, had I not gone through the reflexive process. By embracing this introspective process, I strived to approach the exploration with transparency, integrity, and a commitment to presenting an authentic representation of the community attitudes and perceptions towards homelessness.

3.9. Conclusion

This chapter elaborated on the methodology, defining the validity of the study. The study employed a qualitative research methodology, specifically an exploratory approach, to delve into the perceptions of local residents towards homeless individuals in the Strandfontein community. Semi-structured interviews were conducted to gather in-depth responses. The data was organised and managed using Tesch's data analysis method. The study's limitations were also explored, with a focus on how the researcher dealt with these restrictions. Furthermore, the measures used to ensure dependability, confirmability, credibility, and transferability were explained in detail.

Chapter 4

DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

4. Introduction

This chapter presents the findings of the study per the framework of analysis. The framework is structured around the research objectives of the study. It will include a profile of the participants and a discussion of the findings. The researcher further discusses these findings drawn from the themes and categories ending with the conclusion of the chapter.

4.1. Demographic Profile of the Participants

The following table is an illustration of the demographic factors of the participants.

Table 1: Demographic Profile of the Participants

Participant	Gender	Age	Resident Status	Years as a Resident
1	F	63	Homeowner	39
2	F	51	Homeowner	25
3	F	40	Household Member	40
4	F	59	Homeowner	32
5	F	35	Household Member	28
6	M	49	Homeowner	16
7	F	49	Homeowner	28
8	F	48	Household Member	9
9	F	30	Household Member	30
10	M	33	Renter	28
11	F	51	Homeowner	26
12	F	47	Renter	16
13	M	32	Household Member	32
14	F	50	Homeowner	13
15	M	38	Household Member	30
16	M	29	Household Member	26
17	F	39	Renter	13
18	F	24	Household Member	9
19	F	22	Household Member	9
20	M	20	Household Member	7

The provided table illustrates the participants involved in the study. To ensure anonymity, each participant was assigned a coded marker, which was used in place of a pseudonym when referencing their quotations. Regarding the demographic characteristics, the study comprised 20 participants. The ages of the participants are displayed in the third column varying from 20 to 63 years. The selection of participants was primarily based on their availability and expressed interest, resulting in a higher representation of female participants. In terms of the participants residential status, the majority of participants who were household members were 50% (n=10), followed by homeowners which were 35% (n=7) while only 15% (n=3) of participants were renters, presented in the third column. Notably, as indicated in column five, the duration of residency in Strandfontein exceeded the predetermined criteria of over 5 years. The length of time participants had lived in the Strandfontein community varied from a minimum of 7 years to a maximum of 40 years.

4.1.1. Age of the Participants

Data related to participants age is depicted in the table below:

Table 2: Age of the Participants

Age Group	Number of Participant (n=20)	%
18 – 24	3	15%
25 – 34	3	15%
35 – 44	4	20%
45 – 54	8	40%
55 – 64	2	10%
Over 65	0	0
TOTAL	20	100%

The researcher was interested to know if age influenced participants perceptions regarding homelessness and homeless individuals in the community. The sample consisted of twenty participants, with varying age ranges. Of the twenty participants, 15% (n=3) of participants fell within the age bracket of 18 to 24, another 15% (n=3) of participants were between 25 and 34 years old, subsequently 20% (n=4) of participants were aged 35 to 44, 40% (n=8) of participants fell within the age range of 45 to 54, and the remaining 10% (n=2) were aged 55 to 64.

4.1.2. Years as a Resident

Data related to participant's years living in the community is indicated in the table:

Table 3: Years as a resident

Number of years living in the area	Number of Participants (n=20)	%
More than 5 years < 10	4	20%
More than 10 years	16	80%
TOTAL	20	100%

The researcher aimed to explore the perceptions and attitudes of long-term residents who possessed valuable insights into the dynamics of the community. Longer-term residents may have witnessed changes, developments, and social issues that have unfolded over time. Whereby they might be more knowledgeable about community resources, local initiatives, and ongoing social challenges. In the sample, 80% (n=16) of participants had stayed and lived in their communities for more than ten years, with most of them highlighting that they had been born in the area. Only 20% (n=4) of participants had lived in the area for more than five years, but less than ten years due to moving into the community from another area.

4.1.3. Gender of Participants

Data related to the gender of participants is indicated in the table below:

Table 4: Gender of Participants

Gender	Number of Participants	%
Male	6	30%
Female	14	70%
TOTAL	20	100%

The researcher aimed to explore the potential influence of gender on participants' perceptions regarding homelessness in the community and the overall dynamics of the community. Although gender was not a predetermined criterion for participants, the researcher sought a fair representation of both male and female participants. By considering participants' gender in the analysis, the researcher was able to explore variations in responses in terms of the experiences and gender roles between males and females. In the sample, there were 70% of (n=14) female participants, and 30% (n=6) of male participants out of a total of 20 participants.

4.1. Framework of Analysis

The framework for the data analysis is presented in Table 5. The collected datum were analysed according to Tesch (1990), which involved methodically organising and reducing the data into categories and subcategories as outlined in Framework of Analysis. This chapter specifically discusses the significant categories and subcategories that have been identified by participants and deemed relevant by the researcher.

Table 5: Framework of Analysis

Categories	Subcategories
Economic Effect	Reputation and Image
Social Impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Perceptions of Safety and Security • Community Relationship and Cohesion
Psychological and Emotional Responses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Empathy and Compassion • Fear, Anxiety and Paranoia • Moral Obligations and Responsibility (religious convictions)
Attitudes and Beliefs towards Homelessness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Defining Homelessness • Understanding of the Causes and Contributing Factors
Attitudes towards Community Integration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acceptance and Inclusion • Indifference and Apathy
Strategies for promoting Community integration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advocacy and Support • Community-based Programmes and Services • Education and Awareness Campaigns
Challenges affecting Community Integration	

4.2. Discussion of Findings

This section discusses the findings of this research study and provides an interpretation of the findings. The research findings are described and explained by following the framework for analysis in Table 5. Each category and subcategory are systematically examined in this chapter. The findings of the study are divided into seven categories with 16 subcategories emerged from the findings. The findings are interpreted and discussed by using significant comments from the 20 participants and relevant literature from the body of the literature review in Chapter 2. Concluding remarks are presented at the end of the chapter.

4.2.1. Economic Effects

For most participants, it is believed that the presence of homelessness in the community has resulted in economic effects with potential financial implications and consequences for residents. Participants have expressed their views, attributing perceived financial consequences to the effect on property values affecting the community's reputation and image. These perceptions suggest that the presence of homelessness and homeless individuals may have influenced aspects, potentially affecting the community's overall standing, including how it is perceived by both residents and outsiders. The subcategories below provide a detailed explanation of this category.

4.2.1.1. Reputation and Image

A concern for the participants was the reputation and image of their community and how homelessness would affect the overall standing of the community's 'appearance'.

It's not about the reputation or images that people tend to be about. [It's] the value of their property. It's going to be about the value of your property and what kind of area it is going to become because of these vagrants and homeless people that are walking around in your area.

(Participant 6)

Definitely. If anyone wants to move, and you're looking for an area to stay in for your family, you'll look at if there is like squatter camps in the area, is there a gangsterism [problem], those kind of things in the area. And currently we do have a squatter camp. We have gangsterism and things like that. So that's not an area you potentially would want to stay in if you're looking to buy. So, our reputation for Strandfontein has already degraded.

The participant also reflects concern about property values and economic activity (P6). It was consistently mentioned that the presence of homeless individuals and criminal activity in the area has decreased the appeal of the community to potential buyers and visitors, resulting in a decrease in property values (P9). The significance of this concern is particularly within the community of Strandfontein is its distinctive history. Despite its relatively more favourable socio-economic status, Strandfontein is not immune to the social challenge that affects its fellow sub-areas. This community represents a unique research setting where many of its residents have long-standing roots, tracing their residency back to the community's inception. For this working-class, low to middle-income community of Coloured residents, who historically suffered oppression as a predominantly Black (African, Coloured, Indian/Asian) racial group in South Africa, their homes in Strandfontein symbolize hard-fought opportunities for homeownership. Over time, individuals naturally develop a sense of attachment and familiarity with the dynamics and established norms of their communities. However, they also become more susceptible to feelings of apprehension and unease when confronted with an increase in population and ongoing developments, without the consultation of community members. This is particularly significant if such developments introduce unfamiliar individuals, strain local services and contribute to higher crime rates due to increased population density (Wassmer, 2018). In such a unique setting, research by Mcnee and Pojani (2022) and Wassmer (2018) suggests that the amount of information accessible to residents regarding community developments can also play a vital role in shaping their sense of security. The research further asserts that limited transparency concerning the influx of individuals into the community and undisclosed projects can foster an atmosphere of uncertainty. As a result, participants in Strandfontein often feel uninformed about the individuals entering their community, leading to feelings of distrust, fear, and anxiety. These emotions are compounded by concerns about the preservation of their property values and overall well-being when it comes to their safety and the desirability of the area they live in with their families. Unfortunately, as highlighted by the participants' responses, these feelings can result in negative attitudes misdirected towards the vulnerable population in the community and deepen social divisions within the area.

4.2.2. Social Impact

The presence of homelessness has been observed and associated with significant implications for the social dynamics and relationships of the community, which have led to the erosion of trust and social cohesion. The concerns of residents have contributed to strained relationships, causing a

breakdown in the social fabric of the community. The lack of trust in homelessness and fellow residents even can lead to increased scepticism and hesitancy in interacting with individuals experiencing homelessness, perpetuating a cycle of isolation and disconnection. Additionally, The lack of trust and understanding between residents and homeless individuals has made it difficult for people to feel empathy and form supportive networks. As a result, relationships become strained, and there are fewer social connections. This weakens social cohesion, leading to community fragmentation and preventing collective efforts from taking place.

4.2.2.1. Perceptions of Safety and Security

When asked how the phenomenon of homelessness has affected the resident's day-to-day life in the community, many residents expressed fear and anxiety about the presence of homeless individuals in the community, linking it to criminal activity, gangsterism and substance abuse. They acknowledge that not all homeless individuals were responsible for these problems but believed that the presence of homeless individuals had created opportunity for criminal elements to exploit the situation by targeting the homeless and exploiting their vulnerability to enrich themselves for personal gain. As two participants noted:

Now you go to the ATM, and they are standing at the ATM. And the thing is, some are homeless, right? Not by choice. Others are homeless because they are on drugs. So, they get put out. Then, there are gangsters. So, some of these gangsters, they feed on the actual people that is homeless because they want to rob people. So, they also "beg". So, then you're not sure how you should reach out to the actual homeless person, and (to) someone who is homeless but is on drugs or is in gangsterism.

(Participant 17)

I know that Strandfontein is currently not safe for anybody. That is because of the elements that we have allowed in the area, which nobody is doing anything about it.... yes, it definitely from the homeless and the elements that are coming in the aera. because if I was homeless and I was on drugs, I need my next fix and I needed a meal I'm going to walk around and meet someone, people bump into one another and once that happens? There's like gang wars that takes place that people don't know about.

(Participant 9)

The narratives highlights how residents in the community perceive a direct association between homelessness, crime perpetration and victimisation (Ee & Zhang, 2022). Previous studies (Ee & Zhang, 2022; Nilsson et al., 2020) indicate that the types of crimes occasionally involving homeless people can vary greatly, with some being survival offenses intended to provide subsistence. some of the most common types of crimes committed are survival offences or offenses meant to provide subsistence (Fahnøe, 2018). While it is essential to address the fears and anxieties of residents regarding safety concerns, it is also crucial to recognise that the connection between homelessness and crime is more complex than a simple cause-and-effect relationship. Research studies (Ee & Zhang, 2022; Nilsson et al., 2020; Turner, Funge & Gabbard, 2018) concur that homeless individuals are more exposed to traumatic experiences and may have weak connections making them more vulnerable to victimisation. The risk of victimisation, including exploitation by drug dealers, sexual abuse, hate crimes, theft, robbery, and violence, increases with homelessness. Importantly, the lack of secure and enclosed shelter further amplifies their susceptibility to victimisation (Ee & Zhang, 2022). Consequently, residents' perceptions of safety and security may be negatively influenced by the understanding that homelessness is associated with an increased likelihood of criminal victimisation. Therefore, this perception is rooted in the recognition that homeless individuals face numerous risks and that these risks can spill over into the community (Jackson, 2009).

4.2.2.2. Community Relationships and Cohesion

Participants attributed a decline in social connectedness within the community. They noted a shift from a friendly and close-knit neighbourhood to a more individualistic and isolated environment. For example, participant 10 emphasises the significant changes in the community and the impact on the sense of community. Many residents expressed that changes within the community have led to a lack of neighbour-to-neighbour relationships and a diminished sense of belonging and cohesion in the area.

Well, as I was growing up, this always used to be a very friendly neighbourhood where you would see children running outside, playing outside, and every child was friends with another child, other children, and whatnot. But nowadays, everyone's keeping indoors and keeps [to] themselves at both the houses, you know, for the security reasons, and the other things, and whatnot. So, there isn't that much neighbour to neighbour relationships anymore.

(Participant 3)

Look, due to the financial economy changing, a lot of our neighbours that has lived there for years and even before us have moved out. So that new neighbours has different relationship dynamics Some of the neighbours are friendly some of them don't bother We're not like the old neighbours before, So a lot of the neighbours have moved out, of the community and a lot of new people have moved into the community So it has changed. Before neighbours could look out after one another. Now people are just for themselves.

(Participant 17)

No, there's no community aspect in Strandfontein anymore. Like people don't want to be together anymore. There is no togetherness in the village [also known as Strandfontein] ...People just started minding their own business, so they built their high walls around themselves, let's put it that way. You drive around now, and everyone has high walls, cameras, these alarm systems, so people are in their cocoon at the moment and that's their place of safety.

(Participant 10)

From the expressed views of the participants, it was observed that individuals noticed changes in their neighbourhood, specifically with an increase in visible homelessness. This phenomenon could lead to feelings of unease or discomfort among residents, potentially influencing their willingness to engage with others or participate in community activities. moreover, perception of safety might be impacted, as some residents may associate homelessness with an increased risk of crime or disturbances (Turner, Funge & Gabbard, 2018). This perception can further contribute to the trend of increased security measures and individualised living spaces, as residents attempt to protect themselves.

However, it is essential to approach this analysis with nuance and sensitivity. Homelessness often arises from complex social, economic, and personal circumstances (Turner, Funge & Gabbard, 2018). By blaming homeless individuals solely for the decline in community cohesion would be oversimplifying the matter. Instead, a more critical perspective would consider how broader societal factors, including access to affordable housing, mental health services, and other support systems, contribute to homelessness in the community. In addition to the potential effect of homelessness, the community's dynamics must be explored as well. Participants 17s response suggest that the arrival of new neighbours with different relationship dynamics has altered how they perceive the

community social fabric, Understanding how long-time residents perceive these changes and the extent to which they embrace or resist integration with newcomers is crucial.

4.2.3. Psychological and Emotional Response

This category focuses on understanding how residents experience and cope with the presence of homelessness in their surroundings. Overall, this category provides valuable insight into residents' subjective experiences and well-being in the context of homelessness.

4.2.3.1. Empathy and Compassion

According to Kajonius and Björkman (2020) empathy is considered fundamental to social cognition and societal values, it is the core feature that makes us human being in any social interactions. Residents expressed this empathy and compassion through the acknowledgement and recognition of the challenges faced by homeless individuals (Decety & Cowell, 2015; Kajonius & Björkman, 2020). While compassion refers to the complementary social emotion elicited by witness the suffering of others is rather associated with feelings of concern and warmth, linked to the motivation to help (Goetz, Keltner & Simon-Thomas, 2010). Participants express views of empathetic concern and compassion that the struggles of the homeless serve as a reminder of their vulnerability and the need to treat them with as much respect as they deserve because they are just like us. The following statements reflect these sentiments:

it must be tough. I see it to be hard, extremely challenging. Because if you, obviously you were born into a home, and what was the reason, what was the circumstances that kicked you out onto the streets. so it must be tough, it must be. It can't be easy for any person to not be able to just use a lavatory, or use a toilet, or just have the resources like we have in the house. So, I think that it can't be easy.

(Participant 2)

I think you are either born with empathy or you are not. Because either you're born with or you're not. It doesn't grow on. Maybe it does. But eventually, the more you engage with people that are not the same as you, you start to understand the dynamics of others. But there are many people that I would think, "I'm sure you're, I'm sure there's a heart somewhere." "I'm sure.!" But you don't see it.

(Participant 11)

I would say that they are pretty normal because we are each in our own but we have our own opinions, but they are just like us. It's just that their circumstances are a bit different to us but then it does not mean that we have to treat them any different to what we are.

(Participant 18)

In exploring the perceptions of homelessness within the community, participants, exhibited a deep sense of empathetic concern and compassion towards people experiencing homelessness. They recognised the shared vulnerability faced by homeless individuals and demonstrated a profound understanding of the hardships endured when lacking stable housing and necessities. This empathetic concern aligns with Batson's research (2009, cited in (Decety & Cowell, 2015), which suggests that it encourages and facilitates pro-social behaviour.

For instance, Participant 11 noted that empathy can be an inherent quality in some individuals but can also be cultivated through exposure to diverse experiences over time. This implies that fostering empathy is an ongoing process that benefits from meaningful interactions with people from various backgrounds. Additionally, participant 11 also expressed frustration with individuals who may not outwardly display empathy, highlighting the need to look beyond superficial judgements and understand the complexity of human emotions and behaviours. To analyse these dynamics on the participant's views on homelessness and empathy, we draw upon McLeroy et al. (1988) socio-ecological model, exploring influences from both the intrapersonal and communal levels. This framework explains how empathy and compassion can develop throughout an individual's lifespan. From a socio-ecological perspective, humans naturally seek connection, underscoring the significance of empathy and compassion in understanding the personal experiences of those who are suffering within society and the community at large. By enhancing their knowledge and beliefs through the practice of empathy, individuals have the potential to catalyse positive transformations in their social relationships and surroundings, as suggested by (McLeroy et al., 1988).

4.2.3.2. Fear, Anxiety, and Paranoia

The study findings revealed that fear, anxiety, and paranoia were prevalent among residents concerning people experiencing homelessness in their community, and particularly with residents from the informal settlements/dwellings. Most participants who expressed these concerns and shared their views elaborated on their fear of crime and feelings of safety, as illustrated below:

I mean in the community like I said with the dirt bins and the walking around in the area and knocking at the doors and we're getting break-ins and stuff like that because the homeless people

we don't really know we will see them every other day but it's not like you have a personal relationship with any homeless person that you can say.

(Participant 6)

It has a negative effect because if, no listen, if I'm not at home, I'm worried, okay, are they watching my house? Do they now know I'm not home because they're knocking and I'm not answering? Are they going to try anything during loadshedding when no one is able to see anything? So, there is that fear of, okay, these people can potentially break into my house. So, it has a negative effect.

(Participant 9)

There's more crime going on, more housebreaking. There's a lot of that going on because the homeless they walk around a lot so they get to see every house. And we're just giving them something, and they take advantage of that they look around. So, when someone's house is broken into, it's generally one of them.

(Participant 13)

The narratives expressed by the participants have shed light on the complex and nuanced nature of fear, anxiety, and paranoia among residents concerning homelessness. The stark differences in how male and female participants express their fear of crime underscore the importance of considering gender-specific perspectives in understanding these emotions and overall perceptions on homelessness. While Participant 6 and 13, both male, tended to discuss the crime in the community from a more detached and generalise standpoint, emphasising the potential effects on the community and property, Participant 9, who identified as female, presented a more personal and emotional perspective, describing the direct effect on their feelings of safety and well-being.

The consistency of these findings with Jacksons research (2009) highlights the influence of gender roles and perceptions of risk on the way individuals experience fear and anxiety. Jackson (2009) iterates that women may worry more frequently than men, due to a sense of vulnerability and the higher perceived likelihood of victimization for themselves and their social group. According to the South African Police Services [SAPS] crime statistics, police personnel detected from 1 January 2023 to 31 March 2023, that women in South Africa continue to be stalked by violence, mainly by the hands of men. A percentage increase of 21.5% was recorded in attempted murder figures for the 4th quarter. With more than 900 women reported to have been killed and over 15000 women were

assaulted, during the same period, an increase in the last three years (SAPS, 2023) . These statistics emphasise the harsh reality of violence against women in the country, with alarming increases in attempted murders, assaults and killing. These distressing figures are contributory to the heightened fears and anxieties among women and the warranted justifications for their emotions.

When we consider the vastly different manner in which female participants refer to their safety compared to male participants, we gain insight into the source of their paranoia and anxiety. Understanding that these emotions stem from not only the presence of homelessness, but also the broader perceptions of risk, economic challenges, and the gender-related vulnerabilities that is important to develop comprehensive strategies to address community safety.

4.2.3.3. Moral Obligations and Responsibility

Moral obligation refers to the responsibility of making mindful choices that are to benefit to the wellbeing of others. The responses from participants demonstrate this moral obligation and responsibility associated with addressing homelessness within the community. Some participants views experiences a sense of moral responsibility to help homeless individuals based on their characteristics, religious beliefs or values.

But it also depends on what burdens it is and who the person is. So, I always say you can care for a homeless person, but you also need to be, you must have the spirit of discernment. You must be able to discern, is this the right thing that I'm doing? The person that I want to help is this person's motive, right?

(Participant 1)

My personal belief, on that response, is that we as a Muslim community are supposed to see to the next, to the next persons needs it's our duty, to come upon US, to see to it that our, that we, our Muslim brothers, and sisters get helped and doesn't end up on the street. So, we must open our doors to them. That's why I'm saying there must be a relative that can [support] them or a friend or something that must take them in, because my belief is that if you are neighbours or you know them, you're helping each other, then why would you resort to a life outside the home?

(Participant 2)

The views expressed by participant 6 indicates a complex moral dilemma faced by some members of the community. While they may feel a moral responsibility to assist those in need, they also fear the potential consequences of their actions. This conflict may lead to emotional fatigue and hesitancy in providing help, as they grapple with the larger societal implications of their actions on the community.

To be honest, yes, help can be extended to them but how do we help because homelessness is something that attracts other homeless people.

(Participant 6)

Another perspective that emerged was the belief that addressing homelessness should either be a collective and shared responsibility or on the homeless individuals. Two participants emphasised the importance of both the community and the homeless individuals sharing responsibility:

I think society should reach out more. Really, society should reach out more by not JUST really just celebrating oh, 67 days, 67 minutes, for one day, let's do something, let's run the day, yay! "oh, its youth day, Let's us do something" because then they want to... they want to, and what I hate about certain... NPOs is that they want to take photos, it's nothing wrong with taking photos. But don't take photos of a person drinking a cup of soup. A child, taking a child and having them smile with their cups. Don't do that. Take of your... team, doing whatever, but don't take photos of the people. Rather make people aware of what is happening.

(Participant 11)

I think it has to be like each one's [responsibility] because you can't just blame the homeless person who would try to change the situation. if you are not willing to help somebody else, how do you expect somebody to help you if you were in that situation?

(Participant 18)

The narratives expressed a range of views as they related to their strong sense of moral duty to assist the homeless individuals in need. For example, participant 2 emphasised the communal care and responsibility advocated in their Islamic faith, highlighting the belief that assisting those in need is a fundamental duty. This altruistic view towards helping the less fortunate stems from empathy and compassion, and a desire to make a positive impact on the lives of others. It is evident in the

responses of participants who expressed a genuine concern for the well-being of homeless individuals based on the personal characteristics or religious conviction. This moral obligation compels individuals to act with empathy and compassion, recognising the humanity and dignity of those facing homelessness. Additionally, it is essential to recognise that while moral obligation can inspire altruistic behaviour, it may also present challenges and limitations.

Some participants mentioned experiencing compassion fatigue when faced with repeated requests for help (Figley, 2002). This indicates that while individuals may have a moral obligation to help, the practicalities and complexities of addressing homelessness can take a toll on their emotional well-being. Additionally, concerns about the potential consequences of aiding with homeless individuals reflect a more nuanced aspect of moral responsibility. Participants grappled with the idea of unintentionally attracting more homeless people to their community, highlighting a need for discernment and consideration of broader societal implications in their actions. The concept of morality also extends to shared responsibility within the community. Some participants emphasise the importance of collective action and collaboration with various stakeholders to address homelessness effectively. This notion of shared responsibility goes beyond individual acts of kindness.

4.2.4. Attitudes and Beliefs towards Homelessness

The attitudes and beliefs towards homelessness would refer to the participants' pre-existing attitudes, beliefs, assumptions, and stereotypes that they may hold about people experiencing homelessness and the reasons behind their circumstances. Based on the interview questions asked of participants, a range of opinions and attitudes towards homelessness and homeless individuals emerged.

4.2.4.1. Defining Homelessness

Within this subcategory, participants shared their unique viewpoints on what constitutes homelessness and the underlying factors they associate with it. Participants were asked to share their thoughts and experiences related to homelessness, including how they define the concept. The following were some of the expressed views by participants:

So for me, when I think about the word, I think someone who don't have a shelter, you know, a place where they stay with their loved ones. But I also feel like it brings in poverty. whether You don't have employment, you don't have money, you can't afford your basic human needs, food,

water, whatever. And then also on the other side, you get the people who are on drugs or alcoholics. And they just prefer not to, you know, live in society. Like there's them as well. And then there's the people whose unemployed and can't find work. And they can't afford also to maybe have a house or rent a place. So for me, homelessness is broad. But when I think about it, it falls under poverty.

(Participant 5)

Someone that hasn't got a roof above their head but then you also get a different kind of homelessness. Someone that has a shack. But that isn't a home That's just a coverage. Someone that hasn't got anything to eat. Someone that hasn't have clothes. People think that if you live in a shack you have at home. That is a home to them. But that to me isn't a home.-

(Participant 17)

My first belief is initially that the person is disadvantaged and, you know, might have had a problem in their life, which led them to homelessness. The other part is that sometimes it can be a choice based on the decisions you make, especially when you're young, because when you're young, sometimes people make careless mistakes either by running away from home, running away from school, deciding to refrain from school, falling into drugs, which often leads to homelessness and, you know, begging for money on the street for money to buy drugs initially

(Participant 20)

The phenomenon and therefore concept of homelessness is multifaced, often described in various ways from many reputable literatures and those text are consistently looking at the lived experience of the homeless individuals firmly routing the concept and phenomenon of homelessness from those experiences. However, the findings of this research sought to explore the experience and knowledge of the participants, with regards to how their definition of homelessness comes to light and how their beliefs and how they perceive the state of homelessness to be is shaped. The findings unravel the articulation of participants focused on the physical aspects of shelter. Corroborating the broad general definition given by many countries in seeking to definite homelessness (Chidebell, 2013; Gaetz et al., 2012; Roets et al., 2016). According to these studies, homelessness is associated with the absence of a roof over one's head, highlight the lack of a stable place to stay. This emphasis on the physical structure of a dwelling is evident in Participants 5 description of homelessness as

someone who lacks a shelter and cannot afford basic human needs. Participant 17 further reinforced this notion by distinguishing between a mere ‘coverage’ like a shack and a true ‘home’, which includes access to essential resources like food and clothing.

However, as they spoke and referenced these already known general definitions, the allusion to a more profound understanding of ‘home’ beyond the physical structure is unknowingly to them presented through their definitions and understanding. Participants mention of poverty and its association with homelessness suggests an implicit recognition that a genuine ‘home’ entails more than just having a house; it includes a sense of security and wellbeing that extend beyond mere shelter. Likewise, participant 17’s distinction between a house and a home hint at the importance of emotional and relational factors in defining the concept of ‘home’. This understanding resonates with the literature (Blunt & Dowling, 2022; Rossi & Weber, 1996; Saunders, 2021; Somerville, 1992) that home is a complex bunding involving location, amenities, and social surround creating a profound sense of belonging and security. Where the concept of home serves as a sanctuary, where individuals feel in control of their environment, free from surveillance, and at ease.

The implicit understanding of ‘home’ is essential in exploring the multifaceted nature of homelessness. Participants 5 attribution of homelessness to factors like poverty, unemployment, substance abuse demonstrate may not define the concept and phenomenon of homelessness, but it does demonstrate an awareness that the experience of homelessness is not solely about lack a physical shelter. Rather it involves multiple and sometimes not mutually exclusive interactions between the societal and macro level factors socio-economic conditions, personal circumstance, and emotional wellbeing, of which are intertwined the concept of ‘home’. By delving into this response, we gain insight into the association of homelessness is to being more just the lack of a physical shelter. It becomes evident that the search for a meaningful ‘home’ serves as a driving force behind the choices individuals make when confronted with challenging circumstances. Some may face difficult life decisions pointed out by Participant 20, while others may grapple with unfortunate circumstances lead to homelessness this deep insight into the residents’ perceptions challenges traditional stereotypes surrounding homelessness, which often revolve solely around physical structures. Additionally, as we explore their perceptions regarding homelessness, it becomes evident that the participants implicit understanding of homelessness and the relation to ‘home’ sheds light on the interconnected factors leading to homelessness.

4.2.4.2. *Understanding of the Causes and Contributory Factors*

As we analysed participants insights on the attitudes and beliefs they have towards homelessness, this subcategory also emerged. This category encompasses the multifaceted reasons and experiences that participants believe lead to homelessness. Overall, participants shared their beliefs and attitudes towards what constituted contributory factors and what they understood about it. This sentiment is evident in the following responses:

Those that really have nothing and are years on the street, you see, living may be in the bushes or something, and those that choose to be homeless, because they can't abide by their house rules so they leave their homes and they wander the streets and they become homeless like that

(Participant 13)

Now at present, you know, it's a lot of factors. It's divorce, its debt, it's internal problems. It can also be like maybe health, sickness, it can be a tragedy. Sometimes, like an internal meaning like maybe it's family problem, parents die, children fighting over this, whatever. And also, substance abuse. And also, also just stress on its own, with the environment, because everything is just crashing down and they can't take that emotional stress –

(Participant 8)

People can't afford homes anymore So they find another way of living. Or having a little roof over their head, even if it's nothing... There are many factors, we don't know why those people are there. But one thing I do know is that if they could live in a brick house, they'd definitely would.

(Participant 11)

Understanding the causes and contributory factors of homelessness from the perspective of the residents, offers a crucial and often overlooked dimension to the complex issue of homelessness. By delving into their experiences and beliefs, the researcher sought to gain insight into the multifaceted nature of homelessness through their observation. The participants unique perspectives shed light on different aspects of homelessness, emphasising that it cannot be solely attributed to individual choices. Indeed, the prevalent notion that homeless is solely a consequence of personal failings overlooks the deeper societal and systematic issues at play (Mago et al., 2013). Instead, the narrative reveals a more nuanced reality, one that arises from a combination of personal struggles, interpersonal relationships, community dynamics and broader societal factors.

Personal struggles encompass a range of challenges faced by homeless individuals, including mental health issues, financial hardships, and substance abuse to name a few. The narratives perceived and shared by participants make it evident that many observe homeless people to have grappled with internal battles that compounded their vulnerabilities, ultimately leading to their homelessness. Regrettably, these struggles often remain unnoticed or unaddressed, exacerbating their predicament. According to the National Academies of Sciences and Medicine (2016), the pervasive stigma and prejudice associated with personal struggles further exacerbate the issue, making it difficult for those experiencing such challenges to seek help. They may feel ashamed or afraid of being judged, which hinders their ability to access support and perpetuates their vulnerability on the streets. Addressing these personal struggles and combatting the societal misconceptions surrounding them are crucial steps in fostering a more compassionate and effective approach to tackling homelessness.

Interpersonal relationships may also play a significant role in the potential risk of homelessness. Family breakdowns, conflicts and a lack of social support system can force individuals onto the streets, leaving them without a safety net to fall back on. Participants recount instances where strained family dynamics, loss of loved ones, or disputes over limited resources have attributed to the potential risk of homelessness. At the communal level, the availability of affordable housing and local economic conditions significantly impact homelessness rates. The shortage of affordable housing options in many communities coupled with the rising cost of living, severely restricts individual's choices, often pushing them into homelessness. While this broader perspective is acknowledged by residents, the findings also reveal a concerning overemphasis on individual decisions. As highlighted by Mago et al. (2013), this skewed perception can reinforce stereotypes and impede the development of effective solutions.

4.2.5. Attitudes towards Community Integration

Attitudes towards community integration encompass the various perspectives and beliefs held by individuals, particularly the residents, regarding the inclusion and acceptance of homeless individuals into the community. Community integration, according to (Wong & Solomon, 2002), is considered to be a multidimensional concept that encompasses three elements of integration encompassing the extent to which people participate (physical), develop social ties (social integration), and feel a sense of belonging (psychological integration), which participants responses encompass one or all of these elements. Overall, this category delves into the perceptions and responses of residents towards the process of integrating homeless individuals into the community.

It emphasises the willingness and openness of residents to embrace and foster an inclusive environment where social networks are developed and a sense of belonging is reflected and expressed (Wong & Solomon, 2002). Furthermore, it explores the initiatives implemented to promote integration within the community.

4.2.5.1. Acceptance and Inclusion

This subcategory highlights the critical importance of building community integration and wholeheartedly welcoming homeless individuals into the community. The views expressed reflect the beliefs and opinions of the participants regarding the promotion of inclusivity, empathy and open-mindedness. Furthermore, the participants emphasised the importance of fostering stronger unity among residents to enable collective efforts in providing substantial support to the homeless within the community. The participants shared their perspectives on integrating homeless individuals as a part of their community.

They already part of the community

(Participant 13)

They [homeless individuals] get a sense of community, and that they don't feel like they are a liability, because they are a part of the Strandfontein community, so that would be very good [to include them].

(Participant 15)

I think that we should include homeless people into the decision-making. You that are making the decisions are not actually homeless. So you haven't been in this situation, how are you going to know what is good and what is bad unless you have actually lived the lifestyles so I think they should be involved in the whole decision making process.

(Participant 6)

The participants' quotations demonstrate an ardent call for inclusivity and the active participation of homeless individuals in the community and decision-making process. By genuinely

incorporating people experiencing homelessness into the community fabric, a profound sense of belonging can be fostered, thereby reducing the stigma associated with homelessness. Moreover, this inclusive approach ensures that decisions are well-informed, considerate of the unique challenges faced by the homeless, and holistically address their needs. By embracing the homeless as part of the community, the residents show an understanding of the significance of social integration. They acknowledge that social ties and a sense of belonging are essential for homeless individuals transitioning out of homelessness. This compassionate approach aligns with previous research (Marr & Silva, 2022) that emphasises the importance of community integration for people exiting homelessness. It indicates that the community members are not only willing to provide support but also recognise the potential of homeless individuals to contribute positively to the community once they are included and engaged. This approach aligns with research by Aubry et al. (2013), which emphasises that community integration relies on giving opportunities for homeless individuals to access resources and actively participate in their community. However, it is worth noting that while some participants express these attitudes towards homeless individuals' integration, there are others in the community who remain apathetic and indifferent to the issue of homelessness – as explored in the following subcategory.

4.2.5.2. Indifference and Apathy

In contrast to the previous subcategory, the findings emerging from the study indicated that some residents expressed their avoidance, apathy, and indifference to the homeless situation in the community. In some cases, while residents accepted homeless individuals into their community there was also an indifference to having them in the community as long as it does not have adverse effects on their day-to-day lives as residents in the community. Participants mentioned that:

it doesn't affect me directly.

(Participant 7)

Other participants shared that while they were for the inclusion of homeless people and wanted to take a proactive stance in doing something about the phenomenon of homelessness in their communities, others would rather remain complacent and to themselves without having to worry about the homeless people.

I think there's a handful of people that might help. Otherwise, there are others that say 'it's not my problem.

(Participant 11)

It does [affect the community], but the community doesn't do anything about it. Because you will hear the people, I can speak for this section here they are always complaining about all these homeless people they are always saying or have something to say, (Translated from Afrikaans) "No go away" and 'you chose this' but no one is doing nothing, no one is doing nothing.

(Participant 17)

Responses obtained from participants shed light on the varied attitudes prevailing within the community regarding homelessness. Notably, a significant number of residents expressed indifference and apathy towards the homeless situation. While they acknowledge the presence of homeless individuals in their community, they displayed a lack of emotional engagement and appeared more concerned about maintaining their own day-to-day lives without any adverse effects caused by homelessness.

This indifference towards the issue of homelessness can be attributed to several factors, such as the perception that the problem does not directly affect them as iterated by Participant 6, a sense of powerlessness in tackling a deep-rooted societal issue as great as homelessness, or a lack of connection with the homeless population. Conversely, the study also identified a participant who expressed that while they actively advocate for the inclusion of homeless people in their community, when it comes time to ask for support from fellow residents, no one seems to care, seemingly preferring to remain complacent and uninvolved. This conflicting array of attitudes raises pertinent questions about the level of social cohesion and collective responsibility within the community. While some residents demonstrate concern and a desire to contribute positively, there seems to be a lack of collective action and collaboration to address the issue effectively. Likewise, an observation made by one participant regarding the community's tendency to complain without taking tangible action highlights a gap between awareness and implementation. This disconnect signifies a need to bridge the divide between recognising important issues within the community and doing something about it to get it implemented and actioned.

4.2.6. Challenges Affecting Community Integration

The following category sheds light on the significant challenges that hinder community and social integration for homeless individuals, focusing on the perceptions of the residents. Community

integration is acknowledged as a crucial aspect of empowering homeless individuals enabling them to rebuild stability and establish a sense of belonging within their surroundings. However, achieving this objective is far from straightforward, as the following participants will note. One of the major dilemmas faced by stakeholders is striking a balance between short-term and long-term approaches. While immediate relief measures are necessary to address urgent needs, the root causes of homelessness demand sustained efforts for lasting change. Unfortunately, limited resources are also another element that poses a significant barrier to providing comprehensive support and sustainable outcomes, which is expressed by the views of the participants.

at the moment I think we are finding temporary solutions but it's not long term because it's good for now but it's not going to last, it doesn't last. let's say couple of months that's you implement something, couple of months that is gone because one thing I noticed also the government starts something, but they don't upkeep all the decisions (they make)

(Participant 6)

Other participants shared their perspectives on the role of organisations in addressing integration challenges. They expressed uncertainty about local non-governmental organisations (NGOs), considering that NGOs rely on their resources and may not have the capacity to address the homeless situation due to the limited resources.

I think in terms of government they can, but with NGOs, I don't know if they can because the NGOs are doing it out of their pocket, but also maybe they do take in consideration what the person does needs from maybe, maybe they could like interviews with the people to see what they do need before they start an organisation.

(Participant 19)

The findings revealed that residents harbour apprehensions about existing solutions to address homelessness within their community. They perceive these solutions as temporary and lack strong political will and implementation from the government. Additionally, residents acknowledge their desire to contribute to addressing the issue but recognise their limited capacity to do so independently. Consequently, the study found that resident relies heavily on local NGOs such as Faith-Based [FBO] and Community-Based Organisations [CBO] in the community to assist with homelessness, but these organisations face resource constraints, affecting their ability to provide comprehensive support.

Drawing upon the socio-ecological model, as proposed by McLeroy et al. (1988), the analysis underscores the importance of the community's relationships with organisations in tackling the challenges of homelessness and integration. With multiple services and organisations operating within the same area, there is a risk of resource competition and lack of collaboration, potentially hampering the overall effectiveness of their effort. This finding aligns with previous (C. Batti, 2014; Otaru, Adeyeye & Sajuyigbe, 2021) that have pointed out how NGOs often face uncertainties about future funding due to competition for donor resources. As a consequence, many organisations operate on a project-to-project basis, struggling to sustain their impact over time. This competitive environment may also lead to the duplications of resources and the neglect of other areas requiring assistance. Additionally, the failure to upkeep and maintain programmes within struggling communities can face compromise and possible termination. In light of these insights, the analysis highlights the need to enhance coordination among community agencies and foster coalition building to bolster community awareness, influence local policies, and optimise resource expenditures (McLeroy et al., 1988). By emphasising collaboration and joint efforts among stakeholders it becomes essential to address the multifaceted challenges of homelessness and community integration successfully.

4.2.7. Strategies for promoting Community Integration

This category focused on identifying and implementing approaches that promote inclusivity, cohesion, and interactions within the community of Strandfontein. The strategies aim to create an environment where individuals can actively participate, engage, and connect.

4.2.7.1. Advocacy and Support for Homeless Individuals and Families

Participants responses expressed generally positive views, reflecting a collective desire for increased support both at the societal and community levels. However, participants also expressed frustration and uncertainty, attributing their sentiments to the lack of sufficient resources to effectively prioritise the needs of the homeless population within their community and the lack of support offered to them to provide effective assistance to the homeless in their community.

So, we can do campaigns and just I don't know how you go about educating the community on homelessness I think if we as a community stand together like [bring in] the ward councillor, [do] campaigns, do workshops but also show them how to deal with homeless people and how to help. yes, we are aware that some homeless people are gangster, we are

aware some homeless people are on drugs but if we as a community can come together and create something, first campaigns of reaching out and then also come up with a backup plan how to reach out not just feeding them not just clothing them but educating them.

(Participant 17)

I think like personally we discussed this quite a bit. If you get just a place for them to like live and you tell them like maybe, they have a time frame. You give them clothes, food, what not. You tell them that this is the skills that they can learn to better themselves and they have to practice it. And they later on you have to find a job within that sector or something. You just tell them that all you want in return is for them to help somebody else in their position. It's not something that's going to change overnight but it will change over time. Its small progress but it will get there eventually.

(Participant 18)

The findings presented by Participants 17 and 18 highlight the importance of community involvement and support in addressing homelessness. Their suggestion align with a holistic approach that not only addresses immediate needs but also focuses on empowering homeless individuals for long-term stability. Participant 17's suggestion to educate the community about homelessness and ways to help is important. Often, misconception and stereotypes surrounding homelessness contribute to a lack of empathy and understanding (Cronin, 2014). By organising campaigns and workshops, the community can gain insight into the challenges faced by homeless individuals and learn effective ways to assist them. Additionally, by involving the ward councillor, it can help garner political support and resources, fostering a more cohesive and coordinated effort. Participant 18's suggestion urged a sense of responsibility within the homeless community. Encouraging reciprocity and encouraging individuals to help others in similar situations, to foster a supportive network and a sense of purpose. However, it is essential to recognise that not all homeless individuals may be in a position to give back immediately, and their circumstances might vary widely. Therefore, flexibility and sensitivity in implementing this concept would be important.

4.2.7.2. Community-Based Programmes and Initiatives

Residents shared their perspectives on the effectiveness, strengths, and areas for improvement in community-based programmes within Strandfontein. Notably, participants recommended various

measures to address homelessness in their community. Below are the insights provided from the participants:

Start community projects, get involved in the community projects, so you can understand what's really happening in your community. Then focus on problems, focus on solutions.

(Participant 10)

I think their needs to be a management team in Strandfontein consisting of the churches, and mosques, or in whatever way you can help them. We must set up a management team so that there are co-ordinators in the different camps right. So those co-ordinators will then say, listen these are our challenges. Although we do know of the challenges. The people are hungry, they started a vegetable garden which they were producing nicely, which is now, and those co-ordinators should then come to this management structure. Have a set date for monthly meetings And say, these are our challenges. We need help. And I'm sure they can work hand in hand. And resolve it, if you can resolve the small ones first, small issues to be solved. The big ones are not going to be so big.

(Participant 11)

The findings from the study provided by the participants emphasised the importance of active community initiatives and programmes and the establishment of a committee management team comprising representative from various stakeholders to address homelessness effectively within their communities (Mendes, 2016). The participants stress the significance of community-driven solutions and practical problem-solving in tackling homelessness. They advocate for community members active participation in community projects to gain a better understanding of the actual issues faced by the homeless population. However, there are several points to consider.

Firstly, the limitations to relying solely on community-driven approaches to address homelessness. The community already struggles with a limited number of resources, so while community-based efforts are valuable, they may not have the capacity or resources to address these systemic factors contributing to homelessness adequately. Additionally, the proposed management team consisting of representative from various organisations and stakeholders has the potential for collaboration and coordination (Mendes, 2016). However, the success of such a team depends on its sustainability over the long-term. The commitment of stakeholders and consistent support from all involved participants will be crucial to ensuring that the team continues to function effectively. Moreover,

while focusing on resolving smaller issues in the short term is pragmatic, it is essential not to lose sight of the broader, long-term solutions. The management team should strike a balance between addressing immediate challenges faced by the homeless and advocating for targeted policy changes and systemic improvements to prevent homelessness in the future.

4.2.7.3. Education and Awareness Campaigns

Participants were asked for their input on reducing homelessness and supporting homeless individuals in their transition off the streets. Many participants emphasised the need for educational initiatives targeting both residents and homeless individuals.

Sometimes we are the people who are educated but we need to be educated more. We need to be, we need to, (Translated from Afrikaans) They need to make us more aware of why have people become homeless. And why are they still homeless today?

(Participant 1)

And by that I'm saying, educate them. Educate them on life, on how to handle with money, how to deal with their finances, their home life, teach them how to improve their home life. And then from there maybe then get them into a house.

(Participant 4)

The insights provided by participants shed light on the potential effects of such education and empowerment initiatives. By increasing awareness about the root causes of homelessness, society can challenge stereotypes and misconceptions, leading to a more compassionate approach towards those experiencing homelessness (Teixeira, 2017). However, while education can be transformative, implementing effective educational programmes to the public without addressing the systemic issues might only scratch the surface of the problem. The call for education is well-intentioned. Equipping homeless individuals with financial literacy and life skills can undoubtedly be empowering, offering them tools for self-improvement and stability. However, one must critically explore the feasibility of implementing such education programmes effectively. Homeless individuals face numerous challenges, such as a lack of access to resources, mental health issues, and the constant struggle for survival (Teixeira, 2017). Expecting them to fully engage in educational initiatives without first addressing their immediate needs might be unrealistic and insufficient. Moreover, focusing solely on education and awareness campaigns risks overlooking the broader structural factors that perpetuate homelessness (Teixeira, 2017). The issue often stems

from a combination of socioeconomic inequalities, affordable housing shortages, and inadequate support systems. Without a comprehensive approach that tackles these systemic issues, education campaigns might only serve as a band-aid solution, failing to address the root causes.

4.3. Conclusion

This chapter was divided into two sections. In section one, the demographic profile of the participants was presented, providing the context for subsequent data findings. Alongside this, the framework of analysis was outlined, guiding the interpretation, and understanding of the data. Section two focused on presenting the data that emerged from addressing the research questions outlined in Chapter One. The data was organised into seven main categories, further divided into fourteen subcategories. These subcategories explore various aspects, including the economic and social effects, as well as the psychological and emotional responses of homelessness in the community of Strandfontein. Moreover, this section also provided valuable insights into the attitudes and beliefs towards homelessness and the attitudes, strategies and challenges concerning the integration of homeless individuals into the community. The organisation of data into categories and subcategories within the chapter supports a comprehensive and structured analysis of the research findings.

CHAPTER 5

MAIN CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5. Introduction

This chapter will discuss the conclusions drawn from the research study. Each research objective will be addressed. The recommendations provided for considerations by both the researcher and participants will be discussed in more detail.

5.1. Conclusion

The conclusions align with the achieved research objectives, and the research questions have been addressed.

5.1.1. Objective One: To explore the perceptions of Strandfontein residents regarding homelessness in their community

The study revealed a wide range of perceptions among Strandfontein residents regarding homelessness in their community, influenced by individual, societal and contextual factors. These perceptions vary from acceptance and inclusivity to negative attitudes driven by fear and anxiety. This variation highlights the complexity of community perceptions on homelessness. Furthermore, the findings of the study underscored the significant role of the socio-ecological context in shaping these perceptions. Personal experiences, societal influences and preconceived notions all contribute to residents' perceptions of homelessness. Those who exhibited compassionate and accepting attitudes were often exposed to values of social responsibility and empathy, while those with negative perceptions had limited exposure to diverse narratives and were influenced by societal biases. Therefore this emphasises the importance of broader societal dialogue and education to foster a comprehensive understanding of homelessness in Strandfontein. This addresses the underlying factors that contribute to the negative perceptions. By advocating for a more informed and compassionate approach, the study emphasises the significance of not only promoting direct interactions with homeless individuals but also challenging misconceptions and biases through awareness-building and education initiatives on a broader societal level. Additionally, the understanding of homelessness in the community necessitated an exploration of the socio-economic landscape and its effects on residents' attitudes, highlighting the importance of adopting a holistic approach that considers the socio-ecological context. This approach illustrates how the

complex interplay of influences at the individual, interpersonal, communal and societal level shape perceptions towards homelessness.

5.1.2. Objective Two: To explore Strandfontein resident's personal beliefs, values and attitudes regarding people experiencing homelessness

The findings of the study highlight the significant role of belief systems and values in shaping attitudes and behaviours in society. These belief systems, shaped by factors like personal attributes, religious convictions, and exposure to societal norms, play a pivotal role in shaping perceptions of homelessness and those experiencing it. Residents' beliefs cultivated through social learning and cultural processes, affect their comprehension of societal issues. These attitudes vary among residents, influenced by their unique experiences and exposure to different viewpoints. This study also emphasises the need to recognise the complexity of homelessness, attributing it not only to individual choices but to a combination of personal struggles, societal factors, and systemic barriers. Such an understanding challenges common stereotypes and underscores the need for comprehensive interventions that address the root causes of homelessness, while fostering empathy and support within the community. Furthermore, while some residents exhibit empathy and compassion towards homeless individuals, it is crucial to assess the translation of these feelings into tangible actions and support. Empathy alone may not be sufficient in addressing homelessness effectively. Thus, a deeper exploration of residents' willingness to engage in community-based initiatives, advocate for policy changes, or provide practical assistance to homeless individuals is essential to gauge the true impact of their empathy. Sincere empathy should lead to meaningful actions that address the root causes of homelessness and practical support to those in need.

5.1.3. Objective Three: To explore and understand the effects of homelessness on the community of Strandfontein.

The study emphasises the multifaceted effects of homelessness in the Strandfontein community within a complex social and economic landscape. Residents' concerns about the economic effects of homelessness, particularly on property values and the community's reputation, cannot be dismissed outright. However, it is crucial to consider the broader economic state of the country as well as the underlying historical, structural and systematic factors contributing to homeowners' and residents' protection over their property and community and to the phenomenon of homelessness before arriving at a definitive conclusion about causality.

Strandfontein, situated within the broader Mitchells Plain area, shares common challenges with many other communities in South Africa, extending beyond the issue of homelessness. The country's economic state, including factors such as unemployment, income inequality, and limited access to affordable housing, significantly influences the dynamics of homelessness within the community and how residents respond to homeless individuals within their community. Homelessness is often a manifestation of complex social, economic, and personal circumstances, and it is essential to avoid scapegoating homeless individuals for broader societal issues. Additionally, the social impact of homelessness, including the erosion of trust and social disconnection among residents, must be seen in the context of larger social dynamics and historical factors that have shaped the community. Changes in community relationships can be influenced by various factors, including urbanisation and demographic shifts. From a psychological and emotional standpoint, resident's experiences of empathy and compassion towards homeless individuals are commendable. However, it is important to explore the juxtaposition of empathy and feelings of fear, anxiety, and paranoia, among residents. Fear and anxiety about safety are valid concerns for any community, and they should not be dismissed. Additionally, it is essential to balance these emotions with a nuanced understanding of the root causes of crime and victimisation in the area. Nonetheless, homelessness does not automatically equate to criminal behaviours, and attributing crime solely to homeless individuals oversimplifies complex social issues.

5.1.4. Objective Four: To explore the perception of the Strandfontein residents regarding the integration of homeless individuals within the community

The findings of the study reveal varying attitudes towards the social integration of homeless individuals within the community. The findings presented positive attitudes towards community integration, signifying a willingness to foster inclusivity and empathy. By actively including homeless individuals in the community's social fabric, residents recognise the significance of social ties and a sense of belonging for homeless individuals' successful transition out of homelessness. However, apathy and indifference among some residents is a concerning barrier to effective community integration, necessitating attention. Additionally, the study highlights the complexity of achieving successful community integration. The need to balance short-term relief measures and long-term solutions, and the importance of comprehensive support is also reflected in the study. The participants suggested strategies offering valuable insights into potential approaches for promoting community integration. The emphasis on advocacy, support, and education for homeless individuals and the residents

signifies the importance of providing comprehensive assistance beyond necessities. This approach recognises that empowering homeless individuals with skills and knowledge can enhance their chances of successfully transitioning out of homelessness and becoming active members of the community. Furthermore, community-based programmes and initiative that foster collaboration among stakeholders can create a united front against homelessness leading to more effective and sustainable outcomes. The strategies emphasise the importance of fostering positive relationships between the community and society, as well as with homeless individuals, where successful integration necessitates collaboration among various stakeholders, awareness-building and government support, wherein individuals recognise responsibility in fostering an inclusive and supportive community . Building upon this insight, the following section will introduce the recommendations and suggestions for creating a more inclusive and supportive environment for homeless individuals in Strandfontein.

5.2. Recommendations

The recommendations for the community of Strandfontein and proposal for future studies are presented as follows.

5.2.1. Recommendations for the Community

Based on the findings of this study, residents and researchers proposed the implementation of the following recommendations to reduce the phenomenon of homelessness within their community:

5.2.1.1. Establishment of a Community Management committee

In response to the expressed needs of the residents, the implementation of a community management committee was proposed to represent the diverse stakeholders within the community of Strandfontein. This committee would comprise of representatives from the informal settlement community, homeowners or community members residing in Strandfontein, as well as homeless individuals who have found refuge in Strandfontein. The primary objective of this committee would be to foster effective communication, collaboration, and problem-solving among these various groups. To facilitate the committees' operations, regular monthly meetings and workshops would be organised, providing a platform for representatives to convene with the ward councillors of that specific area or community. The meetings would serve as opportunities to identify and address the unique challenges faced by each group within the community. By engaging in open and inclusive dialogue, stakeholders

can gain a comprehensive understanding of the diverse needs, concerns, and aspirations of all community members.

Furthermore, the presence of support services such as social workers, counsellors, healthcare practitioners, and other relevant service providers, can offer valuable insights, expertise, and resources to assist in addressing the identified challenges effectively. While this approach promotes inclusivity and shared responsibility, the critical aspect lies in its successful implementation. To ensure the committees efficacy, it is important to address potential power imbalances and ensure that the marginalised voices, such as the homeless individuals in the community, have an equal say in the decision-making process. Additionally, resources and support services must be adequately discussed and allocated to facilitate sustainable solutions.

5.2.1.2. Collaboration between local NGOs and the Department of Social Development for effective integration

Collaboration between local non-governmental organisations [NGOs] and the Department of Social Development is another avenue identified to enhance government involvement at the grassroots level. With the Department of Social Development subsidizing intervention programmes, it can help integrate homeless individuals into the community. However, an obstacle to this approach as to many other programmes implemented by the government, may be the availability of sufficient funding and resources for the subsidised programmes. NGOs and community-based organisations [CBOs] may face challenges in sustaining programmes without continuous support. To mitigate this, long-term financial planning and commitment should be ensured. By providing support and empowering local NGOs and CBOs, they can apply for and implement effective intervention strategies that facilitate homeless individuals' integration into society.

As part of the collaboration, the Department of Social Development should also ensure that organisations are equipped with the necessary knowledge and skills to provide rehabilitation services effectively. This can be achieved through training programmes, capacity-building initiatives, and partnerships with experts in the field. One participant highlighted the significance of rehabilitation services. This is where people experiencing homelessness are offered skill development workshops and support in their respective communities. This is a stepping stone to re-entry into society. The participant then suggests that once individuals have secured housing for a certain period, they can focus on financial stability and employment. This is done by accessing job opportunities and skills training. This approach addresses their

immediate needs, facilitates their reintegration into society, and promotes long-term housing stability and independence.

5.2.1.3. Education and empowerment programmes for Homelessness Awareness

Based on the keen interest shown by most participants in taking part in education and empowerment programmes for homelessness awareness, it would be appropriate to involve residents and the homeless individual to address the general misconceptions that residents may have about homelessness and cultivate a more compassionate and inclusive community in Strandfontein. By providing in-depth insights into homeless individuals' challenges, the initiatives have the potential to transform residents' perceptions and attitudes, leading to positive social change. This initiative gives individuals a voice. This allows them to be part of conversations concerning their livelihoods and experiences of homelessness. Through sharing their struggles and challenges with the community, these individuals can instil empathy and understanding among residents. Through dialogue and first-hand engagement, misconceptions can be challenged, fostering community compassion and receptivity. Additionally, to effectively counter these stereotypes, the programme should incorporate compelling narratives and lived experiences shared by homeless individuals themselves. This will allow for a humanising and nuanced understanding of the complexities surrounding homelessness.

Participation of residents in education and empowerment programs can be a key driver of its success. However, initial hesitancy among residents, particularly those who hold the negative perceptions may hinder their willingness to engage in meaningful conversations with a homeless individual. To foster openness and participation, the organiser could employ creative and inviting approaches, such as storytelling sessions, workshops, or community events. These approaches facilitate positive interactions between residents and homeless individuals. Skilful facilitators trained in communication and conflict resolution can play a vital role in encouraging an atmosphere of respect and understanding. Additionally, ensuring the sustainability and long-term impact of the programmes is essential. Collaboration with local institutions and ongoing engagement efforts can create a network of support, enabling continuous awareness and education. By thoughtfully addressing stereotypes, encouraging active involvement, ensuring sustainability, and promoting empathy and empowerment these programmes can lead to lasting positive change. They can also foster a more understanding and supportive community for homeless individuals in Strandfontein.

5.2.2. Recommendations for Future Research

The recommendation of research areas for future studies include.

The present study centred on the community of Strandfontein, a low-density residential sub-area in Mitchells Plain, Cape Town. It explored a limited sample of 20 residents who had resided in the community for over 5 years. Given the constraints of this small sample size, it is imperative to recommend further research on a larger scale, encompassing multiple communities with higher population densities and a more substantial prevalence of homelessness in Cape Town. Researching a more extensive scale would enhance the robustness and generalisability of the findings allowing for a more comprehensive understanding of the multifaceted phenomenon of homelessness and its implications for diverse communities.

Moreover, while this study primarily explores the perceptions and attitudes of residents regarding homeless in a general sense, there exist an opportunity for future research to adopt a gendered perspective. Although the research briefly acknowledged this aspect, conducting a more comprehensive study to explore how women residents perceive homelessness, and how men conceptualise it from a gendered perspective, would yield valuable insights and contribute to a more nuanced analysis of the issue.

To ensure the reliance and applicability of the findings, it is essential to expand the research to include a more diverse population and encompass a larger number of communities. Such an inclusive approach would facilitate the identification of common patterns, unique challenges, and potential solutions tailored to the specific needs of different communities. By incorporating individuals from diverse socio-economic backgrounds.

Furthermore, when considering the Strandfontein community, Mitchells Plain, and the greater Cape Flats area, it is important to note that while various aspects of homelessness in Cape Town have been studied extensively, there is a noticeable lack of specific research addressing homelessness within the Mitchells Plain area and the Strandfontein community. Furthermore, there is a significant gap in research on interventions aimed at assisting the homeless in Mitchells Plain and Strandfontein the scarcity of homeless shelters or 'safe spaces' in these regions compounds the issue. Additionally, it becomes challenging to estimate the number of homeless population in these areas. Therefore, conducting both qualitative and quantitative studies can provide valuable insights into the persistent challenges faced by the homeless

population in these areas, offering potential solutions to address effectively, making it crucial to prioritise efforts to further explore these specific areas.

5.3. Closing Remarks

The study as a whole highlighted the importance of understanding the perceptions and attitudes of local residents regarding homelessness in the community of Strandfontein. By exploring the perceptions and the perceived effects of homelessness on the community, the study revealed a broad spectrum of responses, reflecting the complexity and multifaceted nature of the phenomenon of homelessness. The study highlighted the need to address not only misconceptions and stereotypes but also to recognise and respect the unique viewpoints and experiences of different individuals in the community.

The promotion of community integration emerged as a key approach to effectively integrating homeless individuals into the community and ensuring their needs are treated with care and respect by all stakeholders involved. The experiences and viewpoints shared by the residents shed light on the significance of adopting the socioecological model. The model emphasises addressing all levels of influence when designing interventions to alleviate homelessness within the community of Strandfontein. Therefore, considering the insights and opinions of residents is crucial in tailoring services aimed at integrating the homeless population communities.

Residents also possessed a deeper understanding of the dynamics and characteristics of their community, making their input invaluable. By incorporating the views of all stakeholders, particularly those of residents, in designing and implementing intervention, we can comprehensively address the challenges related to homeless individuals' integration. These inclusive approaches foster a sense of belonging by recognising and valuing the concerns put forward by homeless individuals, enabling the provision of targeted customised services that effectively address the unique difficulties faced by homeless individuals and the challenges faced by the community in supporting them.

Consequently, it is important to address homelessness in a holistic manner, that considers individual, communal, and societal factors, while promoting empathy, understanding and collaboration among residents. It emphasises the significance of fostering a more informed and compassionate approach through broader societal dialogue and education. By embracing the diverse perspective of the residents, interventions can be designed to address the

underlying factor contributing to negative perceptions, while also acknowledging the potential for positive attitudes and community support.

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APPENDIX A: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

1. How long have you been a resident in Strandfontein?
2. How would you define homelessness?
3. What do you think are the factors that lead to homelessness?
4. How do you perceive people experiencing homelessness?
5. Can you tell me about your experiences in engaging with homeless people?
6. Can you tell me about homeless people living in Strandfontein?
7. What effect does homelessness have on your day-to-day life as a resident of Strandfontein?
8. What do you think are the effects of homelessness in the community?
9. What do you think can be done to reduce homelessness and help those who are homeless to move off the street?

APPENDIX B: PARTICIPATION AND CONSENT FORM

University of Cape Town
Department of Social Development

Request for Participation and Consent Form

Name of Researcher: Chernay Chandler

The research forms part of the qualification for a Master of Social Science specialising in Social Development in the Department of Social Development at the University of Cape Town.

Title of Study:

Exploring the perceptions of local residents' regarding homelessness in the Strandfontein community.

Thank you for agreeing to participate in the study. These questions are part of a study that seeks to understand and explore the perceptions of Strandfontein residents regarding homelessness in their community. The research objectives are:

Research Objectives

- To explore the perception of Strandfontein residents regarding homelessness in their community
- To explore Strandfontein resident's personal beliefs, values and attitudes regarding people experiencing homelessness
- To explore and understand the effects of homelessness on the community of Strandfontein
- To explore how residents feel about the social integration of homeless individuals within the community?

1. I understand that by signing below I am consenting to participate in this study. I give my informed consent to participate as the researcher has explained the following to me in a way that I understand:

2. I understand that my participation is voluntary. I understand I have the right not to answer any of the questions. I understand that I have the right to opt out at any part of the research with no consequences. I understand that the interview will approximately be 30 to 45 minutes long and will be recorded with my permission using a digital recording device.

3. I understand and consent that the researcher will transcribe this recording, and all my identifying information will be removed and kept in a secure location. Once the research has concluded, the transcripts and other identifying information will be destroyed.

Thank you for your participation

Signature of Participant

Date

Signature of Researcher

APPENDIX C: ETHICS APPROVAL

UNIVERSITY OF CAPE TOWN



Department of Social Development

University of Cape Town Rondebosch 7701 South Africa

Phone: +27-21-650-3483

E-mail: laryn.powell@uct.ac.za

2 December 2022

Student: **Chernay Chandler (CHNCHE021)**

Outcome: **ACCEPTED**

I am pleased to inform you that ethical clearance has been given by an Ethics Review Committee of the Faculty of Humanities for your study, *Exploring the attitudes and perceptions of Strandfontein residents regarding homelessness in Strandfontein*. The reference number is SWK-REC-2022-SR033.

I wish you all the best for your study.

Signed by candidate

Yours sincerely
Amanda Manqoyi-Ouamba
Lecturer
Ethics Review Committee Member

APPENDIX D: INITIAL CODING PROCESS

Name	Files	Refer	Created on	Create	Modified on	Modified by
Addressing homelessness	7	40	2023/02/08	CD	2023/02/14	CD
Alcohol Abuse	1	1	2023/02/09	CD	2023/02/09	CD
As a woman - your safety feels even more compromised when interacting	1	1	2023/02/11	CD	2023/02/11	CD
Attitudes have changed for the WORSE	2	3	2023/02/08	CD	2023/02/14	CD
Believes homeless people and community members need to be kept seper	2	2	2023/02/08 01:37	CD	2023/02/12	CD
Break-ins and robberies have taken place	4	7	2023/02/08	CD	2023/02/11	CD
Community dynamics changed	3	12	2023/02/10	CD	2023/02/14	CD
Does homelessness affect the lives of residents	4	4	2023/02/09	CD	2023/02/14	CD
Does homelessness have an effect on the community	3	6	2023/02/09	CD	2023/02/14	CD
Dynamics in the informal settlement	5	9	2023/02/08	CD	2023/02/15	CD
Encounter homeless people in the community	4	13	2023/02/09	CD	2023/02/14	CD
Establishment of the informal settlement	4	5	2023/02/08	CD	2023/02/15	CD
Factors of homelessness	4	18	2023/02/09	CD	2023/02/14	CD
Family dynamics- dysfunction	1	4	2023/02/09	CD	2023/02/14	CD
Family loss - dynamics	1	1	2023/02/09	CD	2023/02/09	CD
Feelings towards homeless people - temporary shelter period	2	4	2023/02/08	CD	2023/02/14	CD
Homeless individuals are those that lost their way	2	2	2023/02/08	CD	2023/02/11	CD
Homeless is brought on by external circumstances	1	1	2023/02/13	CD	2023/02/13	CD
Homeless is caused by their own choices	4	5	2023/02/08	CD	2023/02/20	CD
Homeless people are associated with criminal elements	4	7	2023/02/08	CD	2023/02/12	CD
Homeless people are sitting on the streets	2	2	2023/02/08	CD	2023/02/12	CD